



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Click [here](#) to see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

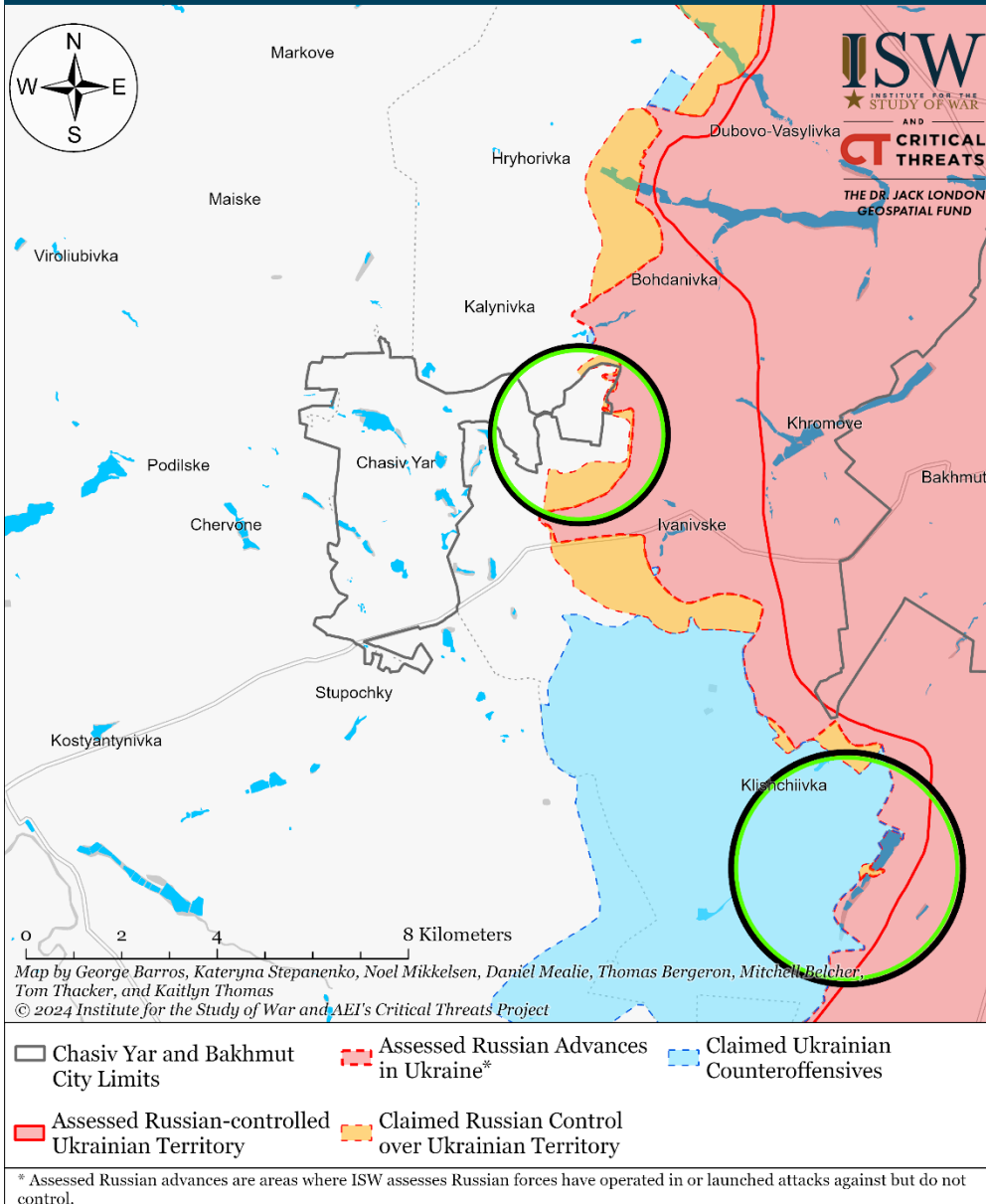
Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 2pm ET on May 18. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 19 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian forces have recently intensified their effort to seize the operationally significant town of Chasiv Yar, seeking to exploit how Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast and ongoing offensive operations throughout eastern Ukraine have generated greater theater-wide pressure on Ukrainian forces. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted an unsuccessful roughly reinforced company-sized mechanized assault with two tanks and 21 infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) in the direction of the Novyi Miroraion in eastern Chasiv Yar on May 17.[1] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted a roughly reinforced platoon-sized mechanized assault in the same area on May 18.[2] Geolocated footage published on May 17 shows Russian forces attacking with at least seven armored vehicles near Ivanivske (east of Chasiv Yar).[3] The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Russian forces are widely using armored vehicles in the Chasiv Yar area, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked Ukrainian forces near Chasiv Yar for destroying at least 20 Russian armored vehicles (presumably over the past day).[4] Russian forces have not made notable tactical gains in the Chasiv Yar area since conducting a company-sized mechanized assault on the town's eastern outskirts on April 4 and have not conducted similar sized-mechanized assaults in the area until May 17.[5] The April 4 mechanized assault was followed by intensified Russian offensive operations near Chasiv Yar, and recent Russian mechanized assaults in the area likely portend an overall intensification of the Russian effort to seize the town.[6] The Russian seizure of Chasiv Yar would be operationally significant since it would provide Russian forces with favorable positions to launch subsequent offensive operations against Kostyantynivka and Druzhkivka, cities that form the southern portion of a Ukrainian defensive belt that is the backbone of Ukraine's defense of Donetsk Oblast.[7]

Russian forces launched a limited offensive operation into northern Kharkiv Oblast on May 10 that aims to strategically draw and fix Ukrainian manpower and materiel from ongoing Ukrainian defensive operations in eastern Ukraine.[8] Russian forces have maintained the tempo of their offensive operations throughout eastern Ukraine in the previous week and will likely continue to do so in order to exploit any vulnerabilities from the transfer of Ukrainian materiel and manpower to defensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast.[9] Ukrainian forces have recently transferred elements of a Ukrainian brigade defending in the Chasiv Yar area to the Vovchansk area, and Russian forces have likely intensified offensive operations near Chasiv Yar to quickly take advantage of weakened Ukrainian defenses.[10] Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi reported that Russian forces aim to force Ukrainian forces to commit available reserves to the defensive operation in northern Kharkiv Oblast, and Russian forces may hope that intensified offensive operations near Chasiv Yar will be more successful if Ukraine cannot commit additional reserves to the area in the future.[11] Russian forces will likely pursue an offensive operation in Ukraine over the coming months that aims to stretch Ukrainian forces across a wide frontline and maintain regular offensive pressure to attempt to weaken the Ukrainian defensive line in aggregate.[12] Russian forces likely hope to make an operationally significant penetration anywhere along the frontline but will likely prioritize the Chasiv Yar area, where Russian forces have the most immediate prospects for an operationally significant advance, and the front west of Avdiivka, where Russian forces have been able to achieve tactically significant gains in recent weeks.[13] Russian forces are currently attempting to achieve tactically and operationally significant gains in Ukraine before the arrival of US security assistance at scale in June and July 2024 allows Ukrainian forces to blunt Russian advances.[14]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Chasiv Yar as of May 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces are likely preparing for the second phase of their offensive operation in northern Kharkiv Oblast, which Russian forces likely intend to launch following their anticipated seizure of Vovchansk. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on May 18 that Russian forces advanced between five and 10 kilometers in northern Kharkiv Oblast before Ukrainian forces stopped Russian advances and that Russian forces are conducting the first of several waves of offensive operations in the area.[15] A second wave of tactical attacks is not the same as the second phase of the operation, and Russian forces may need to launch several "waves" of tactical attacks to achieve the objective of any given singular phase of their offensive operation in northern Kharkiv

Oblast. Zelensky stated that the Russian military command seeks to attack Kharkiv City but that Russian forces lack the manpower required to seize such a large city, so Russian forces will slowly push towards Kharkiv City as part of efforts to force Ukrainian forces to withdraw from the area. Available evidence indicates that Russian forces have so far only committed a limited amount of the prepared forces that Russia maintains in Belgorod, Kursk, and Bryansk oblasts for offensive operations in the area.[16] Ukrainian sources previously stated that Russian forces have committed 2,000 personnel to the frontline along the border and have 1,500 to 2,000 personnel in immediate reserve as of May 11.[17] Ukrainian sources, however, have noted that the Russian forces so far committed to offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast may already be degraded after suffering heavy losses.[18] Ukrainian sources have also recently stated that Russian forces are "leasing" limited elements of Russian formations operating in the Svatove area as part of the Western Grouping of Forces but that other Russian forces groupings do not have "free" combat-ready forces or regiment- or brigade-level assets to transfer to the Northern Grouping of Forces to help sustain and intensify Russian offensive operations along the border.[19] The Russian military command is likely not committing available reserves from the Northern Grouping of Forces to current offensive operations because it intends for these elements to support later phases of the offensive operations or subsequent waves of assaults.

