



MALCONTENT NEWS RUSSIA-UKRAINE SITUATION REPORT

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Malcontent News

Russia-Ukraine War SITREP

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SUMMARY – DAY 545

It has been 3,465 days since Russia occupied the Crimea Peninsula on January 27, 2014, and one year and 180 days since Russia expanded its war against Ukraine. The deaths of Yevgeny Prigozhin, Dmytry Utkin, and Valery Chekalov overwhelmed the news cycle today.

- Positional fighting continued in Kharkiv and Luhansk
- Russian forces attempted to advance on Vesele in the Soledar area of operation (AO)
- Intense fighting continued in Klishchiivka, near Avdiivka, and on the northern edge of Kurdyumivka
- Ukrainian forces captured Russian soldiers in Zavitne Bazhannya
- Fighting continued on the edge of Pryyutne
- Ukrainian forces officially liberated Robotyne
- A Russian S-400 battery, including its radar array and command and control trailer, was destroyed near Olenivka
- Ukrainian Special Operation Forces (SSO) conducted a land, sea, and air raid on Tarkhankut in occupied Crimea
- The Russian air force (VKS) attacked a Ukrainian ship near Zmiinyi Island

- A Russian missile struck the city of Dnipro, destroying a transportation facility
- A Shahed-136 kamikaze drone struck a school building in Romny in the Sumy oblast, killing four
- A Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance squad ambushed Russian troops in Bryansk, killing four and wounding seven
- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hinted another wave of mobilization may be necessary in Ukraine
- Ukraine has developed its own version of the Russian Lancet kamikaze drone, and it has entered serial production
- Over 200 searches were conducted across Ukraine of commissariat offices and medical institutions to review the files of 10,000 men who received medical deferments
- Lithuania will provide Ukraine with additional NASAMS air defense launchers
- Japan announced a \$7 billion financial aid package for Ukraine
- The European Union is preparing a multi-year 50 billion euro aid package for Ukraine
- President Zelenskyy inquired about receiving retiring Finnish F-18/A Hornet multirole aircraft
- Private Military Company (PMC) Wagner Group leaders Yevgeny Prigozhin, Dmitry Utkin, and Valery

Chekalov were killed when Russian air defenses apparently shot down the private jet they were on

- A Russian helicopter pilot defected to Ukraine flying a Mi-8AMTSh rotorcraft with parts for Su-27 and Su-30 aircraft to Kharkiv
- Sevastopol hospitals are reportedly over capacity due to the number of Russian wounded troops arriving from occupied Zaporizhzhia
- Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni called the West's 2014 response to the Russian invasion of Crimea "a mistake"
- United States Senators Lindsey Graham, Richard Blumenthal, and Elizabeth Warren were in Kyiv and met with President Zelenskyy
- President Zelenskyy called his meeting with Hungarian President Katalin Novak "substantive"
- The President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, reiterated that his nation does not recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea and called for the immediate release of all imprisoned Crimean Tatars

DAILY ASSESSMENT

We assess the following:

1. Our assessment that the Russian Ministry of Defense remains in a chaotic state, incapable of creating mission cohesion between penal units, mobiks, conscripts, elite forces, PMCs, and proxy forces, remains accurate after the apparent assassination of PMC Wagner's senior top leaders.
2. In our assessment, the possibility of partisan violence within Russia after the killings of Yevgeny Prigozhin and Dmitry Utkin is significant, and Russian President Vladimir Putin's stature, both inside and outside of Russia, remains in a weakened state.
3. We no longer believe that the threats of aggression from Belarus have weight after the death of Prigozhin and Utkin. Still, we maintain that aggressive posturing directed at Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania and by Russia on the Black Sea risk causing an international incident. The continued soft response by Ukraine's allies has only encouraged Minsk and Moscow to take further risks.
4. Russian Chief of Staff Valery Gerasimov and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu are some of the best allies available for the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense due to their acceptance of systemic corruption, political

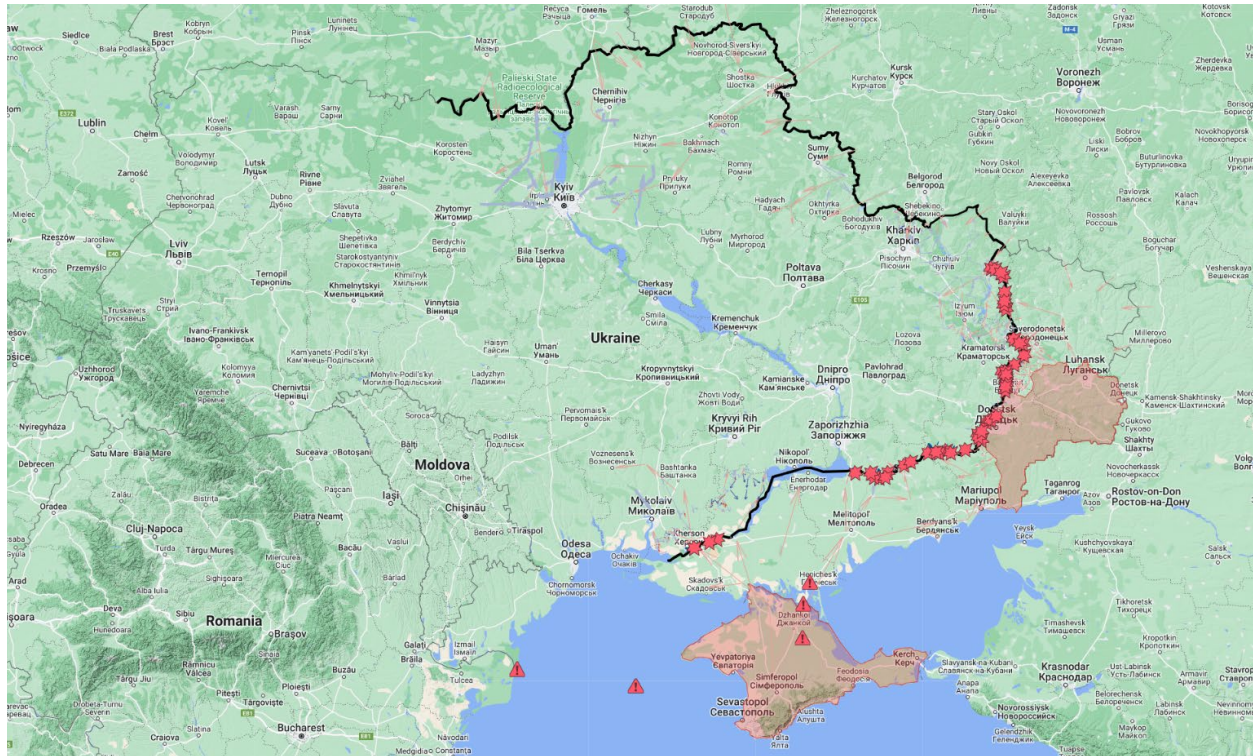
- infighting, waste of military resources, and refusal to adapt to the realities within the theater of war.
5. We assess a high probability of Russian missile strikes that target civilians, civilian infrastructure, and Ukrainian cultural sites in the next 48 hours due to the impending Ukrainian Independence Day holiday.
 6. The perceived slow progress of the Ukrainian summer offensive, questions about the capabilities of Ukrainian military commanders at the battalion and brigade level, and ongoing anticorruption measures highlighting the problems within the Ukrainian government are unfairly straining Western support.
 7. We remain unprepared to declare that the next phase of the summer offensive has started in two operational areas.
 8. Despite Ukraine's likely start of the next phase of its summer offensive, we maintain that Western partners are not meeting their promised military training, heavy equipment, and ammunition dates, negatively impacting Ukraine's military capabilities.
 9. While acknowledging recent operational successes in Zaporizhzhia, we remain concerned about Ukraine's capacity to turn tactical gains in other AOs into operational success and strategic victories.
 10. It is unlikely that Ukraine will execute a wet crossing of the Dnipro River with a battalion-sized or larger force.

11. The growing number of combat ineffective and combat destroyed Russian units is forcing Russian commanders to rotate remaining reserves to hotspots in regions outside their assigned AO.
12. Mistrust among the command structures of the Russian Ministry of Defense, intelligence, and security community is negatively impacting Russia's ability to wage war within Ukraine.
13. While the possibility of an intentional nuclear accident caused by Russian occupiers at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant remains low, the threat should be taken seriously.

[Jump to the Action Report.](#)



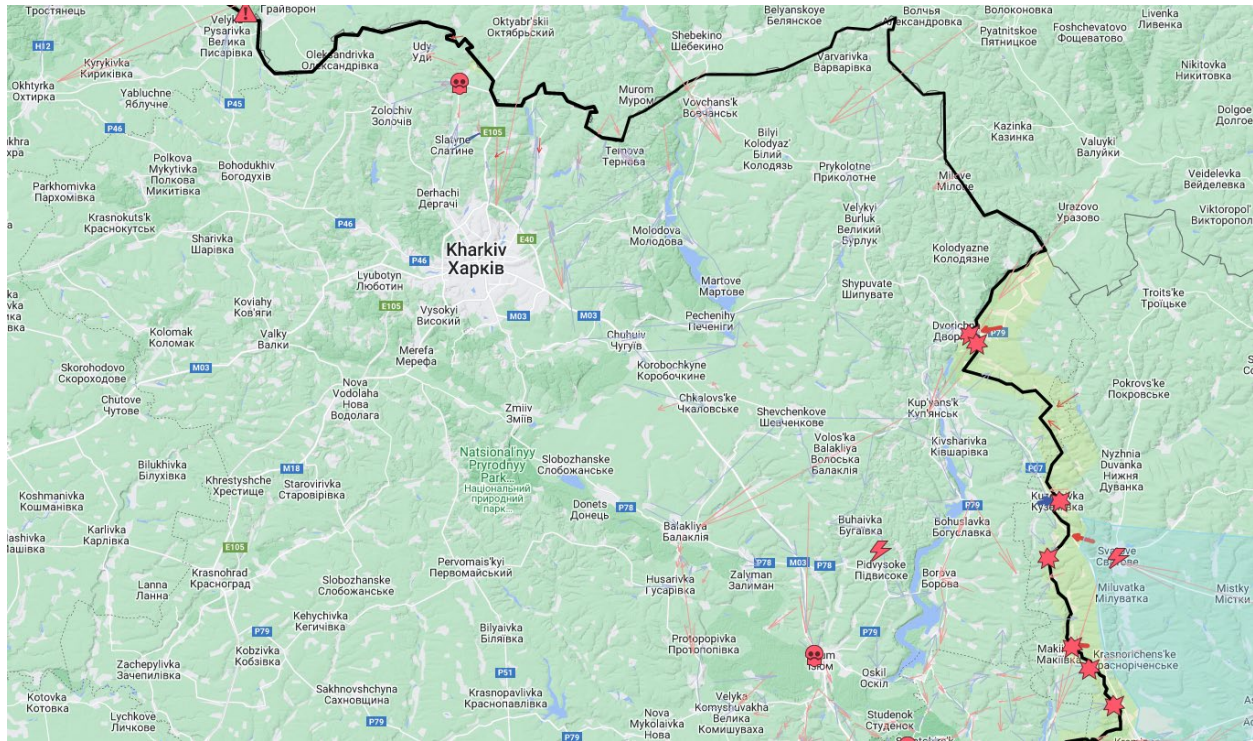
TODAY'S WAR IN UKRAINE MAP



About the maps: Red triangles are sites of significant events unrelated to missile attacks, insurgencies, or ground combat, such as the sinking of the Moskva and the explosion at the Saky Naval airbase. Gray circles indicate an area where fighting has ended with no change in the line of conflict. The archived offensive layer is turned off by default, but you can toggle it on/off in the Map Legend. If you see a settlement name highlighted [like this](#), it is a link to our war map that will take you to the location explained in the Situation Report.

