



## Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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**May 22, 2024, 8:40pm ET**

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.

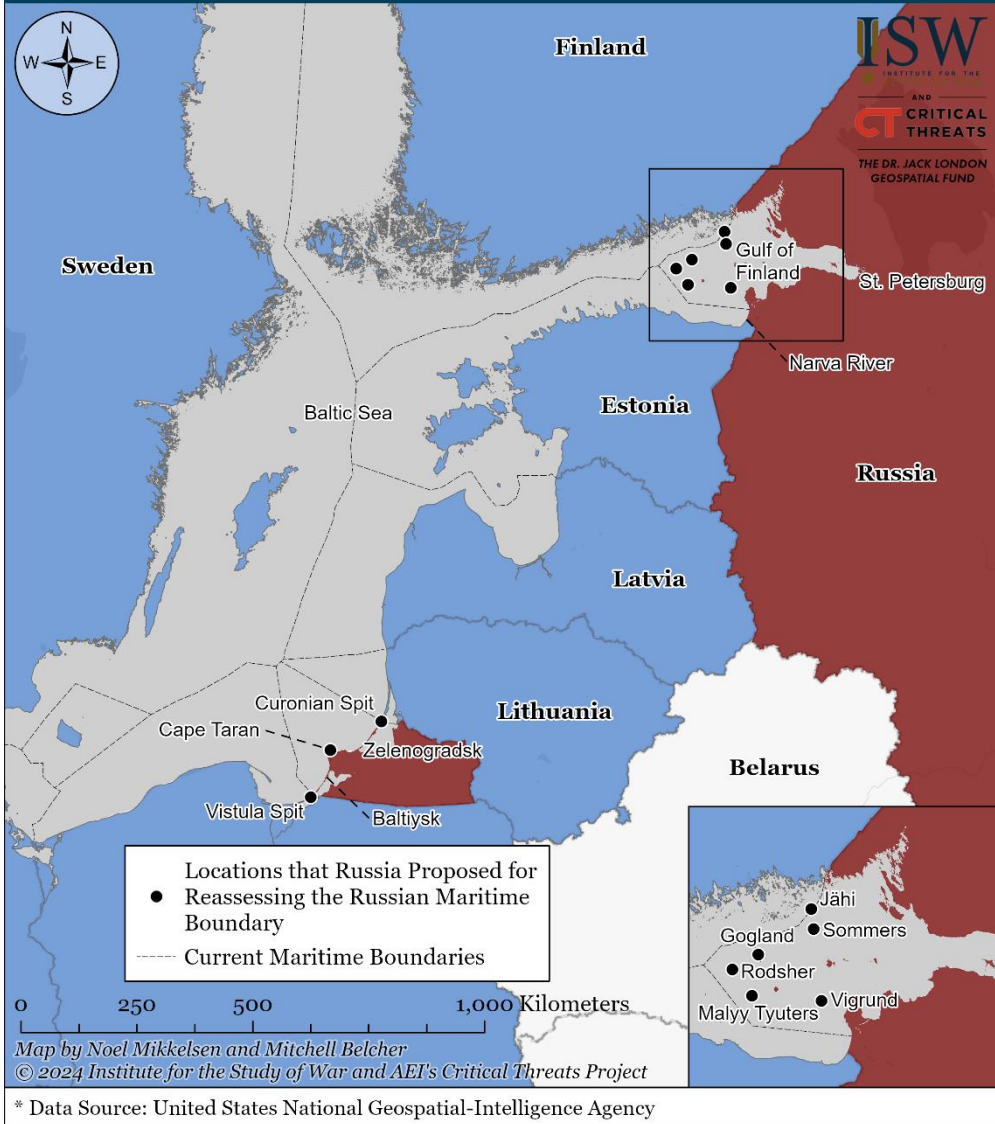
Click [here](#) to see ISW’s 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

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 2:00pm ET on May 22. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 23 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) proposed on May 21 that the Russian government reassess Russia’s maritime borders in the Baltic Sea so that these borders “correspond to the modern geographical situation.”<sup>[1]</sup> The Russian MoD produced a since-deleted document, which appeared on the Russian government’s legal portal on May 21, proposing that the Russian government should reassess the 1985 maritime borders in the Gulf of Finland because these borders were based on outdated “small-scale nautical navigation maps” developed in the mid-20th century.<sup>[2]</sup> The document proposed to partially recognize the 1985 resolution as “defunct.” The document suggested that the Russian government should adjust the maritime border coordinates in the Gulf of Finland in the zone of Jähi, Sommers, Gogland, Rodsher, Malyy Tyuters, and Vigrund islands and near the northern delta of the Narva River. The document also proposed that the Russian government revise the area of the Curonian Spit, Cape Taran, a cape south of Cape Taran, and the Vistula Spit in the Baltic Sea. Sommers, Gogland, Rodsher, Malyy Tyuters, and Vigrund island are under Russian control, while Russia and Finland split control over the Jähi island. The northern delta of the Narva River is located between Russia and Estonia, while the Curonian Spit leads to the international border between Russia and Lithuania. The Vistula Spit (also known as the Baltic Spit in Russia) is split between Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia and Poland, and Cape Taran is just northwest of Kaliningrad City. The document stated that these proposed changes would establish a system of baselines for maritime borders on the southern part of the Russian islands in the eastern part of Gulf of Finland as well as in the areas of Baltiysk and Zelenogradsk, both in Kaliningrad Oblast. The document also noted that these changes will allow Russia to use corresponding water areas as Russian internal sea waters, and that the line of the Russian state border will shift due to the changes in the position of the external border of the territorial sea.

# Maritime Boundaries in the Gulf of Finland Russia Intends to Reassess



**Kremlin and Russian MoD officials denied on May 22 that Russia is planning to change the Russian maritime border, but invertedly implied that the Russian government is considering undertaking some “security” measures in the Baltic Sea.** Russian state news agencies *Ria Novosti* and *TASS* published statements from unnamed military-diplomatic sources, who claimed that “Russia did not have and does not have any intentions of revising the state border line, economic zone, and continental shelf in the Baltic [region].”<sup>[3]</sup> Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that the Russian MoD’s proposal is not politically motivated, despite the fact that the “political situation has changed significantly” since 1985.<sup>[4]</sup> Peskov added that the escalation of tensions and the increased level of confrontation in the Baltic region “requires appropriate steps” from relevant Russian agencies to “ensure [Russian] security.” Russian officials did not explain why the MoD proposal was removed from the government’s legal portal.

**Western officials noted that Russia may be reassessing the basis for maritime borders in order to revise maritime zones in the Baltic Sea.**<sup>[5]</sup> Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen stated on May 22 that the Finnish Foreign Ministry (MFA) is reviewing the reports about Russia's reassessment and that Finland expects Russia to act according to the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea.<sup>[6]</sup> Finnish Prime Minister stated that Russia's review of maritime borders will likely be routine and that Finland is not worried about the reassessment.<sup>[7]</sup> Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis announced that Lithuania summoned the Russian charge d'affaires in connection with the reassessment.<sup>[8]</sup> The Lithuanian MFA told *Politico* that Lithuania sees Russia's actions as "deliberate, targeted, escalatory provocations to intimidate neighboring countries and their societies."<sup>[9]</sup> The Lithuanian MFA added that the Russian MoD's proposal is "further proof that Russia's aggressive and revisionist policy is a threat to the security of neighboring countries and Europe as a whole." Swedish Commander-in-Chief Mikael Byden expressed concern about Russian ambitions in the Baltic Sea and warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin aims to control the Baltic Sea and that Putin "has his eyes" on the island of Gotland.<sup>[10]</sup> Byden did not rule out the possibility that Russia is already using oil tankers to conduct reconnaissance and sabotage in the Baltic Sea and near Gotland.<sup>[11]</sup>