Russian forces reportedly launched offensive operations in the international border area before they completed bringing the Northern Grouping of Forces up to its reported planned end strength and will likely continue offensive operations in the border area in waves as the Russian military attempts to reinforce the grouping. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi recently reported that Russian forces have roughly 35,000 personnel deployed to the border area in Kursk, Bryansk, and Belgorod oblasts and that Russian forces intend to establish a grouping in the area that is between 50,000 to 75,000 personnel in size.[20] Ukrainian sources also recently reported that an additional 3,750 Russian personnel may arrive in the northern Kharkiv Oblast area in the near future. Russian forces have repeatedly conducted offensive operations along different sectors of the front in "pulses" with one sector decreasing in intensity as another increases, and Russian forces may temporarily slow offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast in order to replenish losses and bring the Northern Grouping of Forces up to its desired end strength before resuming the tempo in a second wave at a later time of their choosing.[21]

Russian forces are currently prioritizing the seizure of Vovchansk because it is likely one of the remaining tactical objectives of the first phase of offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast. Russian forces conducted strikes on bridges across the Siverskyi Donets River to quickly isolate the battlefield east of the river in order to improve their chances to degrade Ukrainian ground lines of communication and quickly seize Vovchansk.[22] Russian forces are reportedly conducting a larger number of glide bomb strikes on the settlement than elsewhere along the border and appear to have committed more manpower to the area than in the Lyptsi direction.[23] The Russian military command likely chose the seizure of Vovchansk as one of the key tactical objectives of the first phase of the offensive operation in northern Kharkiv Oblast, since Vovchansk is the largest settlement immediately on the border that would provide Russian forces a staging ground close to the Russian rear to prepare for and launch the second phase of the Russian offensive operation. It is unclear if the second phase of the Russian offensive operation in northern Kharkiv Oblast will prioritize Russia's operational objective to expand the desired "buffer zone" further in width along the international border or Russia's operational objective to advance to within effective tube artillery range of Kharkiv City and its environs.[24] Russian forces could also envision a subsequent phase of the offensive operation from

Vovchansk that aims to advance towards Velykyi Burluk to threaten the operational rear of the Ukrainian force grouping defending in the Kupyansk direction.[25]

Zelensky also outlined materiel requirements for Ukraine to combat Russia's air superiority and defend against the Russian air threat, especially given US-imposed restraints on Ukraine that prohibit Ukraine from striking targets within Russian territory and airspace.[26] Zelensky stated that Ukrainian forces only have 25 percent of the air defenses that Ukraine needs to defend against Russian strikes and called for Western countries to send two Patriot batteries, which Ukraine would specifically deploy to Kharkiv Oblast, as a show of strength against the Russian offensive. Zelensky also stated that Ukraine would need about 120-130 F-16s or other advanced fighter aircraft to achieve air parity with Russia. Air parity is the lowest level of air control, in which no side controls the sky.[27] Zelensky stated that Russia's biggest advantage is Ukraine's restriction against using Western-provided weapons to strike military targets in Russia, and ISW has recently noted that this restriction creates a sanctuary for the Russian military in Russia to strike Ukraine safely without leaving Russian airspace.[28] Ukrainian forces have been able to strike Russian airbases in Russia and occupied Ukraine with some success, but Ukrainian forces have not made a sufficient impact to deter Russian forces from conducting missile and drone strike campaigns against Ukrainian deep-rear areas or glide bomb strikes on frontline and near rear areas.[29] Zelensky's proposed two Patriot batteries in northern Kharkiv Oblast will have a limited effectiveness in defending against Russian airstrikes if Ukrainian forces cannot use the Patriots to intercept Russian fighter-bombers in Russian airspace.[30]

Ukrainian officials have reportedly asked the US presidential administration to ease the restriction against using US-provided weapons to strike military targets in Russia. The *New York Times* (NYT) and *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) reported on May 17, citing Ukrainian and US officials, that Ukraine submitted the request within the past week.[31] The NYT and WSJ reported that Ukraine also requested additional targeting assistance for military targets inside Russia, and former Ukrainian military officials reportedly told the NYT that targeting assistance would allow Ukrainian forces to more accurately plan for drone and missile strikes given the requirements for more detailed terrain mapping for these strikes. White House officials state that the United States does not want to encourage or enable attacks within Russia, and the NYT noted that the White House has rejected similar appeals in the past. ISW continues to assess that this US policy severely compromises Ukraine's ability to defend itself, particularly against Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast.[32]

Zelensky noted that Ukraine must overcome its manpower challenges in order to contest the theater-wide initiative in Ukraine. Zelensky stated that Ukraine is currently forming a significant number of brigades as part of its reserve and that Ukraine still needs to fully staff some of these units.[33] Zelensky stated that consistent rotations for frontline units are an important step in improving Ukrainian morale and noted that Ukraine must first stabilize the frontline and sufficiently staff its units in order to conduct counteroffensive operations in the future. ISW has repeatedly assessed that addressing Ukraine's manpower challenges will be crucial to Ukraine's ability to conduct counteroffensive operations and contest the theater-wide initiative in Ukraine in the future.[34] ISW continues to assess that Ukraine should contest the initiative as soon as possible as Russian forces are reaping a variety of benefits from holding the initiative, including deciding where and at what scale offensive operations will occur throughout the theater and how much materiel Ukrainian forces will have to expend to defend against such efforts.[35]

Ukraine's new mobilization law went into effect on May 18 and will help Ukraine stabilize its force generation apparatus amid ongoing manpower constraints.[36] The Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada adopted the law, which included lowering the mobilization age from 27 to 25, on April 11 and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed the law on April 16.[37] Ukrainian officials have repeatedly emphasized that Ukraine's new mobilization law will help address its manpower challenges and, alongside the delivery of US military assistance, empower Ukraine's defense in critical areas and future counteroffensive operations.[38]

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev called for Russia's envisioned "buffer zone" to encompass all of Ukraine, illustrating that the Kremlin's concept of the buffer zone is a thinly veiled justification for Russia's long-held intent to subsume the entirety of Ukraine and likely an effort to garner domestic support for the Russian war effort. Medvedev stated in a post on his Russian-language Telegram channel on May 17 that Russia's "sanitary [buffer] zone" must at least extend over all central Ukraine and a significant part of western Ukraine in order to place Russian cities out of the range of Ukraine's Western-provided long-range strike systems.[39] Medvedev claimed that if Ukraine continues to strike Russian cities, then Russian forces will have to extend the sanitary zone further to Ukraine's western border with Poland or within Poland itself. Mikhail Zvinchuk, founder of the *Rybar* Telegram channel, also called during an interview on May 18 for Russian forces to occupy additional areas of Ukraine as part of a "buffer zone," claiming that Russian forces should seize areas of Sumy and Chernihiv oblasts along the Russian border.[40] Russian President Vladimir Putin recently characterized Russia's offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast as part of Russia's effort to develop a "buffer zone" on Ukrainian territory to defend Belgorod City against Ukrainian strikes.[41] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov suggested during an interview on April 19 that Russian forces will have to keep attacking further into Ukraine to protect the settlements that come under Russia's expanding buffer zone, insinuating that the Kremlin intends to use the creation of a buffer zone to justify Russian offensive operations even further into Ukraine.[42] Medvedev's and Zvinchuk's comments highlight Russia's likely intent to use this buffer zone narrative to justify Russia's occupation of all of Ukraine. Medvedev's decision to publish this post on his Russian-language Telegram channel suggests that his message is intended for a domestic Russian audience, and Medvedev may intend to generate support and excitement around an imagined future Russian victory in Ukraine ahead of Russia's anticipated summer 2024 offensive operations, which will likely result in large-scale Russian personnel losses.

Founder of the Kremlin-linked *Rybar* Telegram channel, Mikhail Zvinchuk, gave an uncharacteristically public interview in which he criticized the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and speculated on possible changes within the MoD. Zvinchuk gave an interview to Russian-language diaspora-focused outlet *RTVi* on May 18 that focused on the replacement of former Russian Defense Minister and current Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu and corruption in the Russian MoD.[43] Zvinchuk complained about the Russian MoD's bureaucratic issues and claimed that recently appointed Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov will need to start to make "positive changes" to the MoD within three months before people "start asking questions." Zvinchuk claimed that Belousov will likely replace former Russian Deputy Defense Minister Ruslan Tsalikov, who reportedly submitted his resignation to Shoigu a week before Shoigu's replacement, because Tsalikov was Shoigu's "right hand man," not Belousov's. Zvinchuk also claimed that Russian Deputy Defense Minister Tatyana Shevtsova and Russian Deputy Defense Minister and Head of the Russian MoD's Main Military-Political Directorate Viktor Goremykin will remain in their

positions. A Russian insider source, who has previously accurately reported on Russian military command changes, claimed on May 14 that Shevtsova will likely resign, however.[44] Zvinchuk claimed that he has information that Russian Deputy Defense Minister Colonel General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov will leave his post to head the Russian MoD's Africa Corps and that Head of the Russian MoD's Main Directorate of Military Police General Sergei Kuralenko will replace Yevkurov.

Should the Kremlin allow select prominent Russian milbloggers to increase their criticisms of the Russian MoD, public pressure may grow in favor of reforms that would, if implemented, assist Russia's war effort in Ukraine. The Russian MoD notably awarded Zvinchuk in December 2023 for his efforts in military-patriotic education and military-political work for the Russian military, and Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded Zvinchuk with the Russian Order of Merit to the Fatherland Second Class in November 2023.[45] ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin awarding Zvinchuk, whose Telegram channel has over 1.2 million followers as of May 18, was likely part of wider efforts to gain control over and co-opt the often-critical Russian milblogger information space.[46] Russian milbloggers have largely reduced their personal criticisms of Shoigu and Russian Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov following the Wagner Group's armed rebellion in June 2023.[47] Zvinchuk may be trying to use his public interview to gauge the Kremlin's response to critical voices following Shoigu's replacement with Belousov. Considering Zvinchuk's affiliations with the Kremlin, however, the Kremlin may have tasked Zvinchuk with criticizing the Russian MoD publicly while dictating the content and severity of his statements, which may establish an accepted bound of criticisms against the MoD. Any possible Kremlin permittance of increased criticisms of the Russian MoD from Russian milbloggers could lead to bureaucratic reforms that improve the efficacy of Russia's war effort in Ukraine, especially when coupled with Belousov's and Putin's intentions to mobilize the Russian economy and defense industrial base (DIB) to support a protracted war in Ukraine and possibly prepare for a future confrontation with NATO.[48]

Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili vetoed the Russian-style "foreign agents" bill on May 18, but the ruling Georgian Dream party will likely override Zurbishvili's veto in the coming weeks. Zurbishvili announced on May 18 that she vetoed the foreign agent bill that is "fundamentally Russian" and contradicts both Georgia's constitution and all European standards after she previously signaled that she would veto the bill should it pass Georgian parliament.[49] The Georgian parliament passed the foreign agents bill in its final reading on May 14 in an 84-30 vote largely spearheaded by the ruling Georgian Dream party, which has the votes needed to override Zurbishvili's veto.[50] The Georgian parliament will reportedly meet again in four weeks, and Georgia Dream will likely propose to override Zurbishvili's veto to pass the foreign agents bill at that time.[51]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian forces have recently intensified their effort to seize the operationally significant town of Chasiv Yar, seeking to exploit how Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast and ongoing offensive operations throughout eastern Ukraine have generated greater theater-wide pressure on Ukrainian forces.**
- **Russian forces are likely preparing for the second phase of their offensive operation in northern Kharkiv Oblast, which Russian forces likely intend to launch following their anticipated seizure of Vovchansk.**
- **Zelensky also outlined materiel requirements for Ukraine to combat Russia's air superiority and defend against the Russian air threat, especially given US-**

imposed restraints on Ukraine that prohibit Ukraine from striking targets within Russian territory and airspace.