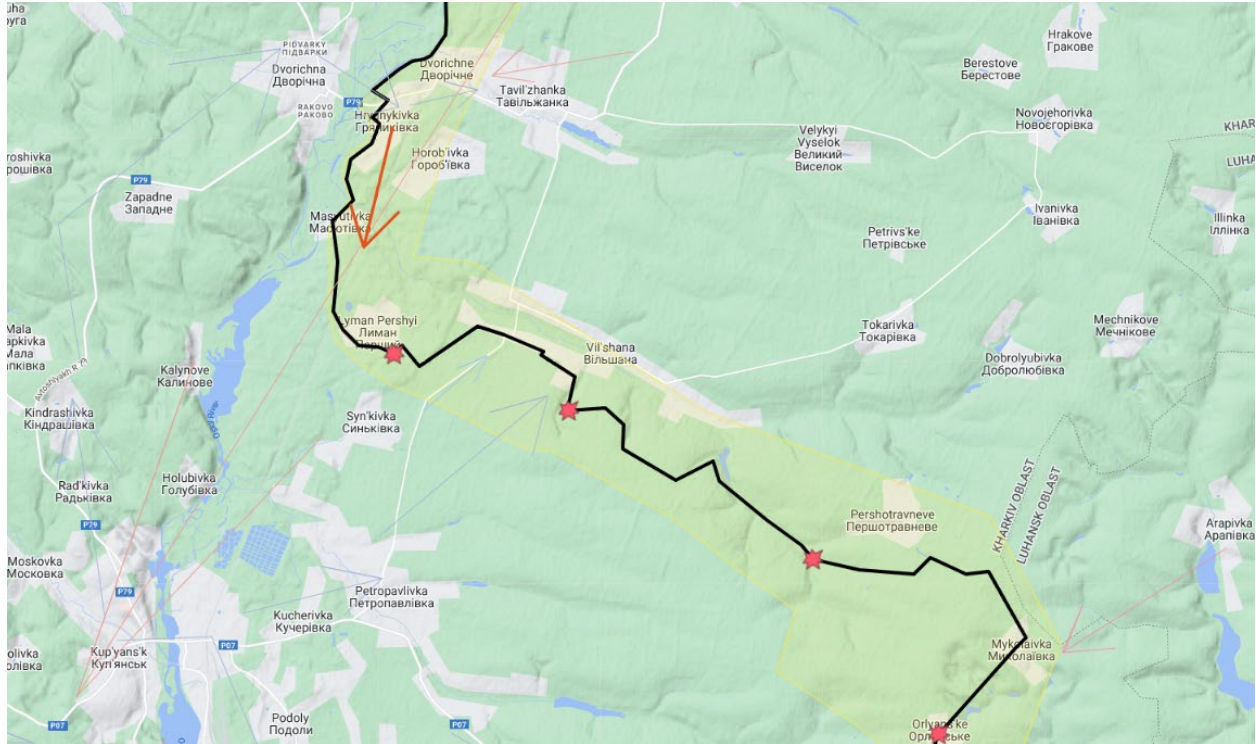
[Russia-Ukraine War Report Map](#)

KHARKIV



Russian Objective: Defend against the Ukrainian offensive, maximize casualties, and terrorize Ukrainian civilians near the line of conflict

Ukrainian Objective: Liberate the northeastern corner of the oblast, hold defensive lines in the Dvorichna and Kupyansk Operational Areas, protect civilians and civilian infrastructure



Dvorichna Operational Area

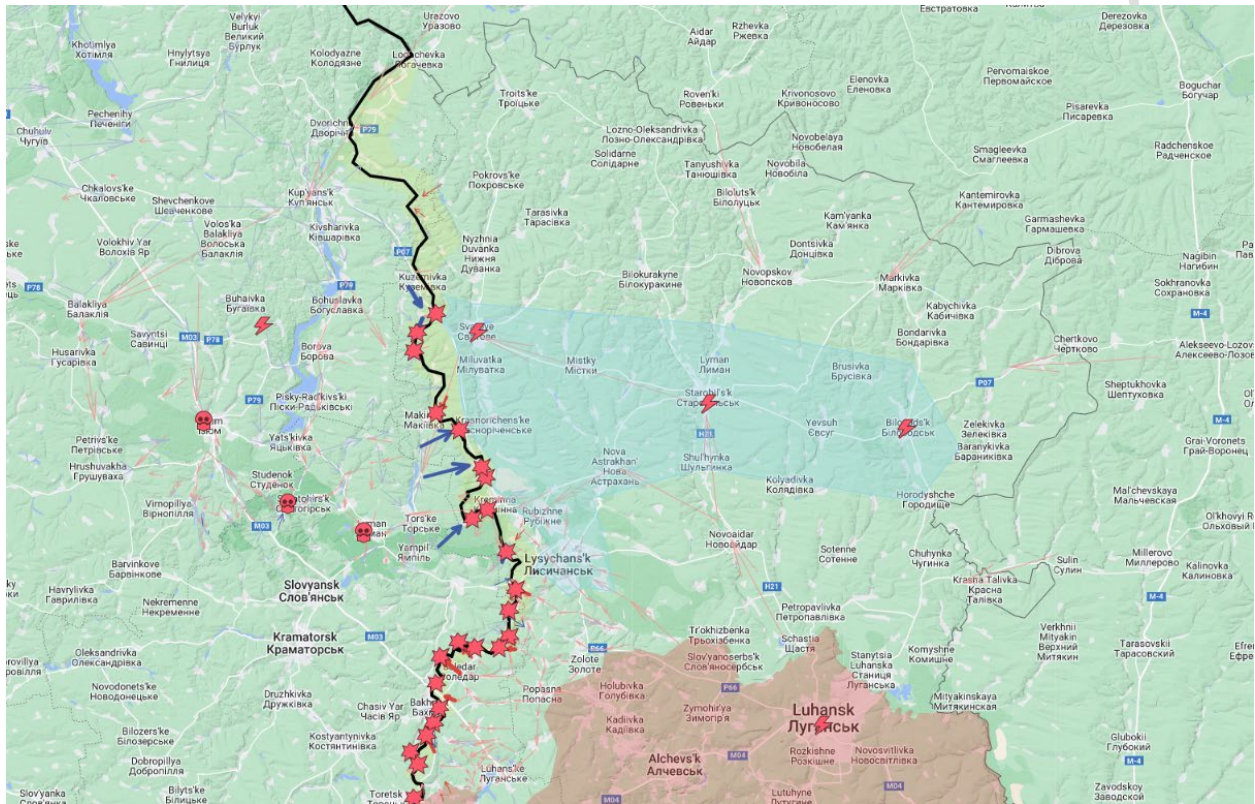
Ukrainian source DeepState agrees with our earlier assessment that the Russian offensive in the Dvorichna and Kupyansk AOs has culminated. Positional fighting northeast of [Synkivka](#) continued.^{1 2}

¹ <https://t.me/DeepStateUA/17430>

² https://t.me/mod_russia/29708 [Russian Government Controlled Social Media Channel]

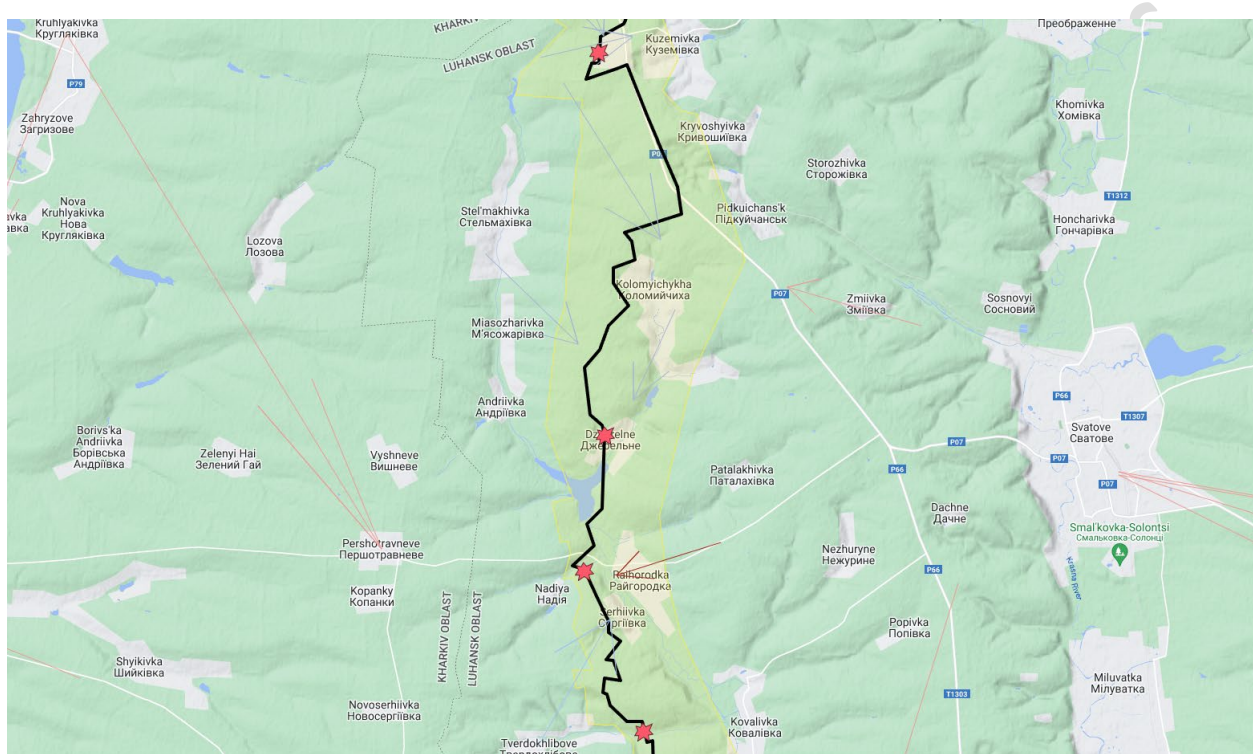
DONBAS REGION

LUHANSK



Russian Objective: Defend against the Ukrainian offensive, maximize casualties, control insurgent activity, set conditions to capture the rest of the region, and support September 2023 elections