**The Kremlin appears to be developing a system to legalize the status of Russia's so-called "compatriots abroad," likely as part of its efforts to set information conditions to justify further aggression and hybrid operations abroad as "protecting" Russia's compatriots.** Russian Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) General Director Yevgeny Primakov stated during an interview with Kremlin newswire *TASS* published on May 22 that Rossotrudnichestvo is developing an "Electronic Card of Compatriots" program that will allow Russia's compatriots abroad to access unspecified government services, visit and work in Russia, and even apply for Russian citizenship in the future.<sup>[12]</sup> Primakov stated that Russia is preparing to launch a pilot version of the program in several unspecified neighboring countries and may begin issuing the first cards by the end of 2024. Primakov stated that Russia's compatriots can provide their personal identifiable information through an online application in exchange for a card and access to these various services, which will presumably be available through an unspecified online platform. Primakov noted that while some of Russia's compatriots abroad do not have Russian citizenship and are "skeptical" of Russia's policies, they are still compatriots in "one way or another" and that this program will help compatriots and their children maintain ties with Russia. Primakov estimated that Russia has between 20 and 40 million compatriots abroad, although it is unclear what definition of "compatriot abroad" Primakov is using. Primakov also emphasized the importance of Russia's educational and cultural exchange programs with students from Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and other countries and noted that the Russian government has been increasing the number of foreign students allowed to study in Russia over the past several years. Primakov stated that Russia has set a goal of having 500,000 foreign students studying in Russia every year by 2030. Primakov noted that Rossotrudnichestvo is having issues operating in the US, United Kingdom (UK), Canada, and other Western countries due to "unfriendly" Western policies and absurdly claimed that Russian Houses (*Russkyi Dom*) in Europe "do not engage in political propaganda or anything else" and only conduct "cultural activities." Moldovan and Ukrainian officials have previously warned that Russian officials use *Russkyi Dom* to promote Russian propaganda and conduct "subversive work" abroad.<sup>[13]</sup>

Rossotrudnichestvo has been working on the “Electronic Card of Compatriots” project since at least 2021 but has yet to publicly launch the program, and Primakov stated in June 2023 that Rossotrudnichestvo plans to open “certification centers” in *Russkiy Dom* centers throughout the world where compatriots can verify their identity as part of the application process.[14] The Russian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (ROC MP), a Kremlin-controlled organization and a known tool within the Russian hybrid warfare toolkit, issued a series of recommendations during the World Russian People's Council on March 27 and 28, which included a call for Russia to prioritize the mass repatriation of “compatriots” to Russia, and the “Electronic Card of Compatriots” program could be a viable pathway for Russia to pursue this recommendation.[15] Russia's compatriots abroad — whom Russian President Vladimir Putin has previously defined as anyone with historical, cultural, or linguistic ties to Russia — are a key aspect of the Kremlin's *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) narrative, which the Kremlin intends to use to justify future Russian aggression under the guise of “protecting” Russian compatriots.[16] The Russian government previously eased language and ancestry requirements for compatriots interested in moving to Russia and may be attempting to further broaden its vague definition of a compatriot to encompass as many people as possible.[17]

**United Kingdom (UK) Defense Minister Grant Shapps stated on May 22 that US and UK intelligence have evidence that the People's Republic of China (PRC) “is now or will be” providing lethal military assistance to Russia, a statement that US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan questioned.**[18] Shapps stated that this evidence is a “significant development” as the PRC has previously presented itself as a “moderating influence” but did not provide further information about the supposed intelligence. Sullivan stated during a press conference that he has previously warned that the PRC may supply Russia with lethal military assistance but that the US has “not seen that to date.”[19] Sullivan stated that he will speak with his British counterparts to ensure that the US and UK have a “common operating picture” and to clarify Shapps' comment.

**Western officials warned that Russian intelligence services intend to increase sabotage activities and other hybrid operations against NATO member countries.** Norway's Police Security Service (PST) and the Norwegian Intelligence Service (NIS) warned on May 22 that there is an increased threat of Russian sabotage against Norwegian arms supplies and other Norwegian organizations involved in the delivery of military materiel to Ukraine.[20] PST Counterintelligence Head Inger Haugland stated that the PST has warned Norwegian arms suppliers to be on high alert and previously warned that Russian actors were planning acts of sabotage in western Norway, where Norwegian naval bases and oil and gas infrastructure are located.[21] Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk warned on May 20 that Polish authorities have recently arrested and charged nine suspects for engaging in acts of sabotage in Poland on behalf of Russian security services.[22] Haugland stated that Russian security services have used non-Russian nationals to conduct sabotage in Poland, Germany, and the United Kingdom in order to have deniability.[23] Tusk also warned on May 21 that Russian actors plan to illegally smuggle thousands of migrants from Africa to Europe and that more than 90 percent of those recently apprehended illegally entering Poland have had Russian visas in their passports.[24] Russian officials recently attempted to create an artificial migrant crisis on the Finnish border in late 2023 in an effort to destabilize NATO and the European Union (EU).[25] Russian security services are likely intensifying sabotage operations in European countries to disrupt the arrival of resumed US security assistance to Ukraine and will likely continue hybrid operations aimed at fomenting discord in Europe ahead of European Parliament elections scheduled for early June 2024.

**US Space Command reported on May 21 that Russia recently launched an anti-satellite weapon, the most recent report that Russia intends to field disruptive anti-satellite capabilities.**[26] US Space Command reported that Russia launched the COSMOS 2576 satellite on May 16 and that US intelligence assesses that it is a counterspace weapon presumably capable of attacking other satellites in low Earth orbit.[27] Pentagon Spokesperson Brigadier General Patrick Ryder added that Russia deployed the COSMOS 2576 satellite into the same orbit as a US government satellite.[28] Russia reportedly launched a separate satellite as part of its program to develop a nuclear anti-satellite weapon in early February 2022.[29] Russian reportedly has yet to field nuclear components of the nuclear anti-satellite weapon and that weapon is likely not yet operational, although the most recent anti-satellite weapon likely is.[30] Russian efforts to field anti-satellite capabilities aimed at disrupting US and partner satellites likely aim to support preparations with a future confrontation with NATO.[31]

**Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan indirectly accused Russia and directly accused Belarus of helping Azerbaijan to prepare for the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, against the backdrop of deteriorating Armenian-Russian relations.** Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko stated that he and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev conversed before the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and concluded that Azerbaijan could be victorious during Lukashenko's May 16-17 state visit to Azerbaijan.[32] Lukashenko also visited Fizuli and Shusha, two settlements that Azerbaijani forces took control of in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War. Pashinyan responded to Lukashenko's statement at a question-and-answer session between the Armenian National Assembly and the Armenian government by stating that Lukashenko said aloud “what he has been trying to metaphorically say to Armenia for four years.”[33] Pashinyan added that he knows of at least two Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member countries that “participated in preparations for the war [in 2020]” and claimed that Azerbaijan's objective in the war was to destroy the “independent state of Armenia.”[34] Pashinyan's implication that Russia helped Azerbaijan prepare for the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, and by extension, supported Azerbaijan's objective of destroying Armenia, is part of Pashinyan's continued criticisms of Russian-Armenian relations and efforts to distance Armenia from political and security relations with Russia.