- **Ukrainian officials have reportedly asked the US presidential administration to ease the restriction against using US-provided weapons to strike military targets in Russia.**
- **Zelensky noted that Ukraine must overcome its manpower challenges in order to contest the theater-wide initiative in Ukraine.**
- **Ukraine's new mobilization law went into effect on May 18 and will help Ukraine stabilize its force generation apparatus amid ongoing manpower constraints.**
- **Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev called for Russia's envisioned "buffer zone" to encompass all of Ukraine, illustrating that the Kremlin's concept of the buffer zone is a thinly veiled justification for Russia's long-held intent to subsume the entirety of Ukraine and likely an effort to garner domestic support for the Russian war effort.**
- **Founder of the Kremlin-linked *Rybar* Telegram channel, Mikhail Zvinchuk, gave an uncharacteristically public interview in which he criticized the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and speculated on possible changes in the MoD.**
- **Should the Kremlin allow select prominent Russian milbloggers to increase their criticisms of the Russian MoD, public pressure may grow in favor of reforms that would, if implemented, assist Russia's war effort in Ukraine.**
- **Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili vetoed the Russian-style "foreign agents" bill on May 18, but the ruling Georgian Dream party will likely override Zurbishvili's veto in the coming weeks.**
- **Russian forces recently marginally advanced near Avdiivka, Hulyaipole, and Robotyne.**
- **The *BBC News Russian Service* reported on May 18 that Russian military authorities in Astana, Kazakhstan, detained a Russian contract service personnel (*kontraktnik*) for desertion on April 23 – the first such instance in Kazakhstan.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

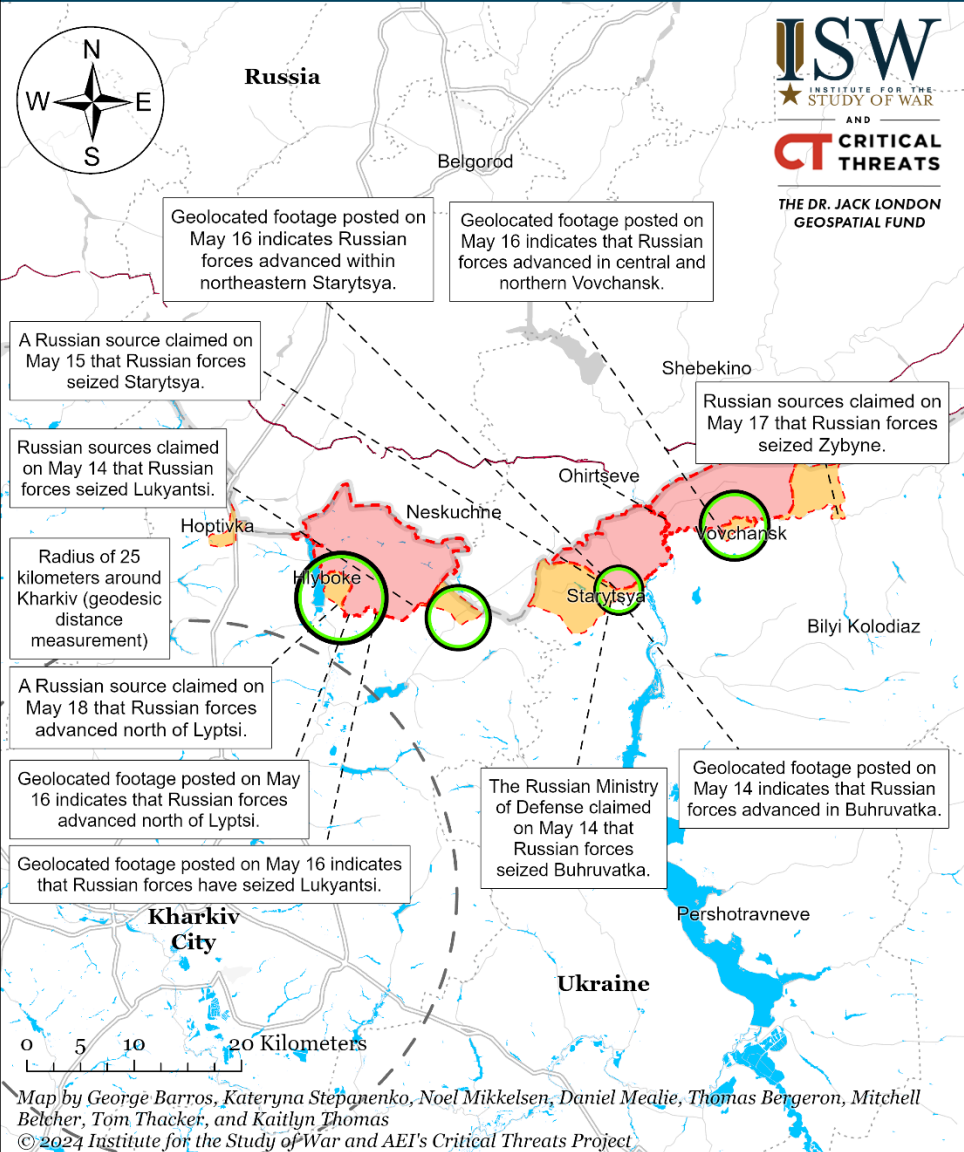
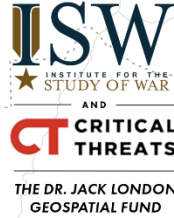
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Lyptsi on May 18, but there were no changes to the frontline in the area. Russian milbloggers claimed on May 17 and 18 that Russian forces advanced near Lukyantsi (northeast of Lyptsi) and up to four kilometers in depth between Hlyboke (north of Lyptsi) and Lukyantsi.[52] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have advanced into the dacha area immediately north of Lyptsi along the Travyanske Reservoir and are clearing the area.[53] ISW has not observed confirmation of these Russian claims. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces are attempting to push Russian forces back near Hlyboke, and the Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian counterattacks near Lyptsi.[54] Russian forces also continued offensive operations near Zelene (northeast of Lyptsi) and between Lukyantsi and Vesele (east of Lyptsi).[55] Elements of the Russian 18th Motorized Rifle Division and 7th Motorized Rifle Regiment (both 11th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly operating in the Lyptsi direction.[56]

Russian forces continued offensive operations near and within Vovchansk on May 18 but there were no changes to the frontline in the area. The Russian MoD claimed that elements of the Russian Northern Grouping of Forces seized Starytsa (west of Vovchansk), although ISW has only observed confirmation of Russian forces operating within northeastern Starytsa.[57] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces continued to make marginal advances within Vovchansk and reiterated claims that Russian forces have entered Zybyne (east of Vovchansk).[58] ISW has not observed confirmation of these Russian claims. A Ukrainian soldier operating in the Vovchansk area stated that Russian forces have up to a battalion worth of manpower operating within northern Vovchansk.[59] The Russian MoD reported that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian counterattacks near Tykhe (west of Vovchansk) and Vovchansk.[60] Russian forces also continued offensive operations near Buhruvatka (west of Vovchansk).[61] Elements of the 1st Motorized Rifle Regiment (2nd Motorized Rifle Division, 1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]), unspecified elements of the 47th Tank Division (1st GTA, MMD), the 138th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th CAA, LMD), and the 25th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th CAA, LMD) are reportedly operating near Vovchansk.[62]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas
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- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Russian Field Fortifications