Ukrainian Objective: Break Russian defensive lines, advance on Svatove, Kreminna, and Lysychansk, and support insurgents



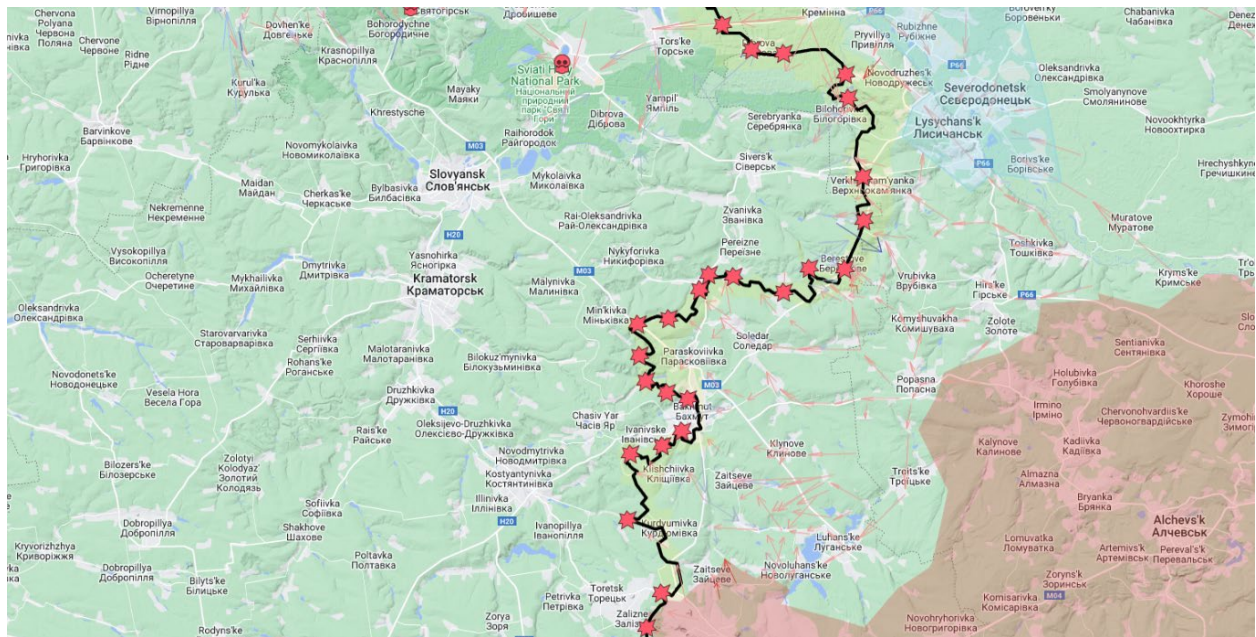
Svatove Operational Area

It is a similar situation in the Svatove AO, with Russian offensive operations culminating. The Russian Ministry of Defense (RMD) reported that Ukrainian forces continued to be on the offensive in [Novoselivske](#). The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (GSAFU) reported a Russian offensive in the direction of [Novojehorivka](#) failed.

ASSESSMENT: If you've noticed a pattern of RMOD claiming Ukraine attacked a location, and 24 hours later, GSAFU reports a failed Russian attack near or at the same location, you would be correct. The Russian Ministry of Defense has not reported offensive operations in weeks, even when they have conducted failed offensive, instead claiming that Ukrainian attacks failed.

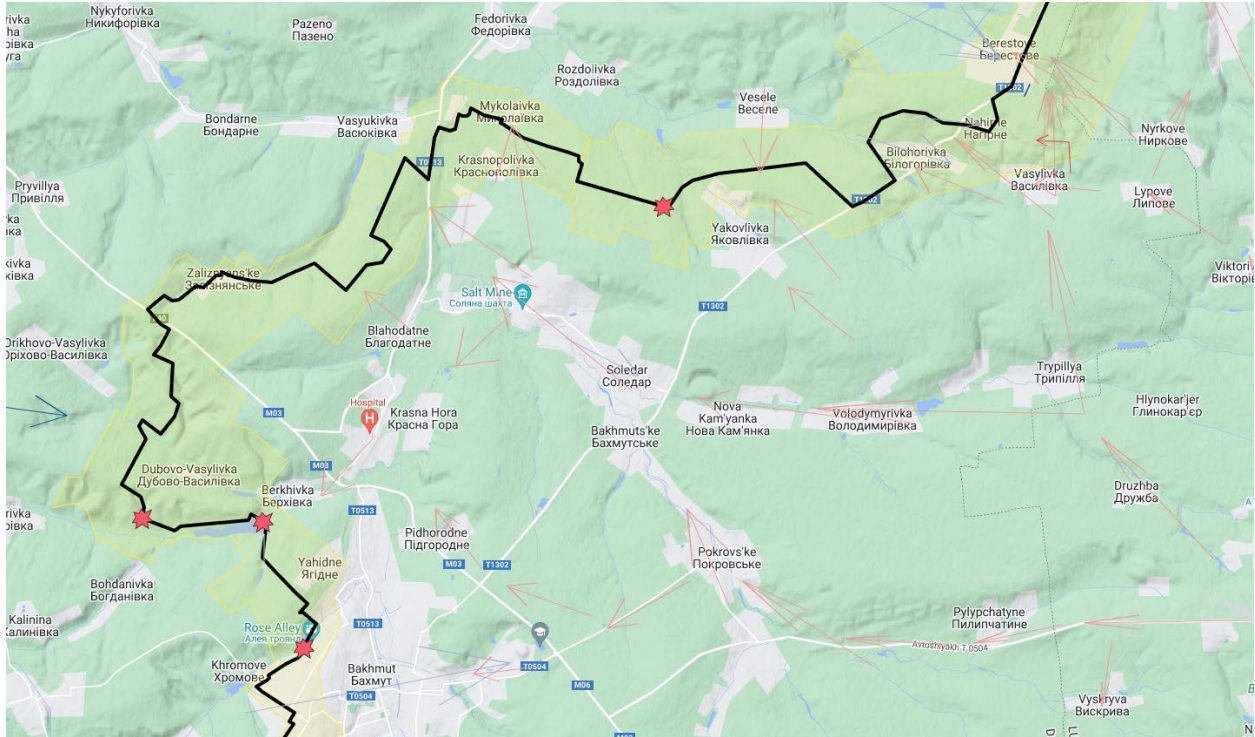


NORTHEAST DONETSK



Russian Objective: Complete the capture of Bakhmut, set conditions to attack Kramatorsk, Slovyansk, and Siversk, and capture the entire region, set conditions for September 2023 elections

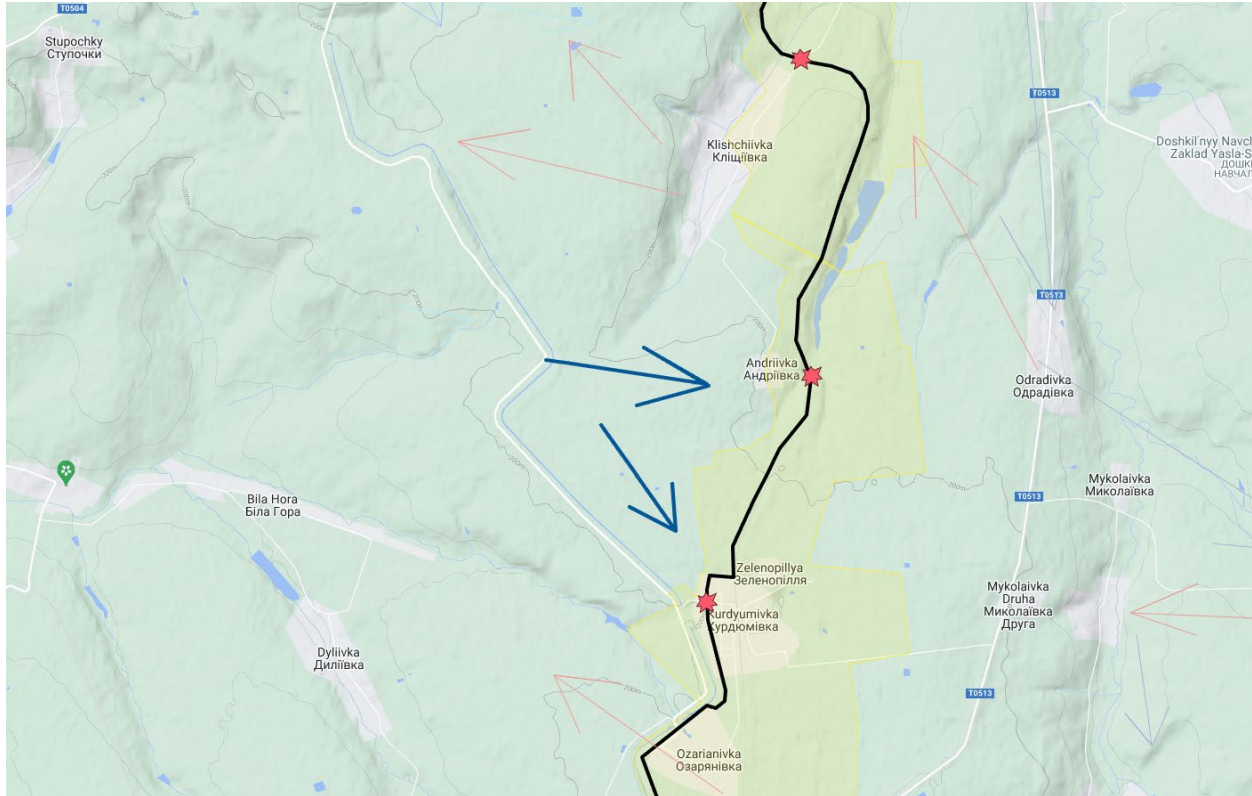
Ukrainian Objective: Defend Siversk and Bakhmut, collapse the Russian flanks while maximizing casualties, draw Russian reserves into the Bakhmut and Soledar operational areas, push into the Luhansk oblast, and minimize civilian casualties



Soledar Operational Area

GSAFU reported that Russian forces attempted to advance in the direction of [Vesele](#), suffered losses, and retreated to their previous defensive positions.³

³ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/11342>

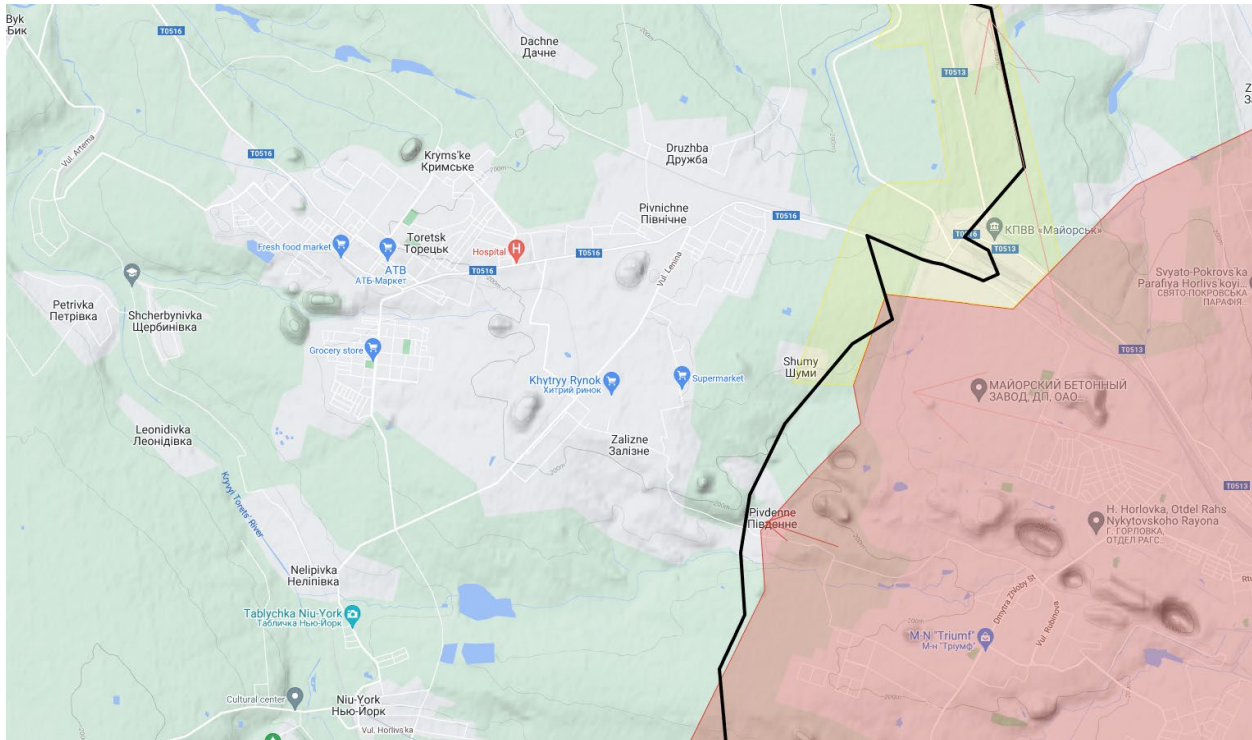


Klishchiivka Operational Area

Heavy fighting was reported in [Klishchiivka](#) and on the edges of [Andriivka](#) and [Kurdyumivka](#).^{4 5} Ukrainian forces are reportedly on the offensive along the entire axis.

⁴ <https://t.me/DeepStateUA/17430>

⁵ https://t.me/mod_russia/29708 [Russian Government Controlled Social Media Channel]

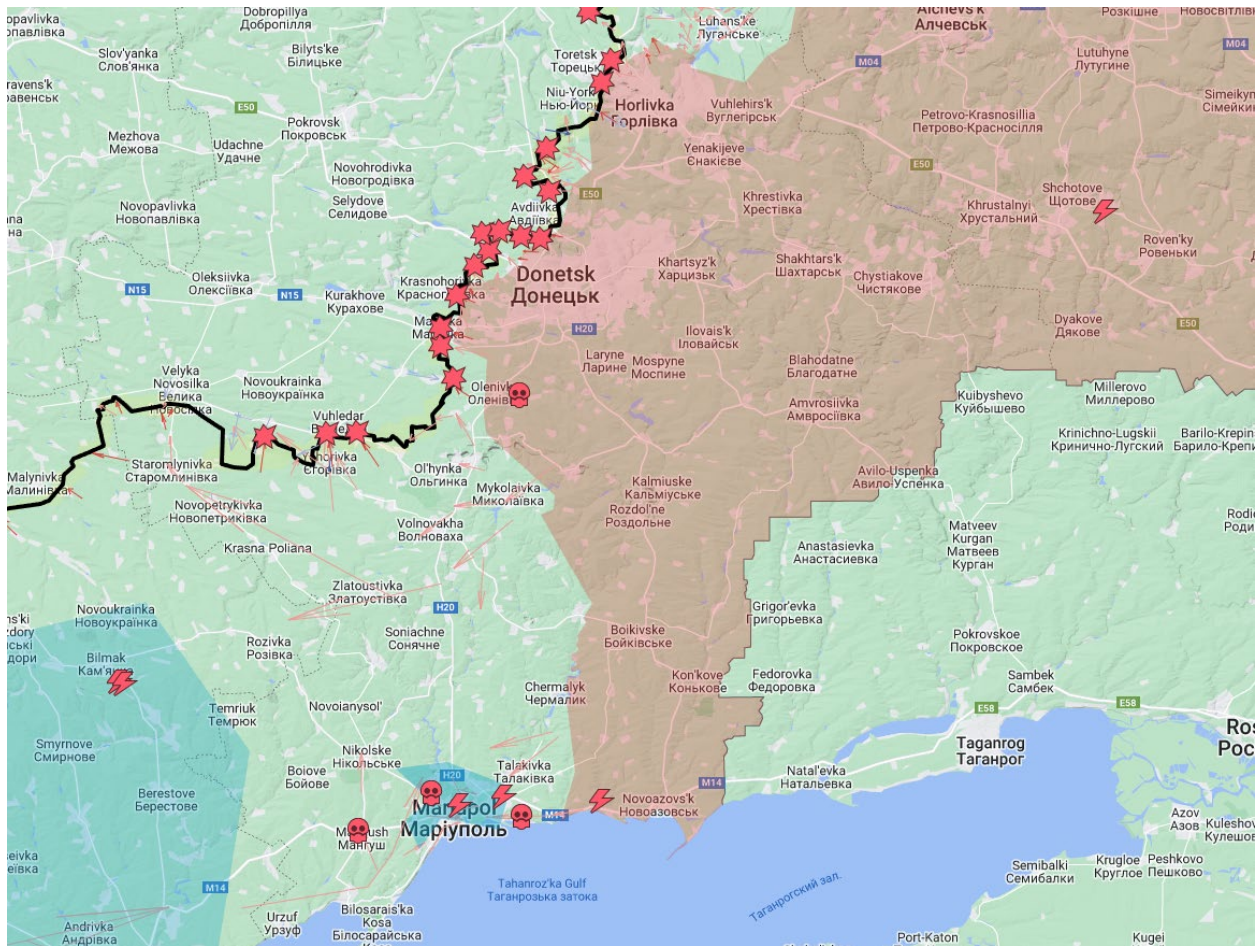


Toretzk-Niu York Operational Area

RMOD claimed Ukrainian forces were on the offensive in the area of [Mayorsk](#).⁶ They likely mean the area between the Siverskyi Donets-Donbas Canal and the T-513 Highway north of the railroad station.

⁶ https://t.me/mod_russia/29708 [Russian Government Controlled Social Media Channel]

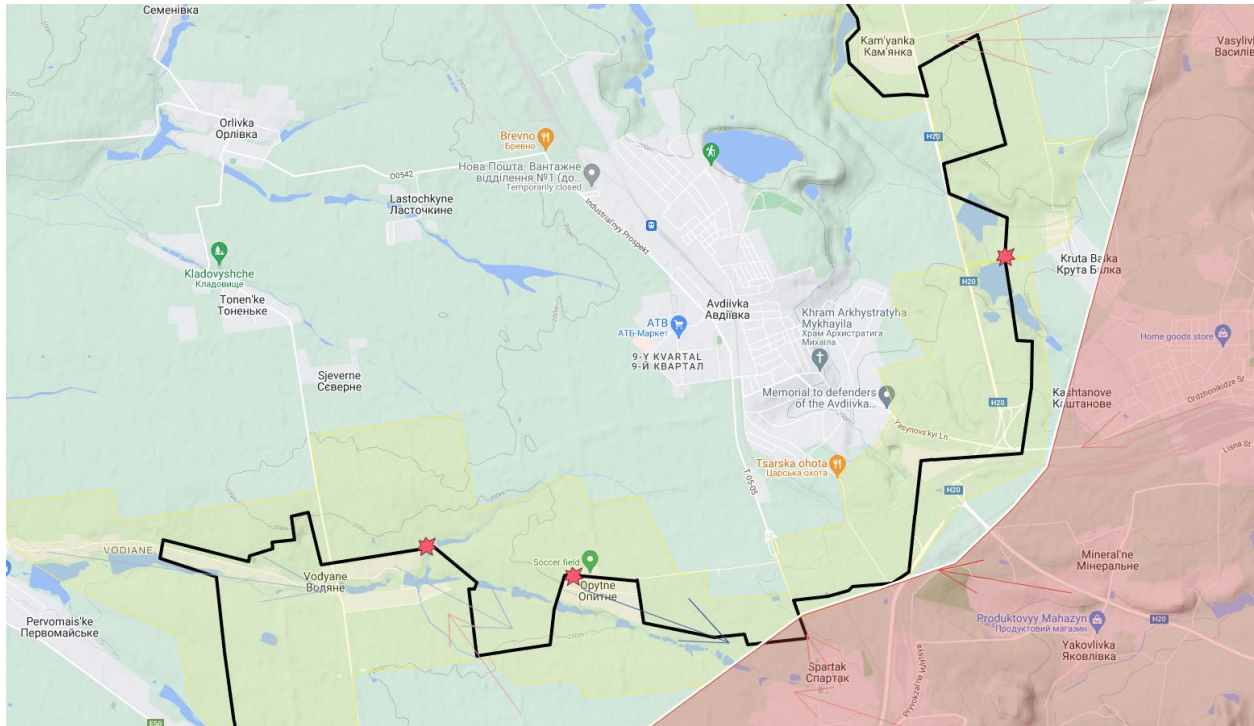
SOUTHWESTERN DONETSK



Russian Objective: Defend against the Ukrainian offensive, maximize casualties, set conditions for September 2023 elections, capture the remainder of the oblast

Ukrainian Objective: Set conditions for larger offensive operations, find and exploit Russian defensive weaknesses,