Pashinyan met with Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Interim President Mohammad Mokhber on May 22.[35] Pashinyan's meeting with Khamenei and Mokhber indicates that Iran may intend to pursue positive relations with Armenia amid Armenia's souring relations with Russia.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) proposed on May 21 that the Russian government reassess Russia's maritime borders in the Baltic Sea so that these borders “correspond to the modern geographical situation.”**
- **Kremlin and Russian MoD officials denied on May 22 that Russia is planning to change the Russian maritime border, but invertedly implied that the Russian government is considering undertaking some “security” measures in the Baltic Sea.**
- **Western officials noted that Russia may be reassessing the basis for maritime borders in order to revise maritime zones in the Baltic Sea.**

- **The Kremlin appears to be developing a system to legalize the status of Russia's so-called “compatriots abroad,” likely as part of its efforts to set information conditions to justify further aggression and hybrid operations abroad as “protecting” Russia's compatriots.**
- **United Kingdom (UK) Defense Minister Grant Shapps stated on May 22 that US and UK intelligence have evidence that the People's Republic of China (PRC) “is now or will be” providing lethal military assistance to Russia, a statement that US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan questioned.**
- **Western officials warned that Russian intelligence services intend to increase sabotage activities and other hybrid operations against NATO member countries.**
- **US Space Command reported on May 21 that Russia recently launched an anti-satellite weapon, the most recent report that Russia intends to field disruptive anti-satellite capabilities.**
- **Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan indirectly accused Russia and directly accused Belarus of helping Azerbaijan to prepare for the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, against the backdrop of deteriorating Armenian-Russian relations.**
- **Ukrainian forces recently recaptured territory near Vovchansk and Chasiv Yar, and Russian forces recently marginally advanced near Vovchansk, Avdiivka, Donetsk City, and Velyka Novosilka.**
- **Russian courts reportedly began forcibly hospitalizing Russians charged with political crimes such as spreading “fake” information about the Russian military, in psychiatric hospitals.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 22, 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 three 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

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**Russian                      Main                      Effort                      –                      Eastern                      Ukraine**

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**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)**

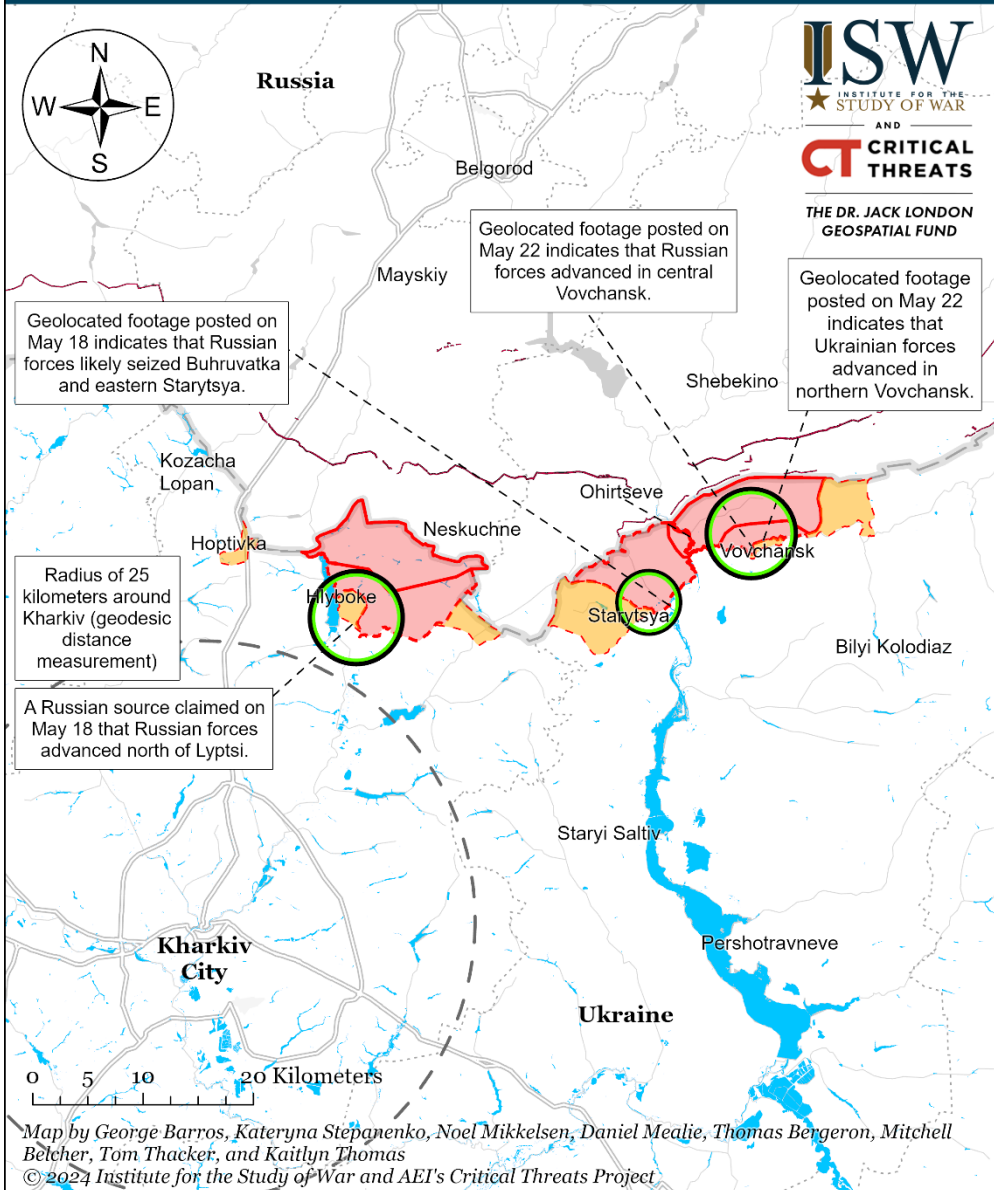
Russian forces continued offensive operations north of Kharkiv City near Lyptsi on May 22, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced near Lyptsi and into Zelene (both north of Kharkiv City), although ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims.[36] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that the Russian military command is withdrawing elements of the 7th Motorized Rifle Regiment (11th Army Corps (AC), Leningrad Military District [LMD]) from offensive operations near Lyptsi for rest and reconstitution.[37] Mashovets noted that Russian forces have increased the size of the Northern Grouping of Forces to roughly 40,000 personnel and that a significant portion of the grouping remains in reserve in Belgorod and Kursk oblasts.

Russian recently marginally advanced within Vovchansk (northeast of Kharkiv City) as fighting continued in and near the settlement on May 22. Geolocated footage published on May 22 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced within Vovchansk, and Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are advancing further within the settlement.[38] Additional geolocated footage published on May 22 indicates that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces from several houses and marginally advanced within northeastern Vovchansk, highlighting the dynamic nature of the combat situation in the settlement.[39] The spokesperson for a Ukrainian unit operating in the Kharkiv direction stated that Ukrainian forces control most of Vovchansk and that Russian forces are conducting assaults in squad-sized infantry groups.[40] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are advancing in the direction of Tykhe (east of Vovchansk) and conducting reconnaissance-in-force operations further east of Vovchansk near Volokhivka, Chaikhivka, Okhrimivka, and Mala



Vovcha.<sup>[41]</sup> A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also advanced up to 280 meters along Sadova Street within Starytsya (southwest of Vovchansk).<sup>[42]</sup> Russian forces also conducted assaults near Buhruvatka (southwest of Vovchansk).<sup>[43]</sup> Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 11th Tank Regiment (18th Motorized Rifle Division, 11th AC, LMD), 272nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (47th Tank Division, 1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]), and the 1st Motorized Rifle Regiment (2nd Motorized Rifle Division, 1st GTA, MMD) are operating near Vovchansk.<sup>[44]</sup> Elements of Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz are reportedly operating near Vovchansk.<sup>[45]</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 22, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	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-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives	