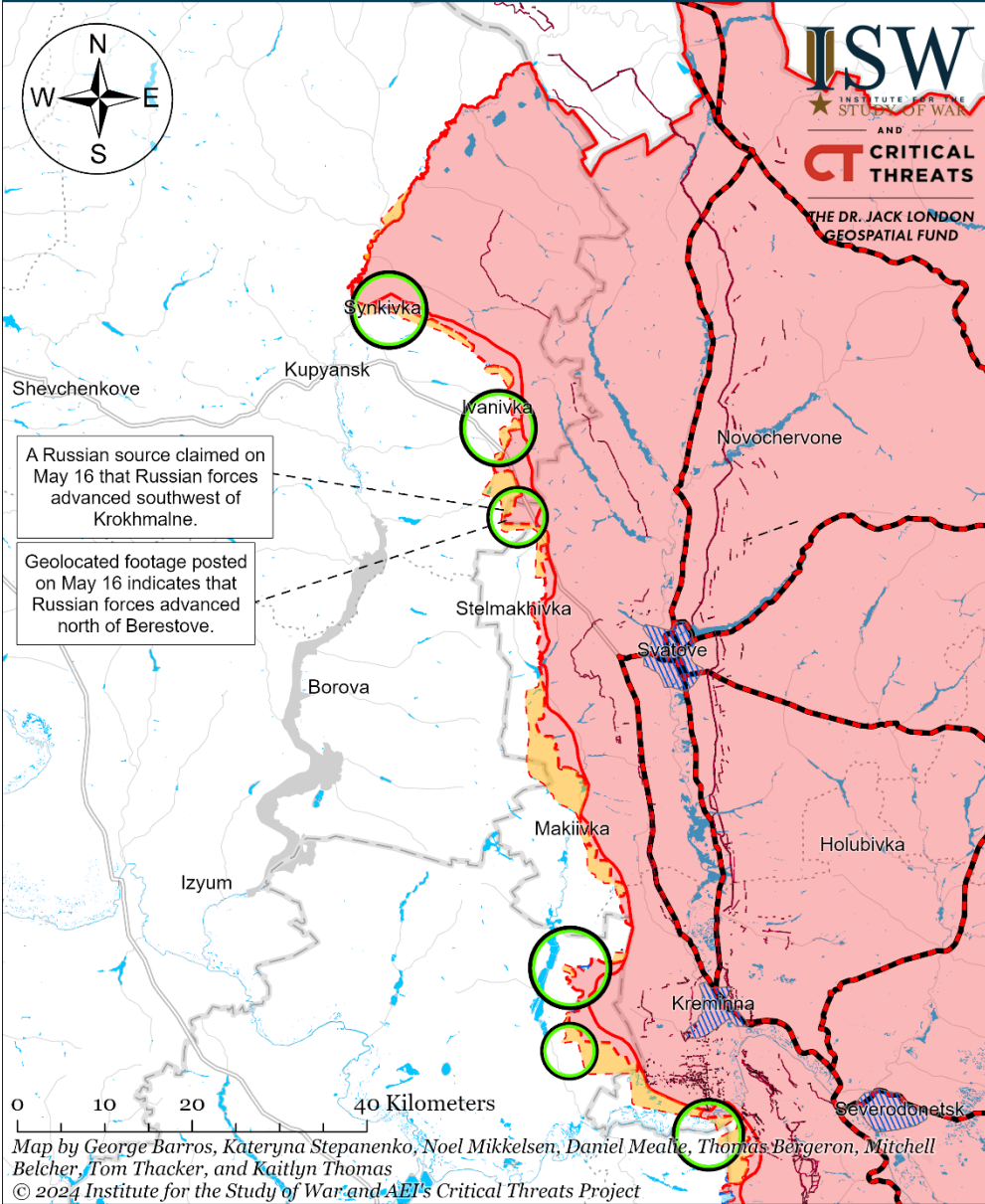
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on May 17 that the maximum extent of Russian advances into Kharkiv Oblast was 10 kilometers. A Russian source claimed on May 17 that Russian forces advanced between 300 and 600 meters toward Lyptsi. Russian sources claimed on May 16 that Russian forces advanced 2.89 kilometers wide and one kilometer deep in Vovchansk. A Russian source claimed on May 14 that Russian forces seized 10 settlements and more than 186 square kilometers in Kharkiv Oblast over the past three days.

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces continued ground attacks on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on May 18, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Krokhmalne and marginally advanced in Berestove (both northwest of Svatove), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[63] Russian forces continued ground assaults northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; northwest of Svatove near Ivanivka and Berestove; west of Svatove near Myasozharivka; northwest of Kreminna near Makiivka and Novosadove; west of Kreminna near Torske; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka and Hryhorivka.[64] Ukrainian forces reportedly counterattacked near Synkivka, Novosadove, Terny (west of Kreminna), and Dibrova (southwest of Kreminna), and the Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success in some unspecified areas.[65]

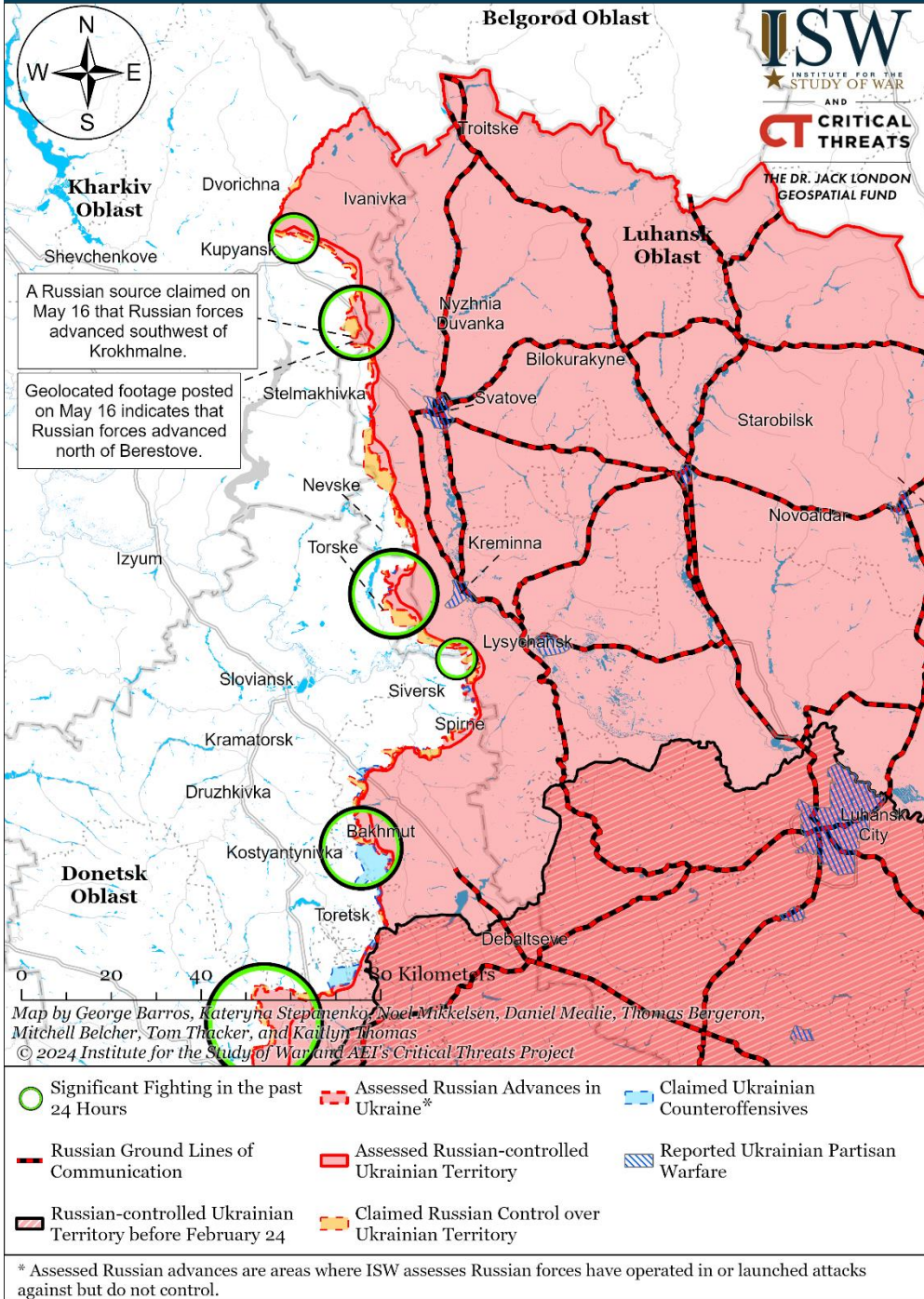
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kupyansk as of May 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine *
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian Field Fortifications
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

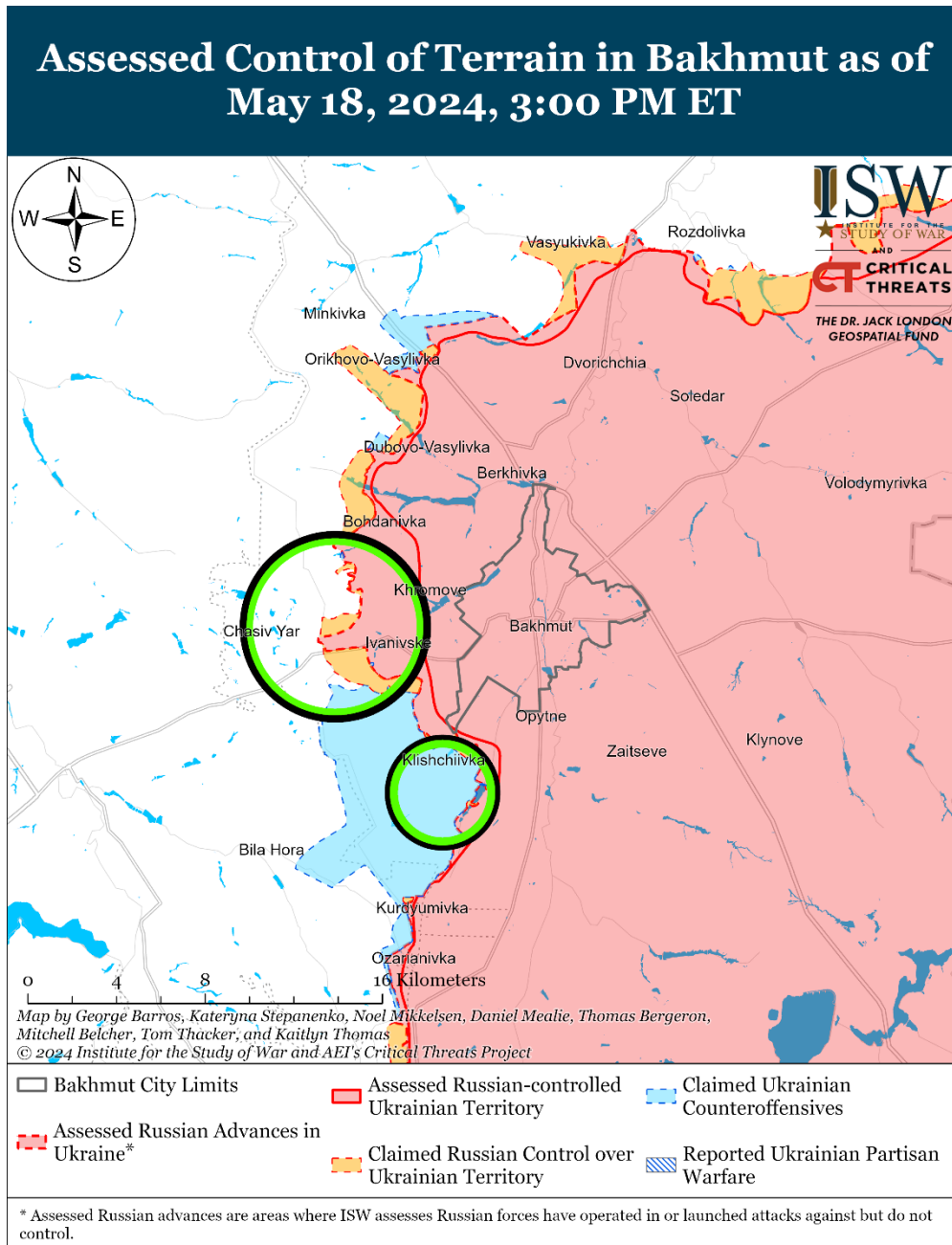
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of May 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



