

**Russia’s Court and Federal Assembly approve annexation of four territories.  
But Ukraine takes back hub in Donetsk and territory in Kherson.**



UK Defence Intelligence update on Russian attacks and troop locations, October 3.

After the parliaments of the Donetsk and Luhansk “people’s republics” and the authorities in the Russia-occupied portions of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions adopted decisions to hold referendums asking voters whether they wanted the territory to become a constituent entity of the Russian Federation, referendums were conducted in the four territories over five days from September 23 through September 27. The results in the sham referendums were entirely predictable: According to the electoral commissions in the four areas, 99.2 percent of the voters in the Donetsk “people’s republic” voted in favor of becoming part of Russia, as did 98.4 percent in the Luhansk “people’s republic,” 93.1 percent in the Russia-occupied portion of Zaporizhzhia region, and 87.1 percent in the Russia-occupied portion of Kherson region.

On Friday, after Russian President Vladimir Putin signed executive orders recognizing the sovereignty and independence of the occupied portions of Kherson region and Zaporizhzhia region – in February he had signed similar orders pertaining to the Donetsk and Luhansk “people’s republics” – he and the leaders of the four areas signed accession treaties that, when ratified, would incorporate each area as a constituent part of the Russian Federation. On Saturday, the Russian Constitutional Court approved the documents on the accession of the four areas and on Sunday it published decrees recognizing the accession treaties as corresponding to the constitution of the Russian Federation and thus lawful. Later that day, Putin submitted to the State Duma the accession treaties and drafts of constitutional laws accepting the areas into the Russian Federation. Yesterday, the Duma unanimously ratified the accession treaties and approved the proposed laws incorporating the areas into the Federation. Today, the Federation

Council, like the Duma, unanimously ratified the treaties and approved the laws incorporating the areas into the Federation. The treaties establish as the borders of the four new entities the borders that existed on the day of their creation and accession into Russia, notwithstanding the fact that the current borders of the “people’s republics” and the occupied territories are not identical to the borders of the regions defined by the Ukrainian constitution, are not clearly demarcated, and are fluid and changing every day.

While the annexation process was unfolding, Ukraine has nevertheless been winning important victories on the battlefield. The small city of Lyman in the northernmost portion of Donetsk region close to Luhansk had been held by Russian troops for some time. But Ukrainian troops, after having retaken a large portion of Kharkiv region, pushed on into the northernmost portion of Donetsk region and, as of last week, had surrounded Lyman, an important rail and transportation hub, leaving the Russian forces holding the city only one way out – a road to the east. Facing the prospect of soon being surrounded and being either defeated militarily or forced to surrender, on Saturday Russia withdrew its troops from Lyman. The Russian ministry of defense announced that “in connection with the creation of a threat of encirclement, the allied troops were withdrawn to a more advantageous location.” The Ukrainian forces are now pushing eastward toward Lysychansk, a city of roughly 100,000 (prior to the war) in Luhansk, from which they were forced to withdraw in early July. And while that has been happening in the Donbas, Ukrainian forces have been taking back territory along the western border of Kherson region.

The annexation of the Donbas “people’s republics” and the portions of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions controlled by Russian forces constitutes a gross violation of international law and makes it even less likely than it was before the annexation that the conflict will end anytime soon. Russia won’t, under any circumstance, return the territories it just annexed and now regards as part of Russia. And Ukraine has made it clear that it won’t, under any circumstance, agree to a settlement of the conflict that allows Russia to retain those territories. And so the war goes on – now with a dramatically-elevated threat of a catastrophic escalation as a result of the annexation. On September 21, Putin concluded a televised address endorsing the referendums and announcing a partial mobilization with these words: “In the event of a threat to the territorial integrity of our country and to defend Russia and our people, we will certainly make use of all weapon systems available to us. This is not a bluff.” And in case anyone didn’t hear him or thought it *was* a bluff, he repeated the message in his speech last Friday before signing the accession treaties with the leaders of the four territories: “We will defend our land with all the forces and resources we have, and we will do everything we can to ensure the safety of our people.”

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