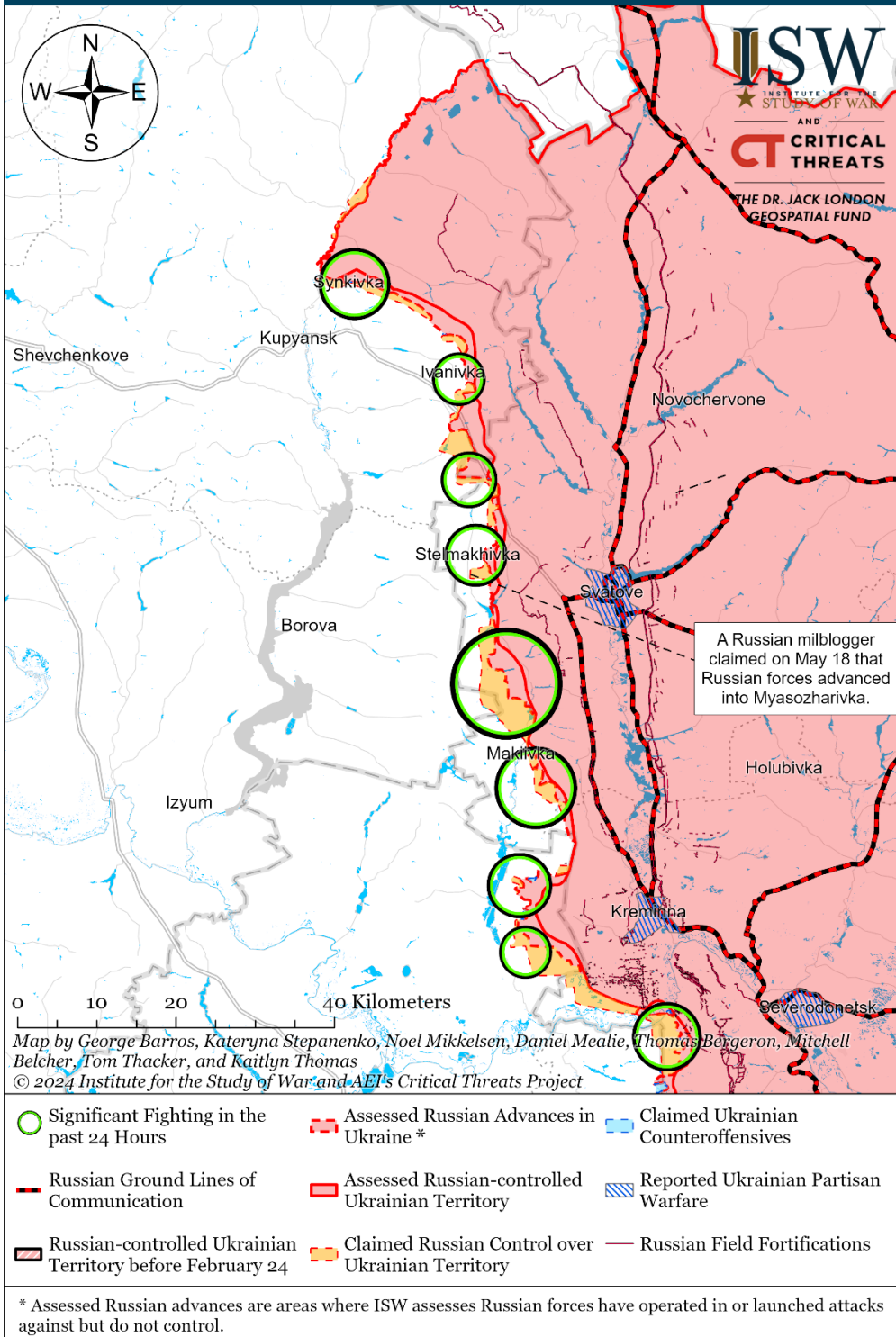
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on May 22 that Russian forces advanced up to 280 meters in Starytsya. A Russian source claimed on May 22 that Russian forces advanced two kilometers near Tykhe. A Russian source claimed on May 22 that Russian forces advanced between 100 and 300 meters deep in the direction of Vovchansk. A Russian source claimed on May 22 that Russian forces advanced between 200 meters and 1.2 kilometers in the direction of Lyptsi. A Russian source claimed on May 21 that Russian forces advanced between 300 and 450 meters near Lyptsi. A Russian source claimed on May 21 that Russian forces advanced between 100 and 350 meters in Vovchansk.

**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 offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on May 22, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. Russian forces continued offensive operations northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; northwest of Svatove near Berestove, Stelmakhivka, and Ivanivka; southwest of Svatove near Serhiivka, Druzhelyubivka, Hrekivka, Novoyehorivka, and Makiivka; west of Kreminna near Nevske and Torske; and south of Kreminna near Hryhorivka and Bilohorivka.[46] A Ukrainian source claimed that Russian forces have been using tanks with heavy metal plating protection during assaults near Bilohorivka over the past week, likely to protect Russian armor against Ukrainian drone strikes.[47] Elements of the Russian 6th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC]) reportedly continue operating near Bilohorivka.[48]

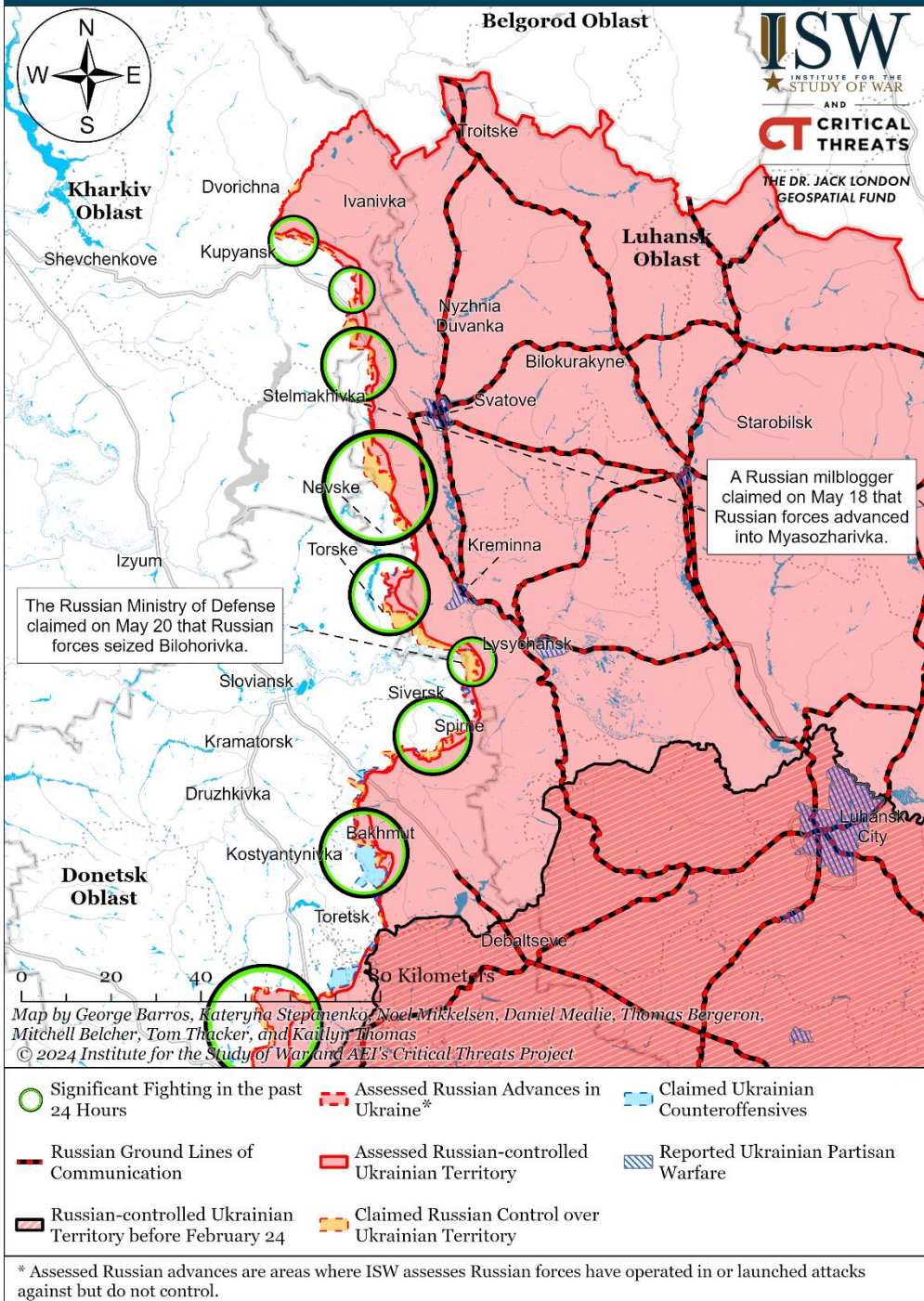
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kupyansk as of May 22, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Luhansk Oblast Military Administration Head Artem Lysohor reported on May 22 that the May 20 Ukrainian strike against the Luhansk Academy of Internal Affairs in occupied Katerynivka (formerly known as Yuvileyne) likely caused “significant” losses among Russian officers.[49]