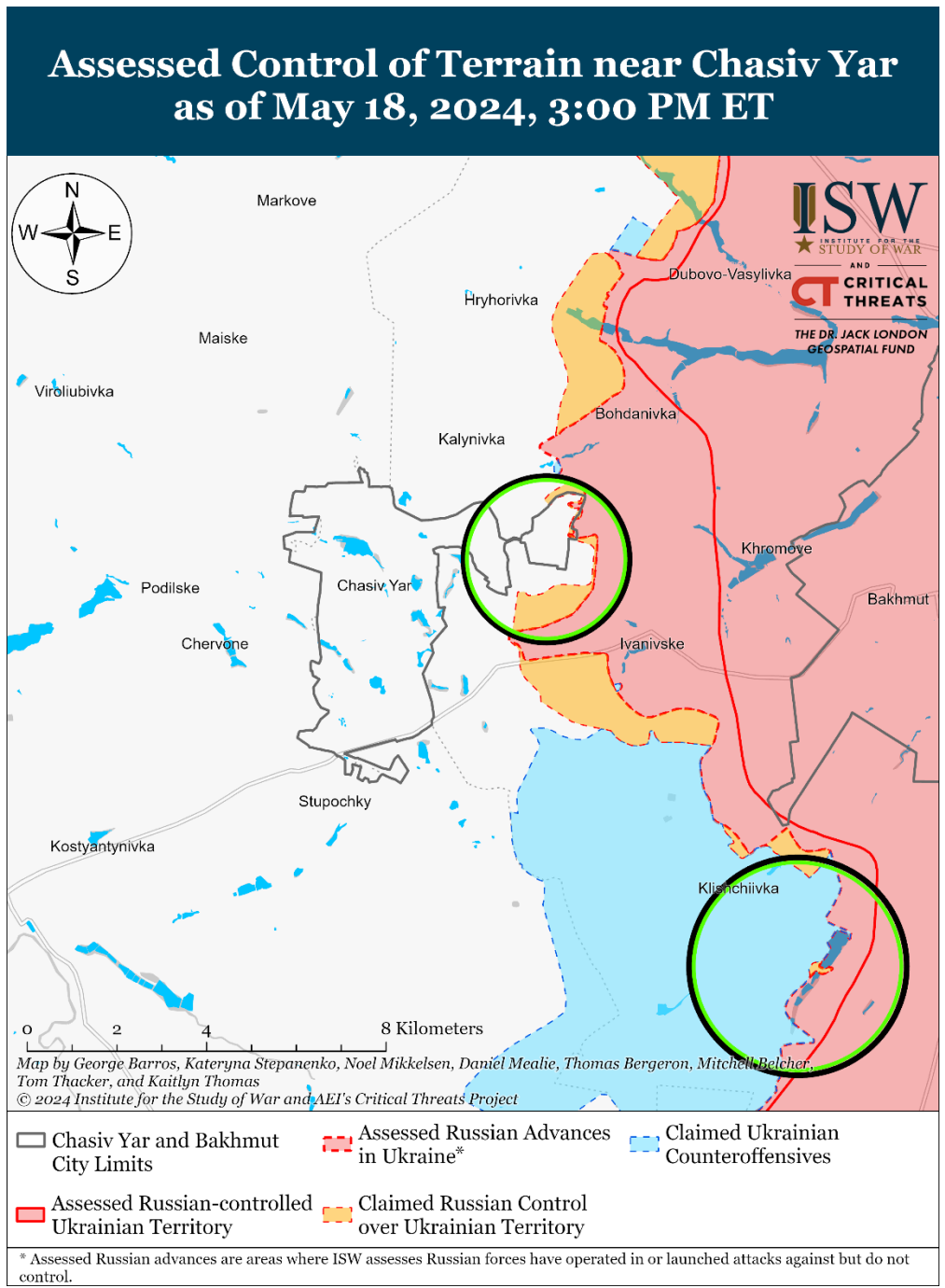
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Siversk direction (northeast of Bakhmut) and conducted several assaults near Rozdolivka (south of Siversk) on May 18.[66]



Russian forces continued offensive operations near Chasiv Yar on May 18. Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division briefly advanced into the Novyi Microraiion in eastern Chasiv Yar, but one milblogger noted that Russian forces later retreated from the area.[67] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also advanced on the eastern outskirts of Kalynove (northeast of Chasiv Yar) and in the Stupky-Holubovskyi-2 nature reserve (southeast of Chasiv Yar).[68] Russian forces continued assaults near the Kanal Microraiion in easternmost Chasiv Yar; east

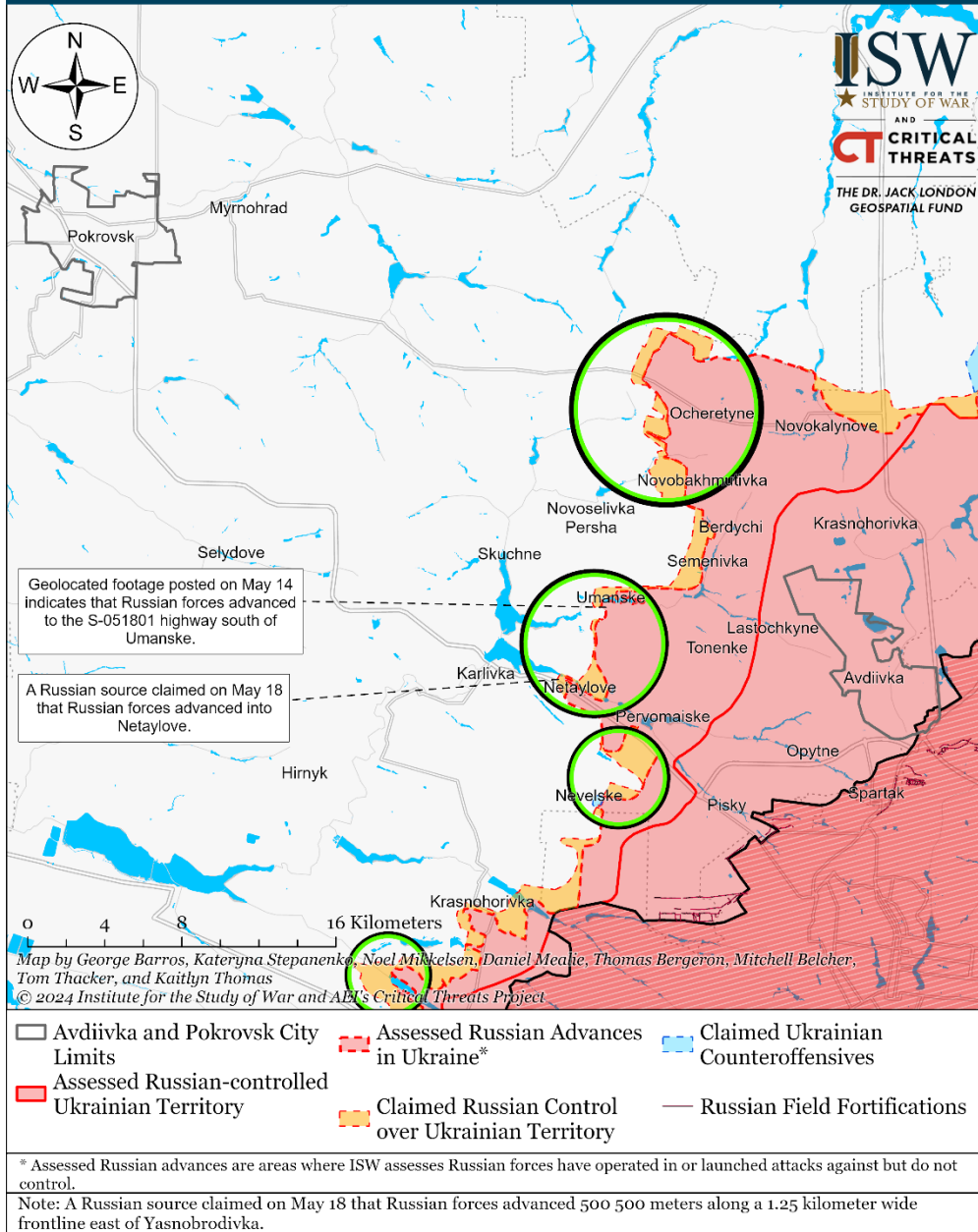
of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske; and southeast of Chasiv Yar near Klishchiivka, Andriivka, and Kurdyumivka.[69] Elements of the Russian 58th Spetsnaz Battalion (Main Directorate of the Russian General Staff [GRU]) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar.[70]