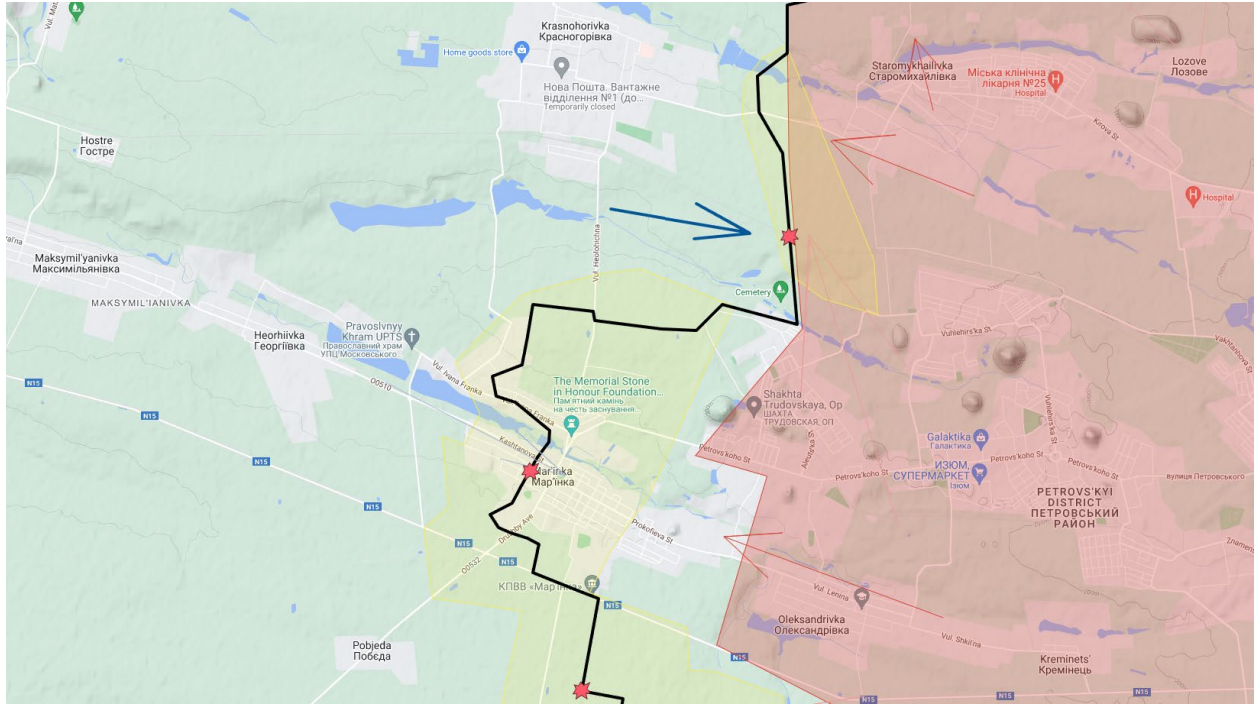
destroy troop concentrations and command and control sites, interdict supplies, and disrupt logistics



Avdiivka Operational Area

The only significant fight was reported by RMOD, which claimed Ukrainian forces were on the offensive near the Ukrainian firebase at [Nevelske](#).⁷

⁷ https://t.me/mod_russia/29708 [Russian Government Controlled Social Media Channel]

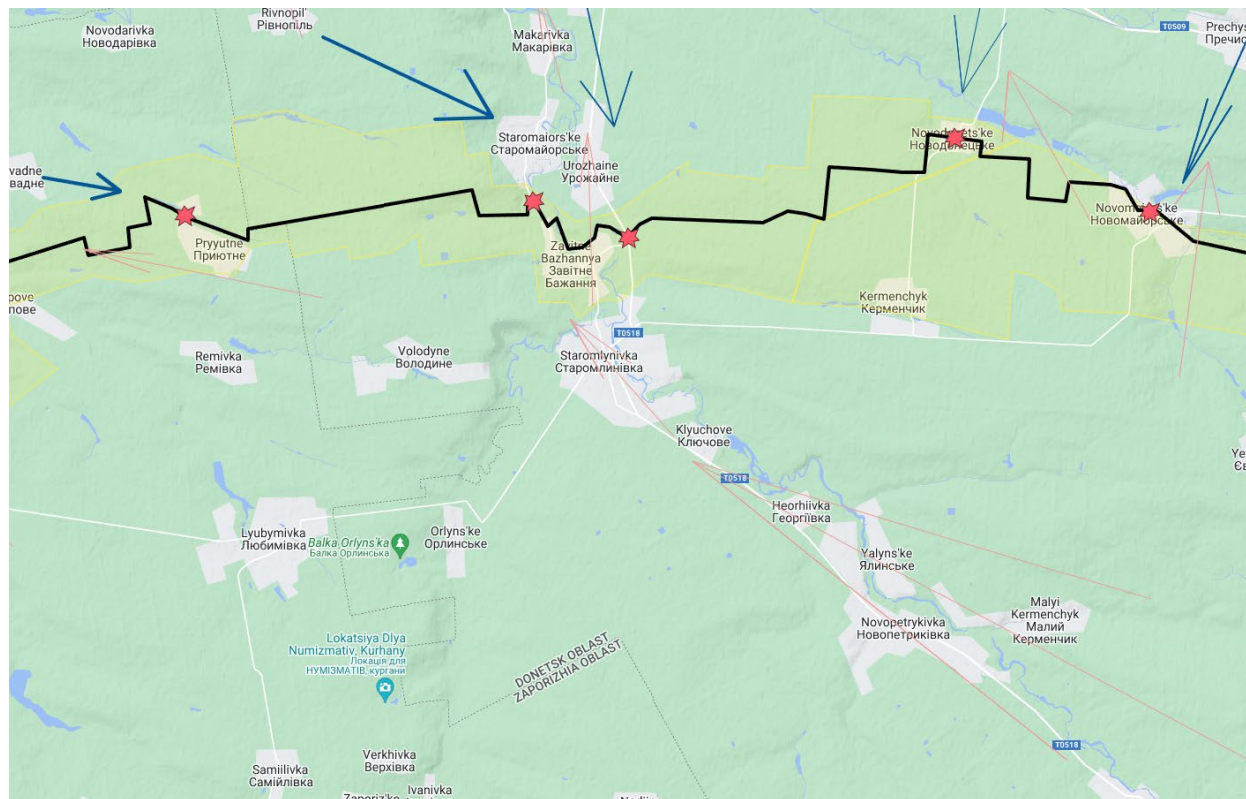


Marinka Operational Area


Positional fighting continued in [Marinka](#).^{8 9}

⁸ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/11342>

⁹ <https://t.me/wargonzo/14531>



Lyubymivka-Staromlynivka Operational Area

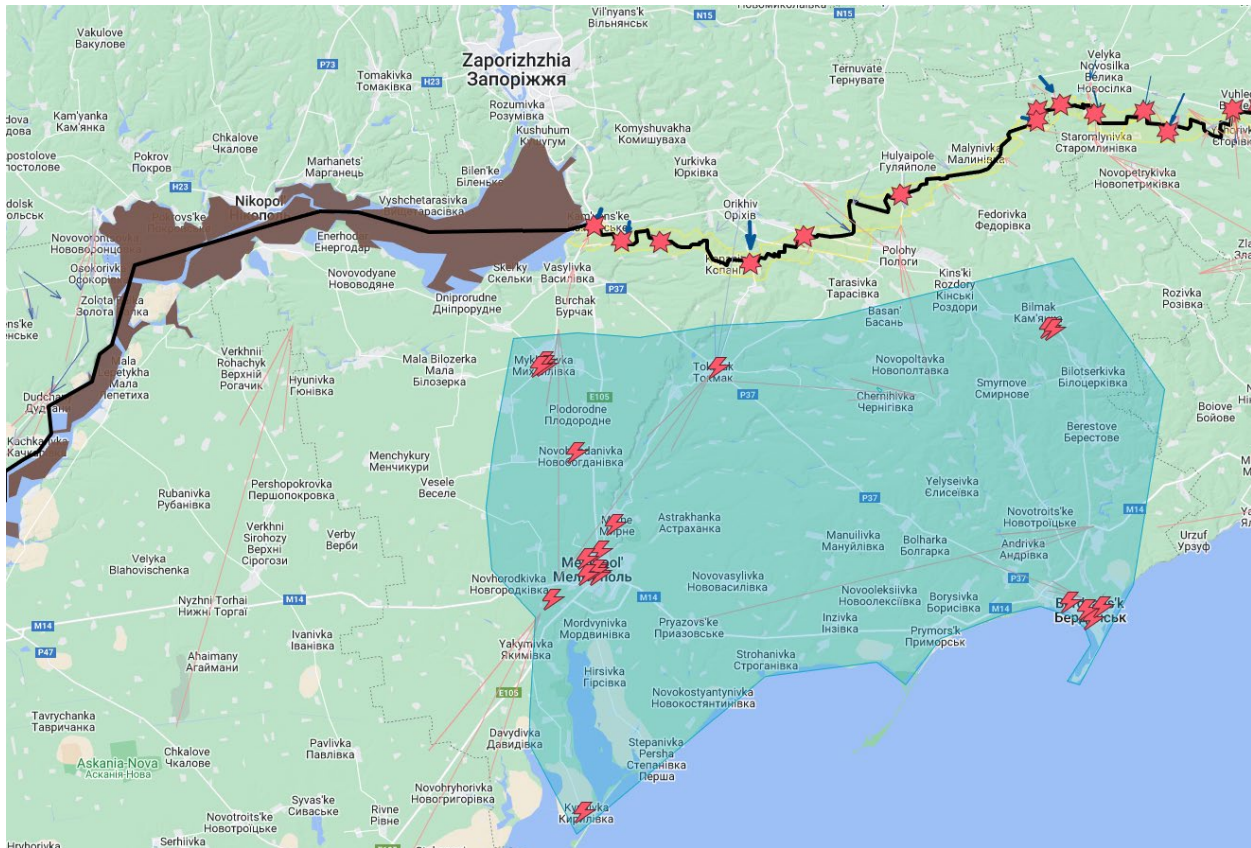
Ukrainian forces  [captured several Russian soldiers in Zavitne Bazhannya](#), indicating that Ukrainian forces are on the offensive south of Urozhaine and Staromaiorske.¹⁰

Russian mercenary milblogger WarGonzo reported that fighting continued on the outskirts of [Pryyutne](#).¹¹