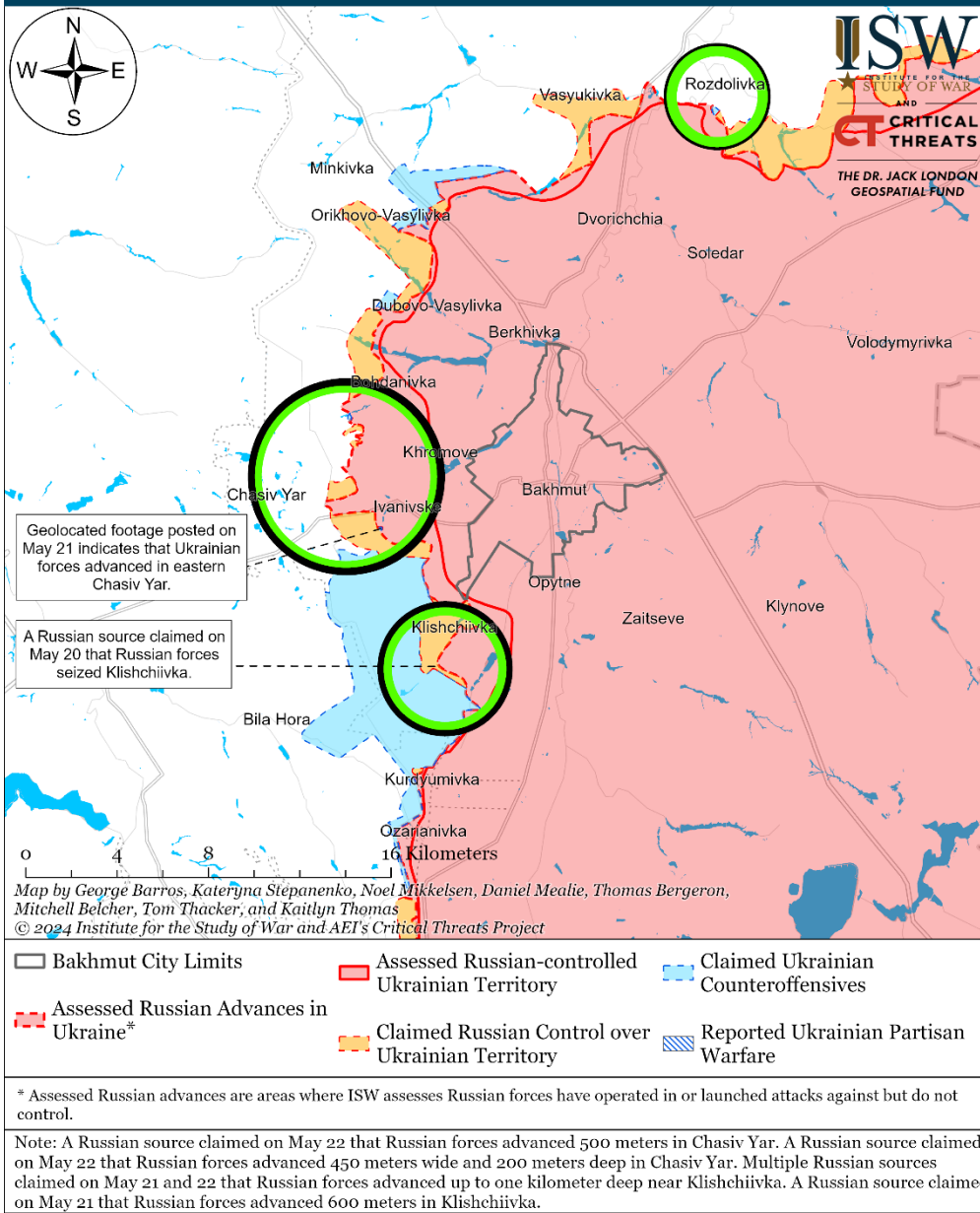
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of May 22, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



## **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 on May 22, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. Russian forces conducted assaults southeast of Siversk near Vyimka and south of Siversk near Rozdolivka.[50]

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of May 22, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