Russian forces recently marginally advanced near Avdiivka amid continued offensive operations in the area on May 18. Geolocated footage published on May 17 and 18 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced east of Yasnobrodivka (west of Avdiivka) and southwest of Solovyove (northwest of Avdiivka).[71] A Ukrainian unit operating near Avdiivka published footage on May 18 of a platoon-

sized Russian armored assault within Solovyove, and Ukrainian forces reportedly repelled the assault.[72] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in an area 1.25 kilometers wide and 500 meters deep near Yasnobrodivka and have seized most of Netaylove (southwest of Avdiivka).[73] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are also advancing near Novooleksandrivka (northwest of Avdiivka), but ISW has not yet observed confirmation of this claim.[74] Russian forces conducted assaults northwest of Avdiivka near Kalynove, Arkhanhelske, Yevhenivka, Sokil, Solovyove, and Novoselivka Persha; west of Avdiivka near Umanske; and southwest of Avdiivka near Nevelske.[75]

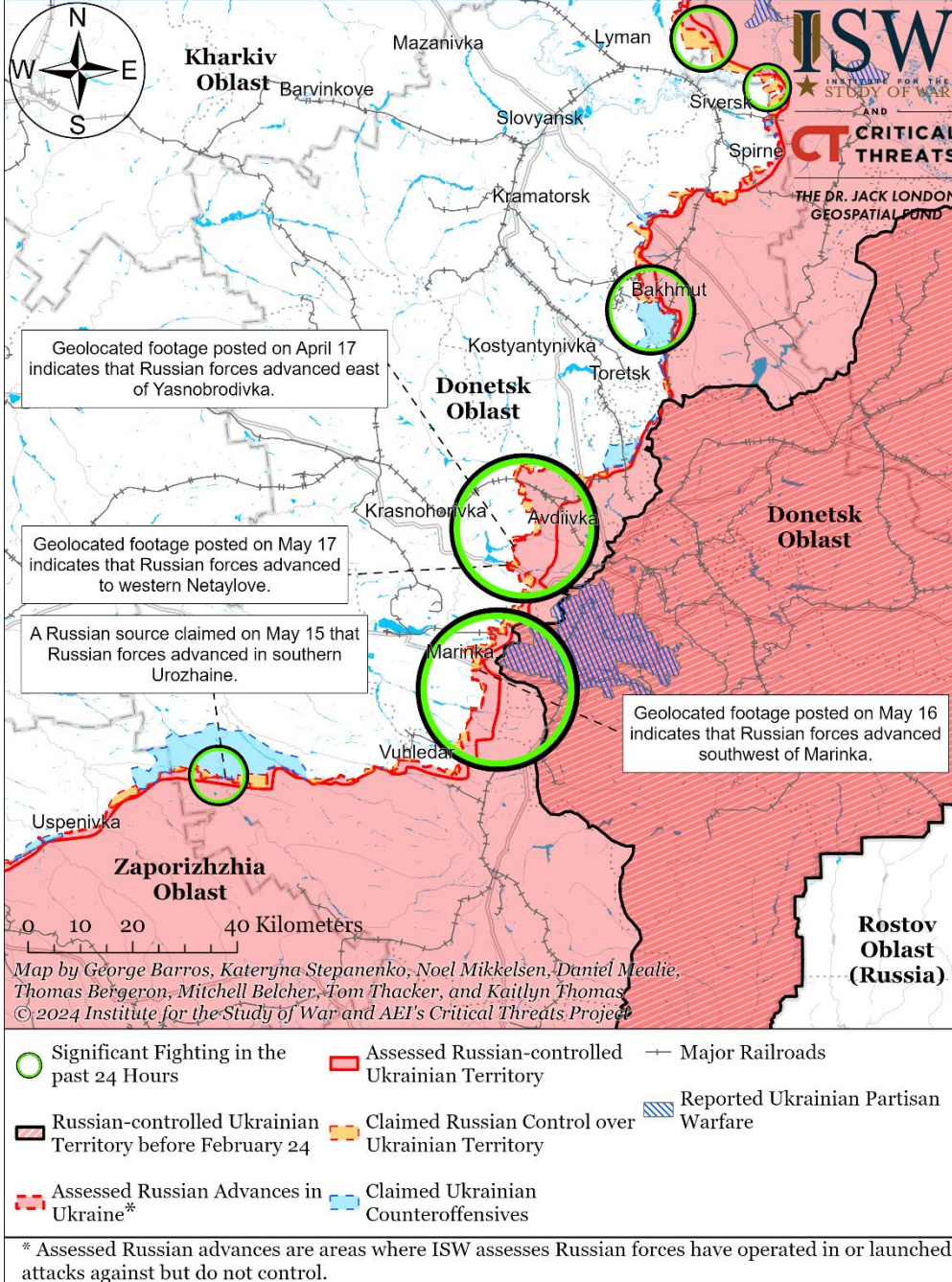
Assessed Control of Terrain Northwest of Avdiivka as of May 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued offensive operations west and southwest of Donetsk City on May 18, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced within and on the northeastern outskirts of Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City).[76] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces cleared Ukrainian forces from an area near the Borisivka pond between Kobzaria street and Pershe Travnia street in the northeastern outskirts of Krasnohorivka and that fighting continues along Tsentralna and Sumska streets within the settlement.[77] Russian forces continued assaults west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near

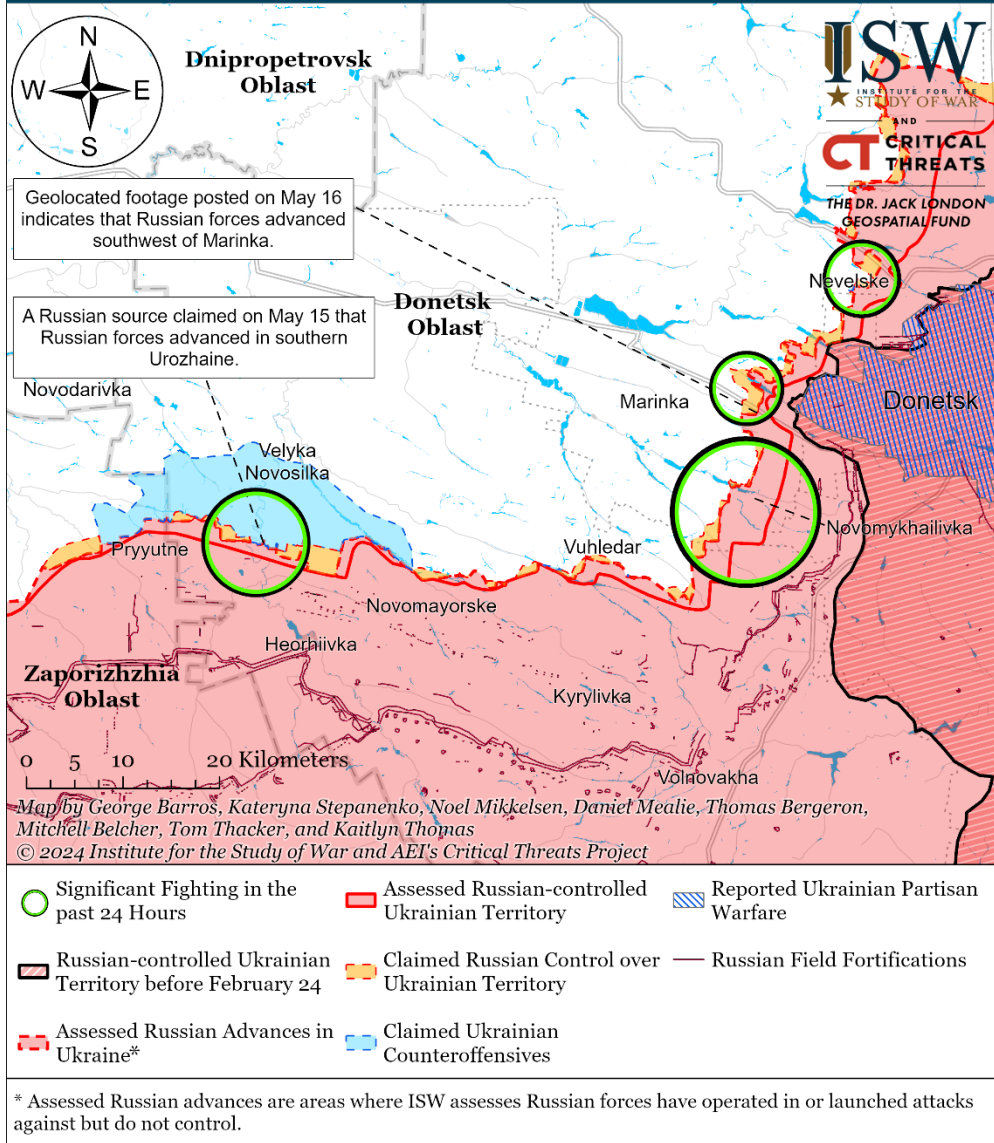
Paraskoviivka, Novomykhailivka, Kostyantynivka, and Vodyane.[78] Elements of the Russian 238th Artillery Brigade (8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Krasnohorivka and elements of the Russian 200th Artillery Brigade (29th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating in the direction of Yelyzavetivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[79]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of May 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued ground assaults in the Donetsk Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on May 18, including south of Velyka Novosilka near Urozhaine and Staromayorske and southeast of Velyka Novosilka near Novomayorske and Volodymyrivka.[80]