¹⁰ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/111308>

¹¹ <https://t.me/wargonzo/14531>

ZAPORIZHIA

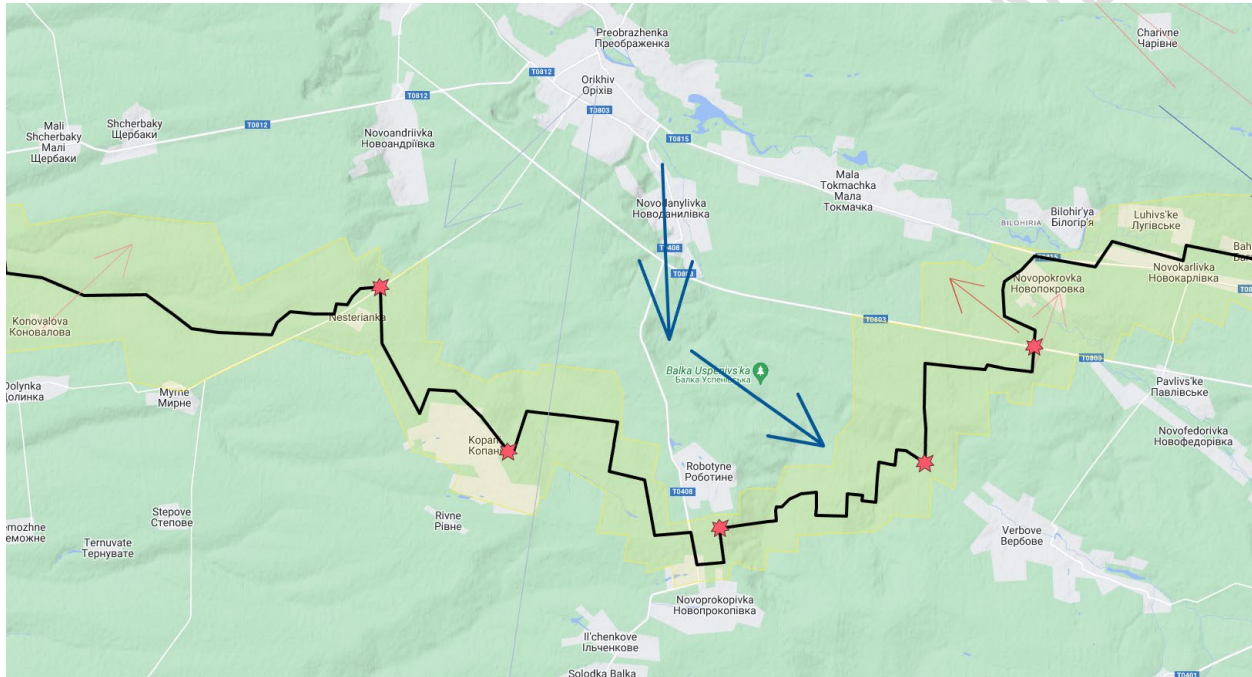


Russian Objective: Defend against the Ukrainian offensive, maximize casualties, set conditions for September 2023 elections, capture the remainder of the oblast, and terrorize Ukrainian civilians with continued attacks

Ukrainian Objective: Exploit weaknesses on the line of conflict, break Russian defensive lines, liberate Russian-occupied areas, and protect civilians

Free Zaporizhzhia

Brigadier General Alexander Tarnavskiy reported that Ukrainian forces executed 1,429 fire missions in Zaporizhzhia and eastern Kherson.¹²





Orikhiv Operational Area

Russian forces attempted to counterattack Ukrainian troops advancing south of [Novopokrovka](#) and were unsuccessful.¹³

¹² <https://t.me/otarnavskiy/211>

¹³ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/11342>

Ukrainian forces officially liberated [Robotyne](#),  [hoisting the Ukrainian flag](#) over the center of the settlement on National Flag Day.¹⁴ ¹⁵ Ukrainian troops continue to push south in the direction of [Novoprokopivka](#). More significantly, Ukrainian forces have liberated Hill 166, which sits between Robotyne and Verbove, connecting the two breaches of the first echelon of the Surovikin Line into a six-kilometer-wide gap. The Ukrainian air force, including  [Su-25 ground attack aircraft](#) and helicopters, has provided close air support (CAS) this week, indicating that Ukraine has established air parity for the first time during the ongoing offensive.¹⁶

Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant

There was no update on the situation at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

¹⁴ <https://t.me/DeepStateUA/17430>

¹⁵ https://t.me/ukrarmed_forces/6037


¹⁶ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/111381>

BLACK SEA, CRIMEA, MYKOLAIV, AND ODESA REGION

Black Sea

Operational Command South (OKS) reported nine Black Sea Fleet vessels are on patrol, including the corvette Cyclone, capable of launching up to eight Kalibr cruise missiles.¹⁷



Occupied Crimea



We have updated information on the explosions at [Tarkhankut](#). Ukrainian forces launched two drones toward Olenivka and launched missiles at the site when Russian air defenses locked on to them. This tactic was used to sink the missile cruiser Moskva in April 2022. An  [S-400 missile battery was destroyed](#), including support vehicles and the command and control center.¹⁸ Embarrassingly, the whole attack was captured by a Ukrainian drone flying directly over the air defense site.

During the night of August 23 – 24, the Main Defense Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine (GUR) conducted an air, sea, and land raid on

¹⁷ https://t.me/our_odessa/52743

¹⁸ https://twitter.com/Gerashchenko_en/status/1694296525923373245

Tarkhankut. A short video showed the Special Operation Forces (SOF)  [operating in the waters directly off the Crimean coast](#).¹⁹ Ukraine confirmed the raid and said that objectives were achieved without casualties. Russian milblogger Romanov Light, who admittedly is not a reliable source, denied Russian claims that the attack was repulsed, supporting Kyiv's report that Ukrainian forces suffered no casualties. A longer video showed that the SOF team  [planted a Ukrainian flag](#) before leaving.²⁰

Ukrainian patrol boats operating near an oil platform off the Crimean coast  [fired on Russian aircraft](#).²¹ The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed they sunk one ship. The poor-quality video  [only showed an aircraft firing its cannon on a ship](#) from a high altitude and cutting away before any confirmation of an explosion or damage.²²

Partisans reported that a fuel train arrived in Feodosia with some railcars empty and others full.²³ The tank farm damaged by multiple Ukrainian drone attacks earlier in the

¹⁹ <https://t.me/Crimeanwind/40438>

²⁰ https://twitter.com/Maks_NAFO_FELLA/status/1694650905600106630


²¹ <https://twitter.com/michaelh992/status/1694326594179899545>

²² <https://twitter.com/michaelh992/status/1694317203418480662>

²³ <https://t.me/Crimeanwind/40302>

summer has still not been repaired, limiting the amount of fuel reserves that can be kept in occupied Crimea.

Odesa

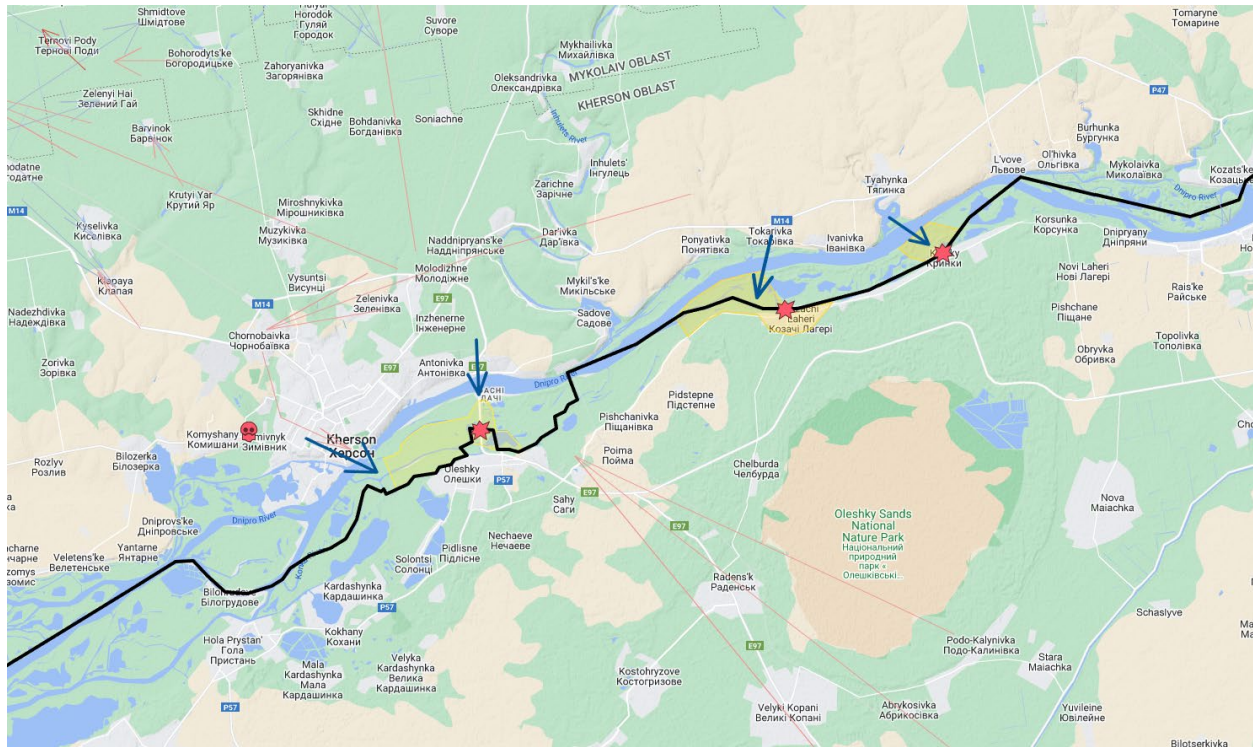
Near Zmiinyi (Snake) Island, a Russian Su-30 aircraft tried to attack a Ukrainian patrol boat. The ship  [fired at the aircraft with a MANPAD](#), which caused mission kill damage. The aircraft was able to return to base.²⁴

KHERSON

Russian Objective: Prevent Ukrainian advances into eastern Kherson, terrorize the civilian population in free Kherson, prepare the region for illegitimate elections in September 2023, and maintain GLOCs to Zaporizhzhia

Ukrainian Objective: Deter attacks on Ukrainian civilians, lock Russian troops and military assets in place, and protect civilian lives

²⁴ https://twitter.com/Heroiam_Slava/status/1694368273758871962



Ukrainian forces maintain their forward operating bases along a 42-kilometer stretch between the Dnipro and Konka Rivers.

WESTERN AND CENTRAL UKRAINE

Russian Objective: Launch terror attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure to break morale

Ukrainian Objective: Deter attacks and protect civilian lives

Dnipropetrovsk

At least one Russian missile struck the city of Dnipro.²⁵ Seven people were wounded in the attack, with six requiring hospitalization, according to Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Administrative and Military Governor (OVA) Sergei Lysak. A city transport facility and three buses were destroyed. The attack also damaged a bank, gas station, hotel, furniture factory, and city administration building.