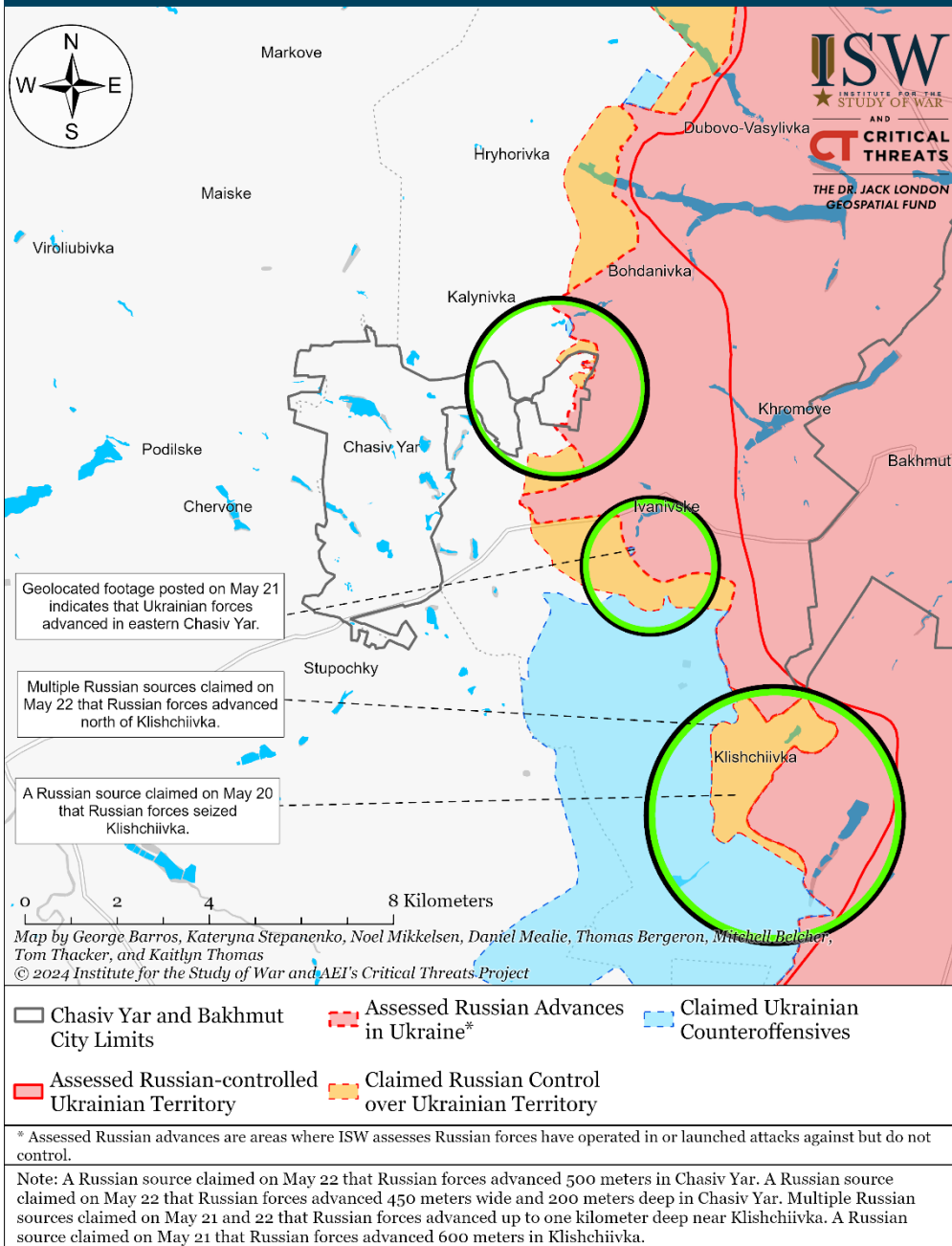


Ukrainian forces recently regained marginal territory within eastern Chasiv Yar amid continued Russian offensive operations in the area on May 22. Geolocated footage published on May 21 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently recaptured several buildings in the eastern part of the Kanal Microraion (easternmost Chasiv Yar).[51] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces seized Klishchiivka, although a Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are still operating within the settlement.[52] Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced further in the Klishchiivka area and that Ukrainian forces are withdrawing from positions west of the settlement.[53] ISW has not observed confirmation of Russian forces seizing Klishchiivka or advancing further west of the settlement. The Telegram channel of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division claimed that elements of the division advanced 500 meters within the Kanal Microraion and are fighting on the eastern outskirts of the Novyi Microraion (eastern Chasiv Yar).[54]

Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Voloshyn stated that Russian forces plan to withdraw elements of the 98th VDV Division committed to offensive operations east of Chasiv Yar for replenishment.<sup>[55]</sup> Russian forces also continued offensive operations east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske and southwest of Chasiv Yar near Andriivka.<sup>[56]</sup> A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the 6th Motorized Rifle Division (3rd Army Corps [AC]) seized Klishchiivka, that elements of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and the 11th VDV Brigade are operating in Ivanivske, and that elements of the 98th VDV Division and 11th VDV Brigade control a section of the Stupky-Holubovski 2 nature reserve (southeast of Chasiv Yar) up to the eastern side of the Siverskyi-Donets Donbas Canal.<sup>[57]</sup> The milblogger also claimed that elements of the 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th AC, Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are attacking near Kalynivka (north of Chasiv Yar).<sup>[58]</sup>