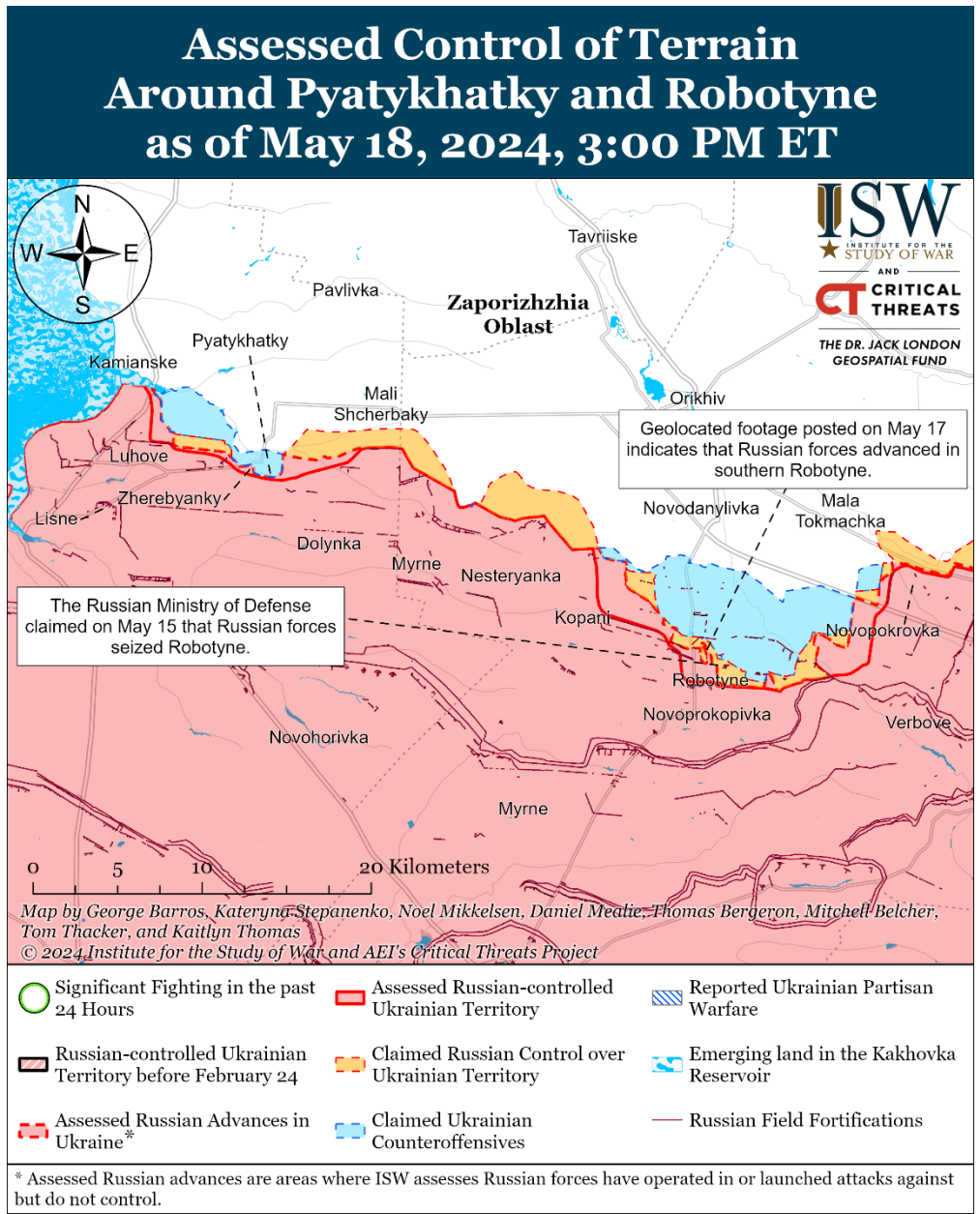
Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Donetsk Oblast as of May 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



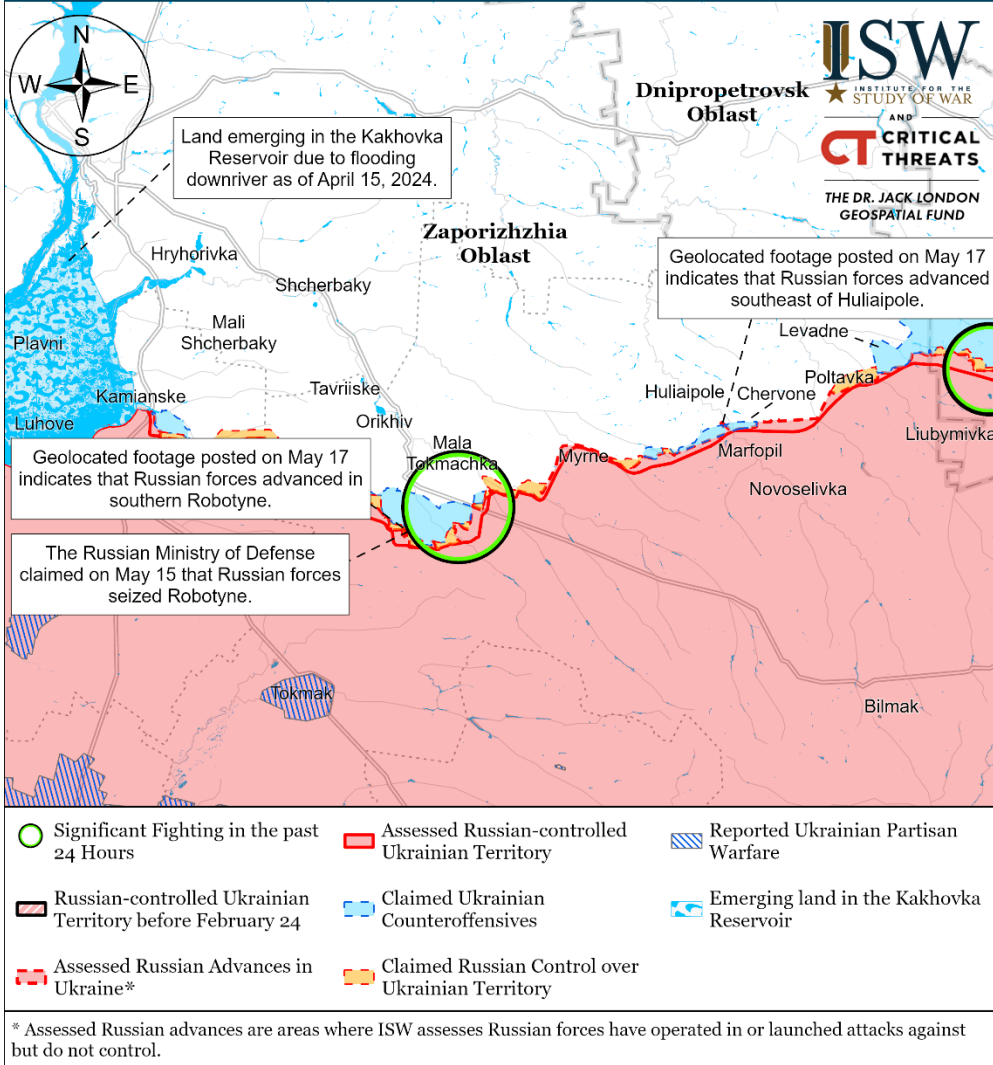
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces recently advanced southeast of Hulyaipole. Geolocated footage published on May 17 shows that Russian forces advanced north of Marfopil (southeast of Hulyaipole), and a Russian milblogger also claimed that Russian forces advanced in the area.[81]

Russian forces recently advanced within Robotyne amid continued positional fighting in the area on May 18. Geolocated footage published on May 17 shows that Russian forces recently advanced into northern Robotyne.[82] Positional fighting also continued northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne) and near Mala Tokmachka (northeast of Robotyne).[83] Elements of the Russian 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhzhia direction, and elements of the Russian 56th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) are reportedly operating near Verbove.[84]