NORTHERN AND NORTHEASTERN UKRAINE

Russian Objective: Lock Ukrainian military resources into place and launch terror attacks on civilians in an attempt to break morale

Ukrainian Objective: Complete the liberation of the Kharkiv oblast, maintain the integrity of the international border, deter attacks, and protect civilian lives

Sumy

²⁵ <https://t.me/suspilnenews/23625>

A Shahed-136 kamikaze drone struck a school building in Romny, 📷 [destroying the building](#).²⁶ Four people were killed, including the school's director, deputy director, secretary, and librarian. Four more people who were in the area were injured.^{27 28}

²⁶ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/111276>

²⁷ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/111258>

²⁸ <https://t.me/uniannet/108990>

RUSSIAN FRONT

Russian Objective: Stabilize government control and civil order, prevent further insurrection, repel Russian partisan attacks, secure the state border

Ukrainian-Backed Russian Partisan Objective: Motivate other Russians to fight against the Putin regime, accelerate the downfall of the Russian government, foment civil unrest

Bryansk

Local reports in Bryansk indicated that a Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group crossed the border and engaged with Russian troops, killing four and wounding seven.²⁹

Kaluga

Russian officials claimed that a Ukrainian drone was shot down over the region.³⁰

²⁹ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/111251>

³⁰ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/111383>

BELARUSIAN FRONT

There wasn't any major activity in this region, and with the death of Yevgeny Prigozhin and Dmitry Utkin, we will close this section on August 31 unless there is renewed activity. In our assessment, with PMC Wagner reportedly leaving Belarus and the pay dispute among the remaining mercenaries, we don't see the organization being a significant force.

THEATERWIDE

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was asked if there would be another round of mobilization of the Ukrainian people, with the leader candidly replying, "I'll say frankly, the military approached me to give them the opportunity to mobilize more. I can't tell you anything else yet."³¹

Mykhailo Fedorov, the Deputy Prime Minister for Innovation, Education, Science and Technology of Ukraine, said that Ukraine has developed its own version of the Russian Lancet kamikaze drone, and serial production has

³¹ <https://t.me/uniannet/109014>

already started. "We are now engaged in scaling. There is a clear vision in terms of timing and quantity. Today, the Lancet is a fairly effective weapon. We analyze the statistics of its use. Hundreds of Lancets are produced every month. This is a big threat," he said.^{32 33}

While visiting Kyiv to meet with President Zelenskyy, United States Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) defended ongoing military support to Ukraine. "The United States spent billions during the Cold War to prevent Russian aggression. Now, we have spent less than 3% of our defense budget in Ukraine to help the Ukrainian military, and they have destroyed half of the Russian army. It is the best investment ever for American security. Ukraine is a great partner. We haven't seen a partner like this since Churchill," he said during a press conference.

Editor's Note: Based on the data we've reviewed on the removal of Russian military hardware from storage depots, the claim of destroying "half of the Russian army" isn't far from reality but a little over-inflated. Our criticism is not directed at Senator Graham, who has been a tireless advocate of military aid to Ukraine, but if the United States had fulfilled its delivery promises on time and ended its

³² <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/111263>

³³ <https://t.me/uniannet/109010>

policy of being afraid of a post-Putin Russian Federation, more Ukrainian lives would have been preserved, and more of the Russian army would be destroyed.

It is also unfair for Senator Graham not to acknowledge the significant contributions that other nations have made to Ukraine, which have also significantly aided the war effort. While the United States continues to wring its hands over MGM-140 ATACMS as "escalatory," France and the United Kingdom have provided SCALP-ER and Storm Shadow Cruise missiles that have devastated Russian logistics. German Gepard and IRIS-T, air defense systems, have proven highly effective, and Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland, and the Czech Republic have given significantly more aid when compared to their military budgets and national GDP. It is also important to acknowledge the significant increase in aid to Ukraine from Italy after the election of Giorgia Meloni as Prime Minister.

While we dismiss the proposed policies of the Congressional Freedom Caucus, which would sever all support to Ukraine and have the United States exit NATO, we agree with their demand that the Biden Administration make a firm declaration on its goal in Ukraine. Support "for as long as it takes" is not a goal but a risky political

policy where “as long as it takes” is defined by who sits in the White House. We believe that the Pentagon and the executive branch are reluctant to state a clear policy of Russian defeat in Ukraine as quickly as possible within reasonable means because it might make Putin mad. He’s already mad – mad as a hatter and mad as a sociopath.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine conducted more than 200 searches at commissariat offices and medical commissions, collecting the records of an estimated 10,000 men who received medical exemptions.³⁴ This does not mean that there were 10,000 illegal exemptions issued, but the legality is under review.

Regarding providing substantially more military aid when compared to their defense budget and GDP, Lithuania announced that it was providing Ukraine with NASAMS air defense launchers in September.³⁵

Fumio Kishida, the Prime Minister of Japan, announced that his nation would provide Ukraine with \$7 billion in aid.^{36 37} He added that Japan would lend its experience and

³⁴ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/111254>

³⁵ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/111295>

³⁶ <https://t.me/suspilnenews/23619>

³⁷ <https://t.me/DPSUkr/13057>

expertise on post-war reconstruction and natural disaster recovery to help accelerate Ukraine's revitalization.

The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, announced the preparation of a multi-year plan that will provide 50 billion euros of aid to Ukraine and help prepare the nation for its accession to the European Union.³⁸

During the visit of Petteri Orpo, the Prime Minister of Finland, President Zelenskyy once again asked the Nordic nation for F-18/A Hornets multirole fighter planes.³⁹ In March, previous Prime Minister Sanna Marin suggested that Finland could provide some of their F-18s but was rebuked.

The table for equipment losses was **updated on August 21, 2023**, and includes the losses suffered during the Prigozhin Insurrection of June 23 – 24.

³⁸ <https://t.me/suspilnenews/23619>

³⁹ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/08/23/7416790/>

RUSSIA VS. UKRAINE HEAVY EQUIPMENT LOSSES

Russian and Ukrainian visually confirmed heavy equipment losses sourced from the [Oryx Database](#) from February 24, 2022, to August 21, 2023. 11,791 Russian (including [Chef's Rebellion](#)) vs. 4,206 Ukrainian

Equipment	Russian Losses	Ukrainian Losses	Ratio	Change
Main Battle Tanks	2108	268	7.87:1	↓
Medium Duty Tanks	145	351	0.41:1	—
Armored fighting Vehicles	949	308	3.08:1	—
Infantry Fighting Vehicles	2680	698	3.84:1	—
Armored Personnel Carriers	343	325	1.06:1	—
MRAPs	46	142	0.32:1	↓
Infantry Mobility Vehicles	202	359	0.56:1	—
Command and Communications Vehicles	247	16	15.43:1	↑
Engineering Vehicles	335	74	4.52:1	↑
Towed Artillery	283	148	1.91:1	—
Self-Propelled Howitzers/Mortars	499	206	2.42:1	↓
MLRS	256	50	5.12:1	↑
SAMs	162	127	1.28:1	↑
Mobile Radars	43	73	0.59:1	↑
EW/ECW	50	4	12.50:1	↑
Winged Aircraft	86	69	1.25:1	↑
Helicopters	109	32	3.41:1	↑
Naval Vessels	13	27	0.48:1	—

RUSSIAN MOBILIZATION, MOBIKS, AND MIR

General of the Army Sergei Surovkin's replacement as commander of the Russian Aerospace Forces was announced as his Chief of Staff, Colonel General Viktor Afzalov.⁴⁰ Less than 24 hours after Afzalov's appointment, Russian air defenses appear to have shot down a corporate jet with seven passengers and three crew. The aircraft carried three senior leaders of PMC Wagner, including Yevgeny Prigozhin, Dmytry Utkin, and Valery Chekalov. The Council of Commanders confirmed that all seven Wagner employees were killed.




Our investigation has attempted to piece together a timeline for what appears to be a well-planned assassination plot that started shortly after the failed Prigozhin Insurrection of June 23 – 24.

On July 31, during a meeting at the Africa-Russian Summit in St. Petersburg between African leaders and Russian President Vladimir Putin, General Andrey Averyanov was present. Averyanov is with the Main Defense Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Russia (GRU) and is the head of covert operations, which includes

⁴⁰ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/08/23/7416764/>

assassinations.⁴¹ Kremlin watchers considered his presence at the meeting with African leaders unusual.

After Yevgeny Prigozhin released a video of himself in Mali talking about the new future for PMC Wagner, he reportedly flew back to Moscow on an emergency basis to deal with the GRU-led effort to de-Wagnerize Africa and have PMC Redoubt take over operations.⁴²



Boarding one of PMC Wagner's private jets in Moscow to fly to Wagner Group headquarters in St. Petersburg, his airplane was  [apparently shot down over Kuzhenkino](#) in the Tver Region.⁴³ Local residents  [reported hearing two loud explosions](#), and videos suggested that air defense missiles had targeted the aircraft.⁴⁴ The tail section of the Embraer Legacy 600 broke off as it spiraled out of control, with a wing on fire. The aircraft crashed in three pieces, with the flight deck, the fuselage, and the tail landing in three different areas. Graphic video showed the mutilated remains of the pilot and co-pilot while revealing that some of the debris showed  [evidence of being struck by fragments](#) typical of an air defense missile explosion. The

⁴¹ <https://twitter.com/christogrozev/status/1685978302236811264>

⁴² <https://twitter.com/christogrozev/status/1694423637648928921>

⁴³ <https://twitter.com/wartranslated/status/1694399987721949607>

⁴⁴ https://t.me/shot_shot/56050

video is NSFW and not for children. Many will find it disturbing. If you want to watch the video, you can   [click here](#).^{45 46}

Prigozhin's name appeared on the passenger manifest, but he reportedly would swap planes at the last minute to conceal his location. Close associates reported that "Prigozhin was sure that Putin would forgive him everything and was not afraid of anything. He said that he knew a lot."⁴⁷ At the last minute, it was reported that the leader of Wagner decided to fly on the aircraft where he was registered on the manifest.

In the hours and days after the Prigozhin Insurrection, we assessed that Russian President Putin has never let someone who betrayed him walk free. All who have crossed Putin for right or wrong have ended up dead, imprisoned, or in hiding after failed assassination attempts. We saw no reason why Yevgeny Prigozhin or Dmytry Utkin would be exceptions.


⁴⁵ https://t.me/ukrarmed_forces/6027

⁴⁶ <https://t.me/ShrikeNews/10106>

⁴⁷ <https://t.me/vchkogpu/41197>

We also doubted claims that 25,000 Wagnerites would go to Belarus, and even when Prigozhin appeared on July 15, we did not believe he was safe. We were even more shocked when Prigozhin was seen in St. Petersburg, Russia, on July 29 for the Russia-Africa Summit.

The chain of events from July 31 to today points to a planned assassination, and Prigozhin appears to have entered a trap. The deaths of Utkin and Chekalov were a bonus. As absurd as this may seem to a Western audience, General Afzalov's first assignment as the head of the acting head of the Russian VKS may have been a loyalty test.