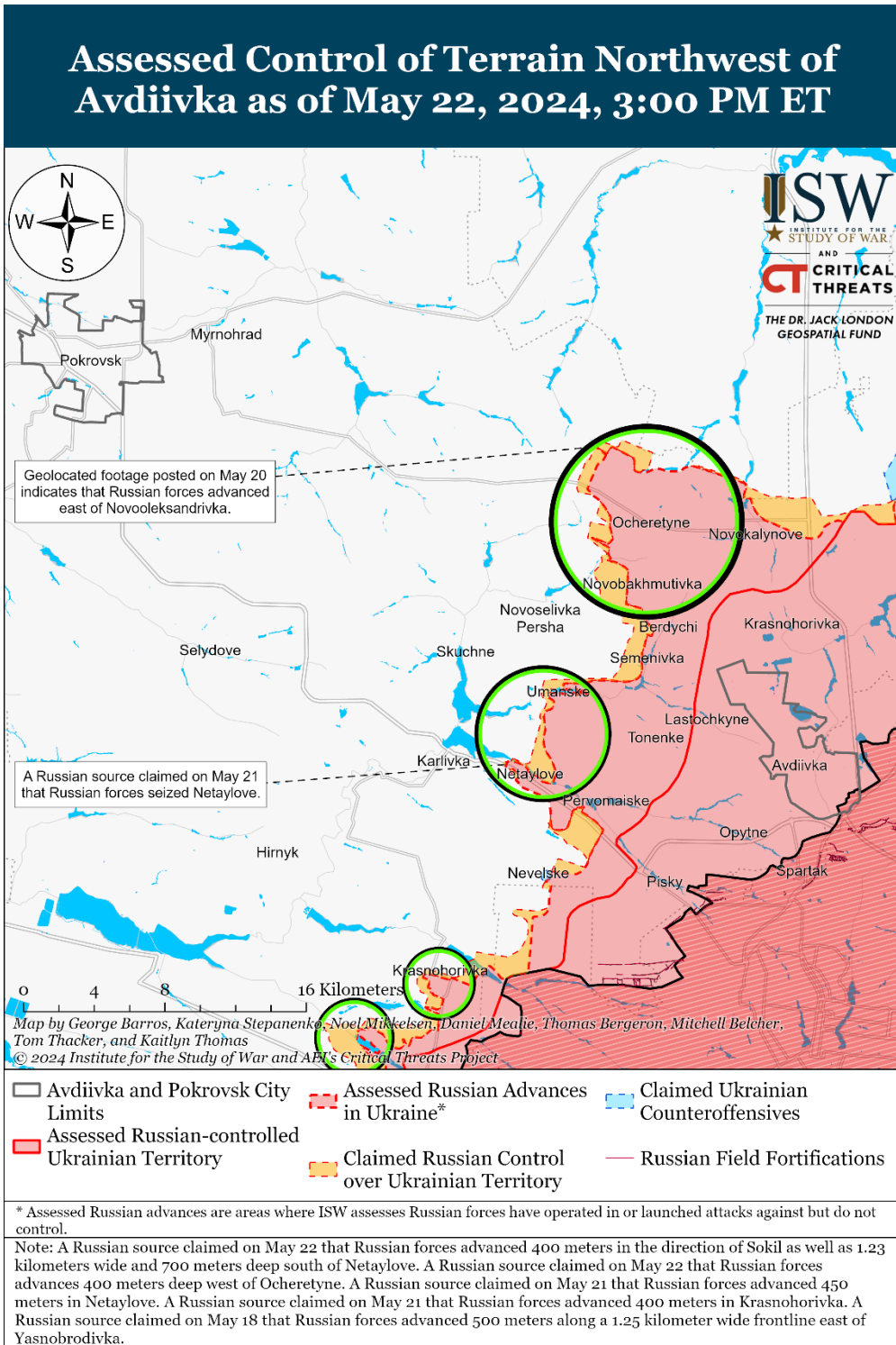


# Assessed Control of Terrain near Chasiv Yar as of May 22, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

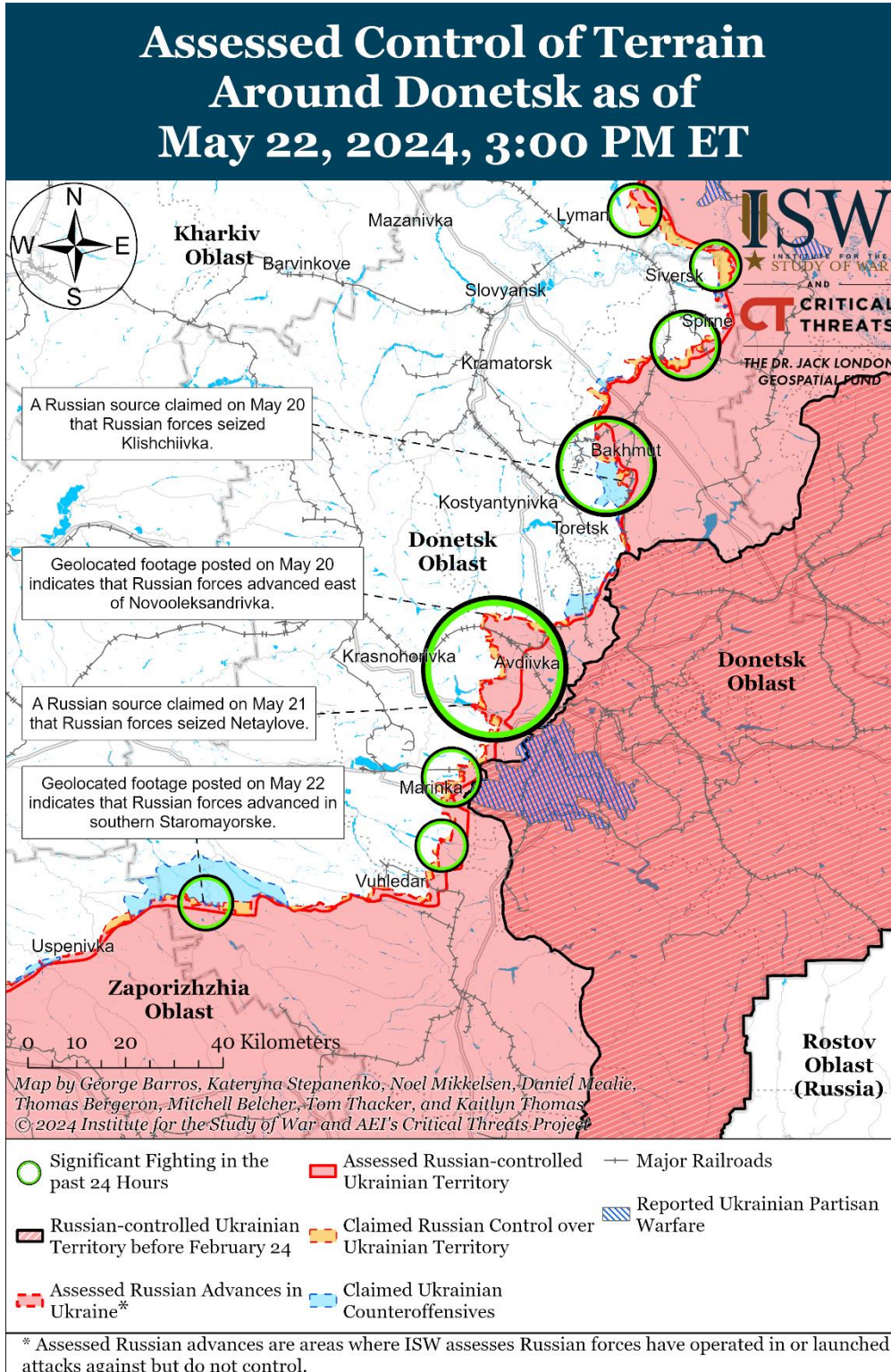


Russian forces recently advanced northwest of Avdiivka amid continued Russian offensive operations in the area on May 22. Geolocated footage published on May 20 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced up to the eastern outskirts of Novooleksandrivka (northwest of Avdiivka).[59] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced 400 meters in depth along a railway line in the direction of Sokil (northwest of Avdiivka) and along a front 1.23 kilometers wide and 700 meters deep south of Netaylove (west of Avdiivka).[60] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are consolidating positions west of Netaylove and that Ukrainian forces are withdrawing from positions in the area to Karlivka (west of Avdiivka).[61] ISW has not observed confirmation of these Russian claims. Russian forces continued offensive operations northwest of Avdiivka near Novooleksandrivka, Prohres,

Solovyove, Sokil, Kalynove, Yevhenivka, Arkhanhelske, Novopokrovske, and Ocheretyne and west of Avdiivka near Umanske, Yasnobrodivka, Novoselivka Persha, Sieverne, and Netaylove.[62] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces redeployed elements of several Ukrainian brigades from the Avdiivka area to the frontline in northern Kharkiv Oblast, although ISW has not observed evidence of this claim.[63] Elements of the Russian 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People’s Republic [DNR] Army Corps) are reportedly operating near Netaylove and Nevelske (southwest of Avdiivka).[64]

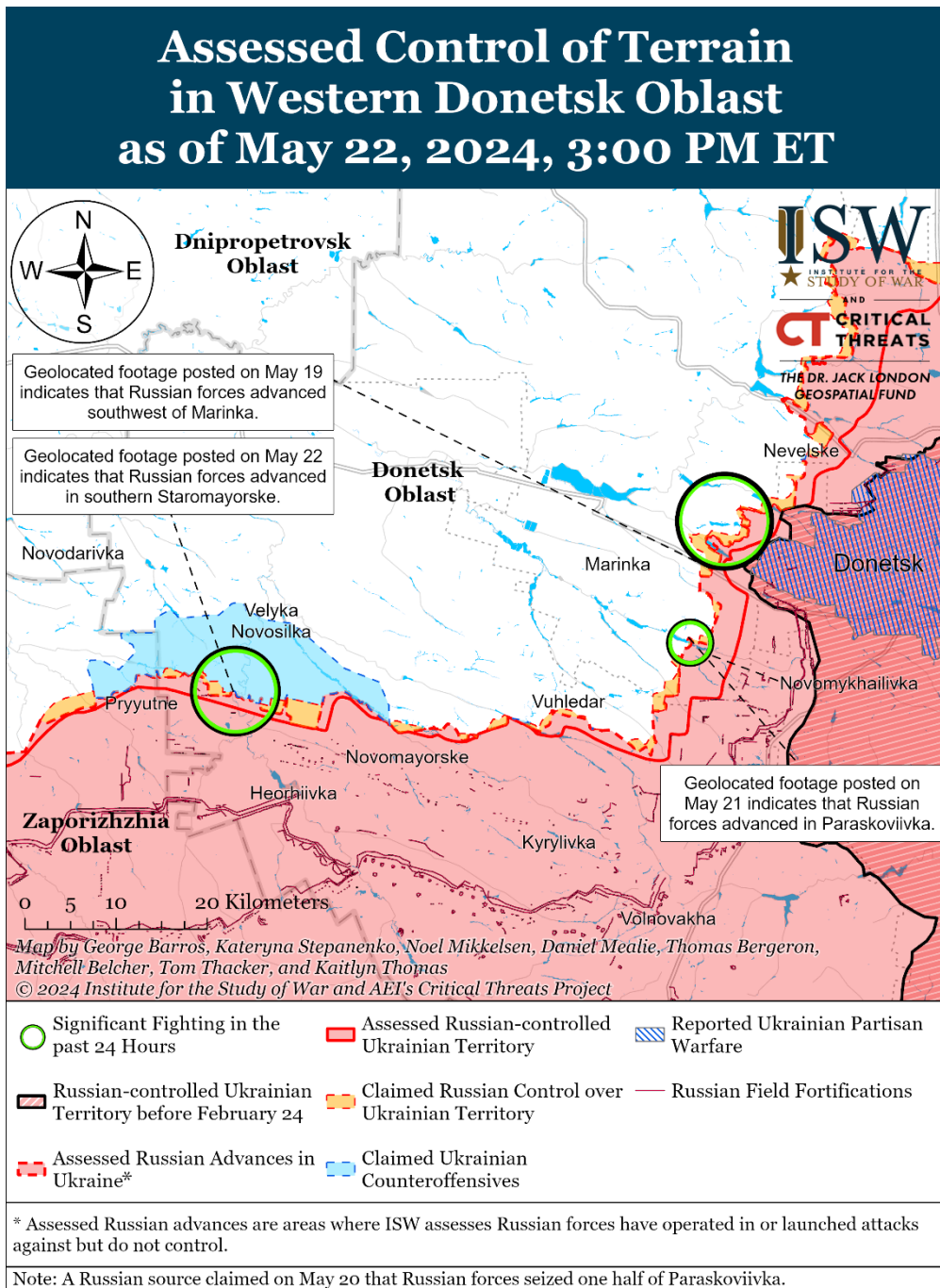


Russian forces recently made marginal gains southwest of Donetsk City. Geolocated footage published on May 21 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced southwest of Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[65] A Russian milblogger claimed on May 22 that Russian forces advanced further into Paraskoviivka (southwest of Donetsk City), although ISW has not observed evidence of this claim.[66] Russian forces continued offensive operations west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka, Pobieda, Paraskoviivka, Kostyantynivka, and Volodymyrivka on May 22.[67]