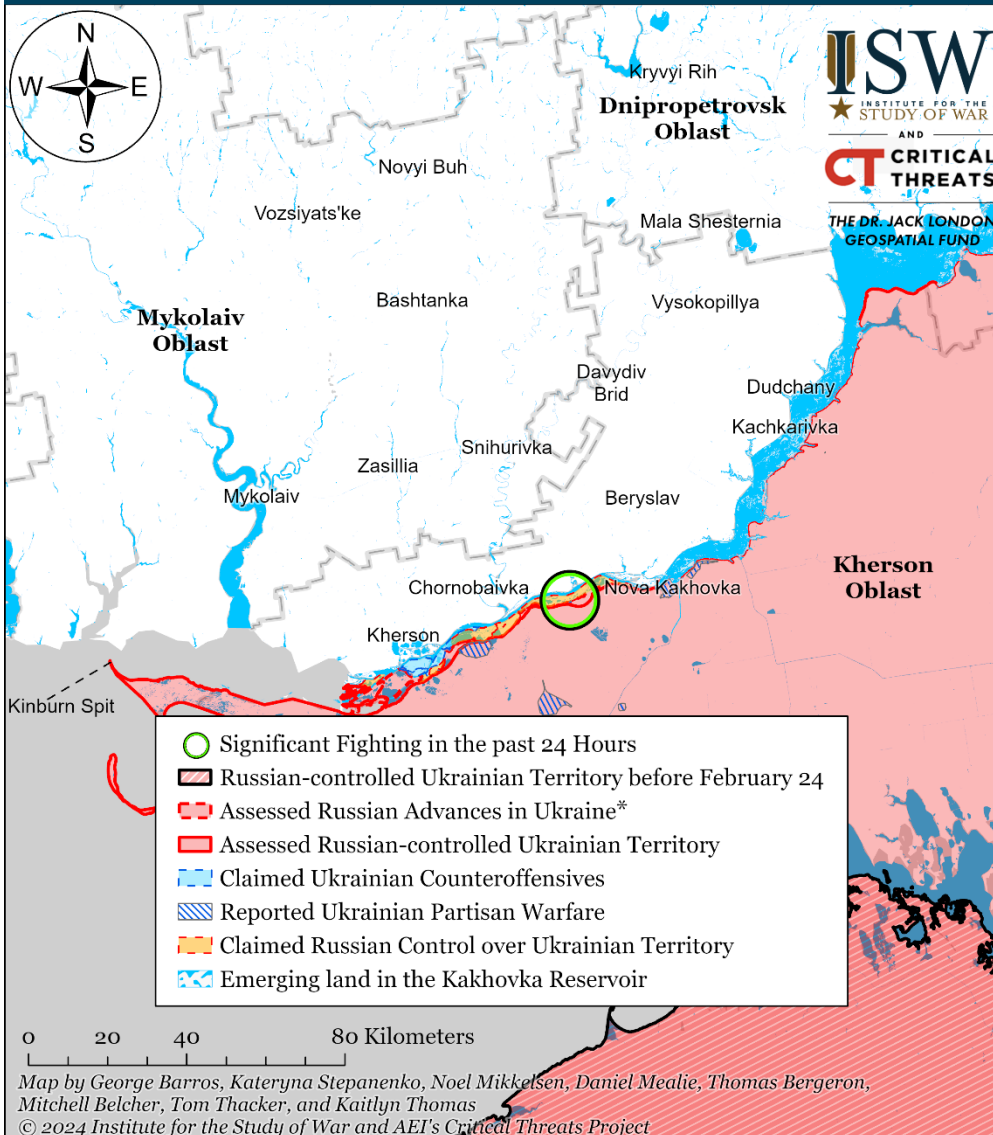


Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of May 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional fighting continued in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast near Krynky on May 17.[85]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: The Ukrainian counteroffensive layer displays areas previously assigned to the Russian control, Russian advances, or Russian claims layers where ISW now assesses that Ukrainian forces have established a presence beyond a short-term raid. Inclusion of an area on this layer does not imply that ISW assesses that the area is part of any upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive operation.

Russian officials claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted aerial and maritime drone strikes against occupied Crimea on May 18. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces intercepted a Ukrainian aerial drone over occupied Crimea and two Ukrainian maritime drones in the Dnipro River and western Black Sea.[86]

Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)

Russian forces conducted a series of drone and missile attacks in the evening of May 17, overnight from May 17 to 18, and in the morning of May 18 that largely targeted Odesa Oblast. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces launched three ballistic missiles, possibly Iskander-M missiles, and three Kh-59/69 cruise missiles against Odesa City on the night of May 17 and that Ukrainian forces shot down the three Kh-59/69 missiles.[87] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces struck a Ukrainian military warehouse in Odesa City with Iskander missiles on the night of May 17.[88] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces launched 13 Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Arkhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai, and Kursk Oblast on the night of May 17 to 18 and that Ukrainian forces shot down all 13 drones over Kharkiv, Poltava, Vinnytsia, Mykolaiv, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.[89] Poltava Oblast Military Administration Head Filip Pronin stated that Russian drones damaged the energy infrastructure in Poltava Oblast.[90] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces conducted a ballistic missile strike, possibly with an Iskander-M missile, against Odesa City on the morning of May 18.[91]

Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)

The *BBC News Russian Service* reported on May 18 that Russian military authorities in Astana, Kazakhstan, detained a Russian contract service personnel (*kontraktnik*) for desertion on April 23 – the first such instance in Kazakhstan.[92] The *BBC News Russian Service* reported that Russian authorities are holding the Russian serviceman at a Russian military unit in Priozersk, Kazakhstan. The *kontraktnik* reportedly signed a contract with the Russian MoD before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and went to Kazakhstan in June 2023 to avoid fighting in the war. Russian military authorities previously detained Russian citizens in Armenia for desertion in April 2024 and December 2023.[93]

Russian Technological Adaptations (Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)

Russian drone manufacturer Unmanned Systems claimed on May 18 that the modernized Supercam S350M reconnaissance drone is more resistant to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW).[94] The modernized drone is reportedly lighter and has an increased flight time, increased number of frequency channels, and improved optical-electronic systems.

Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)

ISW is not publishing coverage of Ukrainian defense industrial efforts today.

Activities in Russian-occupied areas (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas today.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov deliberately attempted to portray Western states' military support for Ukraine as an unwillingness to negotiate despite Russia's own unwillingness to engage in meaningful negotiations with Ukraine. Lavrov gave a speech to the Russian Council on Foreign and Defense Policy on May 18 claiming that the West is preparing for a war against Russia, and that NATO membership is no longer a sufficient guarantee of member state security after Russia's so-called "special military operation," and that the West has shown an unwillingness to negotiate with Russia by continuing to provide Ukraine with weapons to sustain its defense against the Russian invasion.[95] Lavrov is likely attempting to distract from Russia's own unwillingness to participate in good-faith negotiations with Ukraine and notably undermined Ukraine's sovereignty and autonomy by indicating that the West is the only other meaningful negotiating party regarding Ukraine.[96] Senior Kremlin officials have indicated that Russia is also preparing for a protracted war, including through Russian President Vladimir Putin's appointment of economist Andrey Belousov as the new Russian defense minister.[97] Founder of the Kremlin-linked *Rybar* ultranationalist Telegram channel Mikhail Zvinchuk also stated in an interview published on May 18 that Russia's war in Ukraine is unlikely to conclude earlier than summer or fall 2025.[98]

Pro-Kremlin mouthpieces continued efforts to discredit the Ukrainian government, particularly regarding the new Ukrainian mobilization law that came into force on May 18. Russian actors claimed that Ukrainian law enforcement personnel are committing violent acts to apprehend people to mobilize them into the Ukrainian army and are widely spreading reports about protests against the mobilization law.[99] Some Russian ultranationalist milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian law enforcement will begin conducting mass mobilization raids on May 20, which Russian sources claim is the date when Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's presidential term will become "invalid." [100] Ukraine would have held its presidential election on March 31 and would have begun a new presidential term on May 20 if Russia had not illegally invaded Ukraine.[101] Ukraine's constitution permits postponing elections and allows a sitting president to continue to serve after the designated end of his term under martial law, and Zelensky's decision not to hold elections given Ukraine's ongoing existential defensive war is fully in accord with the Ukrainian constitution.

Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova seized on ongoing protests in French New Caledonia to discredit France internationally, likely to support wider information operations that portray the collective West as an internationally destabilizing force.[102] Zakharova accused France of involving itself in the "issues of foreign countries," though New Caledonia is a French territory.[103]

Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

Nothing significant to report.

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other

geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.

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[75] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid04ESFnsM9UGpBh4j8vaoE5rWVa8F4MZLpACBXjcri1tNkPGknjYANZziLL6gmGNQl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02XHtncCAYKHnz8XZqsmKSjH2QAcEiz4cuBpF6Tt9yMdUB35nzLS4rQJyET38VLDEul> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid020evC23GbxgdZ4901v5TcWrft308rdqorsAPkNS3L88tacN8oRVRX9kT8zdwGurHl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0Fgm5xUBVagSqkvK5eMfwQxZhFKPYTrTAo8fTHttujN9wSjwTuHFdBmPhYQZDs56l> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0WDyN2W8VMxeSjB2bbCJQhndPQKY5L2gPLwQijB1xPMgw1Zp97Nna979ZmGuWqTkQl> ; https://t.me/mod_russia/38867 ; https://t.me/dva_majors/42879 ; <https://t.me/wargonzo/20000> ; <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/10813> ; <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/10828>

[76] <https://t.me/rybar/60174> ; <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/10832> ; <https://t.me/wargonzo/20000> ; <https://t.me/rybar/60156>

[77] <https://t.me/rybar/60174> ; <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/10832>

[78] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid04ESFnsM9UGpBh4j8vaoE5rWVa8F4MZLpACBXjcri1tNkPGknjYANZziLL6gmGNQl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02XHtncCAYKHnz8XZqsmKSjH2QAcEiz4cuBpF6Tt9yMdUB35nzLS4rQJyET38VLDEul> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid020evC23GbxgdZ4901v5TcWrft308rdqorsAPkNS3L88tacN8oRVRX9kT8zdwGurHl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0Fgm5xUBVagSqkvK5eMfwQxZhFKPYTrTAo8fTHttujN9wSjwTuHFdBmPhYQZDs56l> ;

[79] <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/68457> (Krasnohorivka) ; https://t.me/voin_dv/8615 (Yelizavetivka)

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[81] https://t.me/creamy_caprice/5559; <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1579348972845630>;
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[82] https://t.me/Ronins44_65/216; https://t.me/creamy_caprice/5560

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[84] <https://t.me/RVvoenkori/68415> (Zaporizhia direction); https://t.me/mod_russia/38864 (Verbove)

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoWDyN2W8VMxeSjB2bbCJQhndPQKY5L2gPLwQijB1xPMgw1Zp97Nna979ZmGuWqTkQl>

[86] https://t.me/mod_russia/38868; https://t.me/mod_russia/38861

[87] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoWDyN2W8VMxeSjB2bbCJQhndPQKY5L2gPLwQijB1xPMgw1Zp97Nna979ZmGuWqTkQl> ; https://t.me/SJTF_Odes/9225

[88] <https://t.me/RVvoenkori/68402> ; <https://t.me/RVvoenkori/68409> ; https://t.me/dva_majors/42874 ; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/124037 ; <https://t.me/vrogov/15787> ; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBezsonov/36106>

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[101] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar051724>

[102] https://t.me/MID_Russia/40717; https://t.me/tass_agency/249632

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