President Putin was in Kursk to commemorate ~~the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Josef Stalin and Adolf Hitler~~ the World War II Battle of Kursk. The Russian President was seen  [rushing back to the Kremlin](#).⁴⁸

Alexander Khodakovsky, the deputy commander of the Special Purpose Mobility Unit (OMON) forces of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DNR), called for the immediate release of Igor Strelkov Girkin after Prigozhin's death. "I cannot yet formulate why this is necessary, but

⁴⁸ <https://t.me/itsdonetsk/96320>

Strelkov needs to be released. In principle, I was not a supporter of his arrest, but now I am completely inwardly convinced that he is needed. If only dull guardians like me remain, Russia will stop playing with colors."⁴⁹

Upon hearing the news of Prigozhin's death, advisor to the Office of the President of Ukraine, Mikhail Podolyak, said, "Obviously, Prigozhin signed his own death warrant at the moment when he believed in Lukashenka's strange 'guarantees' and Putin's equally absurd 'word of honor.' The defiant removal of Prigozhin and the Wagner team, two months after the coup attempt, is Putin's signal to the Russian elites ahead of the 2024 elections. 'Careful!' Disloyalty equals death."⁵⁰

Videos of PMC Wagner mercenaries have already emerged, declaring they are  [prepared to take up arms against the Russian government](#) to avenge Prigozhin's death.⁵¹

ASSESSMENT: We believe the risk of a period of violence within the Russian Federation is high. While we do not believe there will be another insurrection like on June 23,

⁴⁹ https://t.me/aleksandr_skif/2858

⁵⁰ <https://t.me/Crimeanwind/40390>

⁵¹ <https://t.me/uniannet/109071>

we believe that assassinations, fires, car bombings, and disappearances will start. While we believe that President Putin is behind what we assess as the assassination of Prigozhin, we also believe that the Kremlin does not understand the degree of dissatisfaction just under the surface within the ranks of the armed forces.

The best off-ramp for Moscow would be to tell a half-lie. Admit that Prigozhin's airplane was shot down but declare it was either an accident or done by individual bad actors acting on their own. It is far more likely Moscow will blame Ukraine. While the Russian public will likely accept whatever the Kremlin tells them, anyone in the armed forces who understands the operation of MANPADS and has watched the videos circulating across social media won't accept this was an accident or a bomb.

During a six-month operation, the GUR worked with a Russian helicopter pilot who wanted to defect. The pilot's family was aided in leaving Russia, and a few weeks ago, he flew a Russian Mi-8AMTSh ground attack helicopter to Kharkiv. The flight crew believed they were flying a supply of Su-27 and Su-30 aircraft parts between two airbases. The pilot eliminated the co-pilot and door gunner during his

defection. The GUR announced that the details of the operation would be revealed on September 7.^{52 53}

This is much better than the Russian state spin, which claimed that a Russian Mi-8 helicopter became lost in southern Ukraine and flew 300 kilometers to Poltava, landing at a Ukrainian military airfield by accident.

Editor's Note: Apparently, Russian helicopters aren't taught how to dead reckon navigate and don't have compasses in their rotorcraft.

The Crimean Tartar insurgent organization Atesh reported that Sevastopol hospitals are overflowing with wounded soldiers of the Russian Armed Forces.⁵⁴ "There are no places to place them in the wards, forcing the staff to place them in the corridors and dining room. There are no medical personnel for [so many wounded] either. Because of this, the occupiers are recruiting old people who have long since retired. It is reported that the wounded soldiers are delivered by train."

⁵² https://t.me/ukrarmed_forces/6023

⁵³ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/111288>

⁵⁴ https://t.me/atesh_ua/1589

GEOPOLITICS

During her speech at the Crimean Summit, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni called the West's response to Russia's invasion of Crimea a mistake.⁵⁵ "Back in 2014, Western countries did not fully understand the scale of what was happening and perhaps hoped that Moscow's imperialist ambitions would cease there. We made a mistake and must admit it," said Giorgia Meloni. "Today, we do not hesitate to stand side by side with you. And today, we are here to reiterate that Russia must stop its aggressive policy and withdraw its forces. We will never get tired of working to end the war and achieve a just and lasting peace."

U.S. Senators Graham, Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) discussed the frontline priorities with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy during an unannounced visit to Kyiv.⁵⁶

President Zelenskyy met with the President of Hungary, Katalin Novak. During a joint press conference, he said, "During my meeting with President of Hungary Katalin

⁵⁵ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/08/23/7416828/>

⁵⁶ https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official/7499

Novak, we substantively discussed the development of bilateral relations. Thank you for your visit to Ukraine and participation in the Third Summit of the International Crimea Platform. And for supporting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. This is very important to us."⁵⁷

The President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, declared that his nation does not recognize Russia's occupation of Crimea. "Crimea is part of Ukraine. We maintain our support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine," adding that Russia must release all imprisoned Crimean Tatars and come to the negotiating table.


ECONOMIC


The rouble improved after Russia increased its prime lending rate by 350 basis points, but the change wasn't dramatic. Since the Central Bank of Russia increased interest rates to 12%, the rouble improved from 102 for \$1 to bouncing between 93 and 95.


⁵⁷ https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official/7498

Notes on Sourcing Information


Malcontent News uses a wide range of sources to create our daily Situation Report, the foundation for the Russian-Ukraine War Report Podcast. There are some notable sources that we frequently use and others that we don't. The most common sources currently, or in the past, we have used for the Theater of War section of the Situation Report include the following.


 **Russian Ministry of Defense Morning Report:** We use the RMOD Morning Report to identify combat reports, shelling locations, and territorial control change claims. We do not consider claims of Ukrainian troops killed, equipment destroyed, or military resources destroyed valid without videos and pictures that can be confirmed by date, time, weather, and geolocation, or third-party confirmation from recognized Western news outlets or trusted Ukrainian sources.


 **Rybar:** We consider Rybar a mercenary organization because they are staffed by former Russian Ministry of Defense public relations officers who actively provide target information to the Russian military. Their operational budget is \$20,000 a month, while they claim they receive no government funding. We only use their reports to identify combat locations. We no longer consider their territorial control changes due to a three-month pattern from June to August 2023 of repeated publication of blatant disinformation and a years-long pattern of denying all Russian war crimes.


 **War Gonzo:** We consider War Gonzo a mercenary organization because their employees have recorded themselves actively engaging in direct combat, specifically in Marinka. Recently, War Gonzo admitted in their daily report to leveraging the information from the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. They intermix combat reports with their own on a 24-hour delay. We use their reports for *unique claims* about combat, territorial control change claims, and troop movement reports. Although the War


Gonzo daily reports are moderately accurate, they occasionally engage in blatant disinformation and misinformation.

 **Readovka:** We consider Readovka to be a Kremlin-aligned propagandist organization. Their daily reports are a word-for-word repeat of the RMOD Morning Report and provide no value to our analysis. They occasionally provide credible information through videos and pictures that can be confirmed by date, time, weather, and geolocation.

 **Igor "Girkin" Strelkov:** We consider Strelkov to be a convicted war criminal who is highly informed, specifically about the situation in the Donbas. We use his combat reports, territorial control change claims, and troop movement information. In the Donbas, we consider his reports to be highly accurate. The fidelity of information he provides in Zaporizhia, Kherson, and Kharkiv appears to come from other social media channels with a history of spreading misinformation and is of lower quality. Reports he shares outside of the Donbas provided by Russian Federation 1st Army Corps units have greater fidelity.

 **Andrei Morozov:** Morozov is a pro-Russian milblogger and a radio communications and logistics specialist with the Russian 2nd Army Corps. We consider him a provider of high-quality information, especially within his fields of specialty. In the fall of 2022, Morozov was detained by OMON for up to three weeks due to his content and has had his online material censored by the Kremlin several times over the last 11 months.

 **Private Military Company Wagner Group Social Media:** We consider reports from PMC Wagner of Russian victories as overstating gains and reports of Russian failures, particularly among the Russian Ministry of Defense and the 1st and 2nd Army Corps of the Russian Army, as overstating problems. We do not consider claims of territorial control changes from Wagner as authentic without pictures, videos, or **unique** Russian State Media reports that include a video that can be geolocated.

 **Luhansk People's Republic Joint Center for Control and Coordination:** We only use their reports about large-scale artillery and HIMARS strikes in the occupied territories.

⊖ **Leonid Pasechnik:** We do not use any combat, territorial control changes, troop movements, casualty claims, or equipment destroyed claims from the self-declared leader of the so-called Luhansk People's Republic.

⚠ **Donetsk People's Republic People's Militia:** We only use their reports for videos and pictures that can be confirmed by date, time, weather, and geolocation.

⊖ **Donetsk People's Republic Territorial Defense:** We do not use combat, territorial control changes, troop movements, casualty claims, or equipment destroyed claims from their public relations and social media channels. They have repeatedly engaged in misinformation and disinformation.

⊖ **Denis Pushilin:** We do not use any combat, territorial control changes, troop movements, casualty claims, or equipment destroyed claims from the self-declared leader of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic.

⚠ **Ramzan Kadyrov:** The contribution and impact of Chechen forces in Ukraine have become minimal, and Akhmat no longer produces large volumes of video content that can be geolocated. We continue to monitor his channels.

✅ **General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine:** We consider the morning and evening reports, specifically combat reports, territorial control changes, and troop movements, from GSAFU to be high quality. The Ukrainian General Staff uses clever wording to create plausible deniability of battlefield failures. Combat reports start with "repelled attacks of the occupant forces in the vicinities of," which negates reporting fighting in areas where territory was lost. Instead of misinformation or disinformation, GSAFU engages in omission. Reports about problems within the Russian military are given more weight if the SBU or GUR reinforces them or if there is added confirmation in the Russian milblogger information space.

✅ **DeepState:** We use the Daily Report from DeepState for combat reports and territorial control changes. They frequently support their claims with geolocated, time, date, and weather-confirmed pictures and videos, making them a high-quality Ukrainian-based source. They occasionally overstate Russian territorial control claims but never present disinformation or

misinformation. Combined with the reports from GSAFU, gaps in combat reports are filled. We support DeepState through their Patreon at \$10 a month.

✔ **Institute for the Study of War:** We occasionally leverage the map and territorial control change information produced by the ISW when there is conflicting data. Their presentation of Russian-assessed, Ukrainian-assessed, and Russian-claimed information is helpful when our analysts have to make a judgment call due to the absence of verifiable information. We do not copy from their map but take their territorial control information as an additional data point when assessing our own changes.

⚠ **Ivan Fedorov:** We use information about insurgent activity and HIMARS strikes in Zaporizhia provided by Fedorov, the exiled mayor of Melitiopol.

✔ **Vitaly Kim:** When there are reports of potential air raids in Ukraine, we monitor Kim, the Mykolaiv Oblast Administrative and Military Governor, for realtime reports. Kim is consistently one of the first, if not the first, Ukrainian government official to confirm kamikaze drones or missiles have been launched toward Ukraine.

⊖ **Oleksiy Arestovych:** We no longer use the information provided by Arestovych after being fired from his role as the Chief Advisor to the President of Ukraine. Before being terminated, Arestovych had developed a reputation for providing exaggerated, unverified, and false claims for Ukrainian successes and failures.