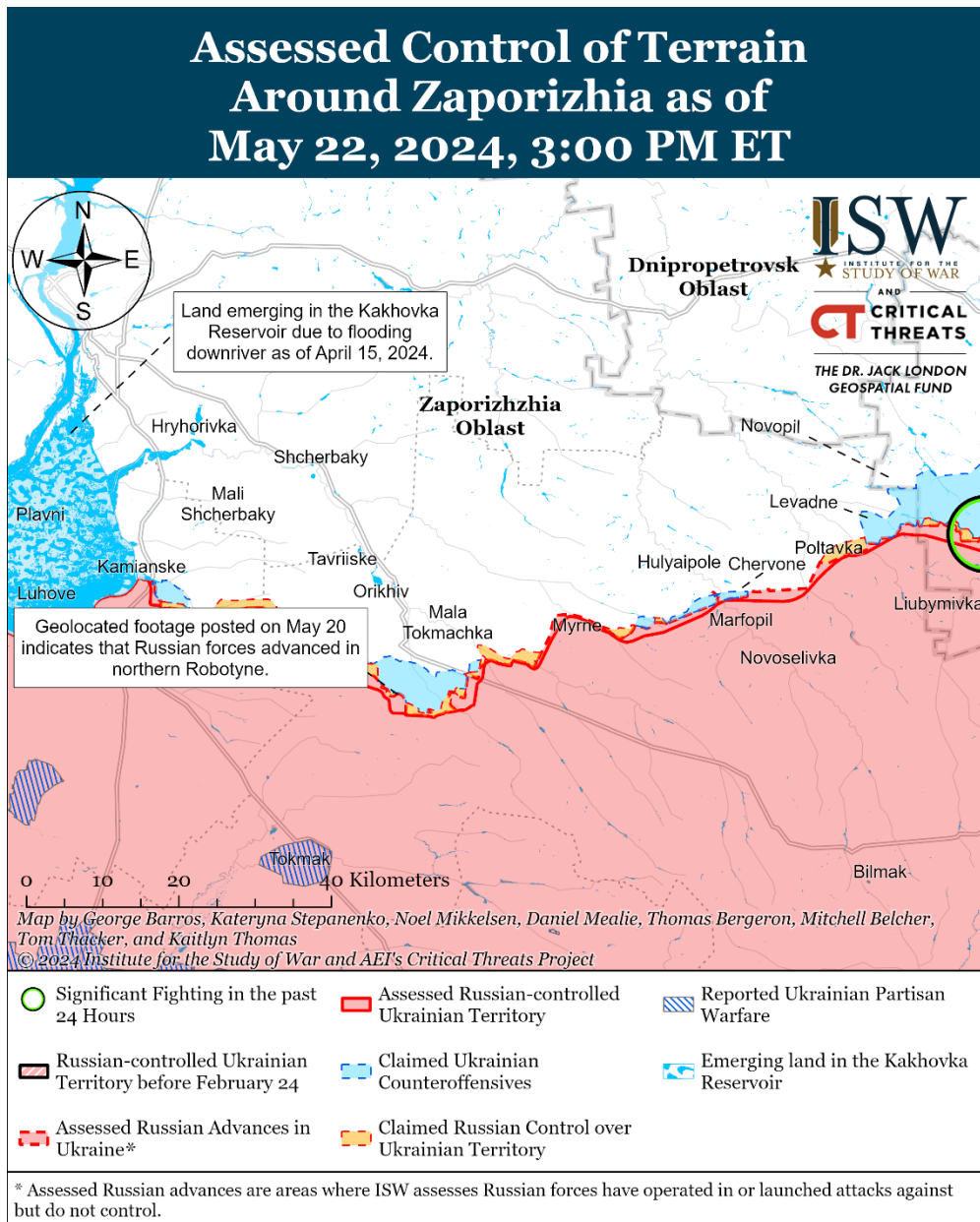
Russian forces recently advanced in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area. Geolocated footage published on May 21 and 22 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced within southern Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka).[68] Russian forces continued offensive operations south of Velyka Novsilka near Urozhaine and Staromayorske on May 22.[69]



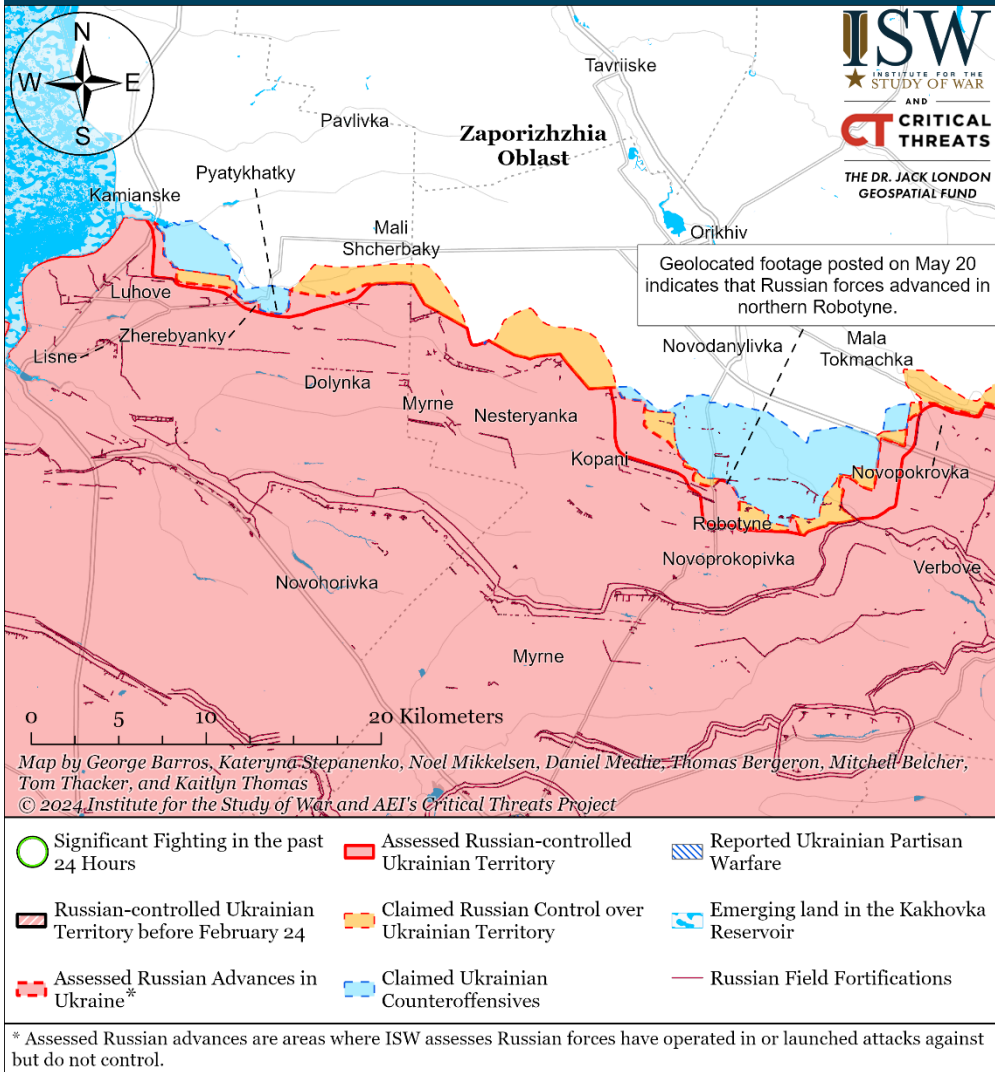
**Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhia Oblast on May 22, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 108th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) advanced a kilometer toward Mala Tokmachka (northeast of Robotyne), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[70]

Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced near Robotyne and that fighting is ongoing near Verbove.[71] Elements of the Russian 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Robotyne, and elements of the Russian BARS-10 Battalion of the “Tsarskiye Volki” Brigade (affiliated with Zaporizhzhia Oblast occupation senator Dmitry Rogozin) are reportedly operating near Vasylivka (west of Robotyne).[72]

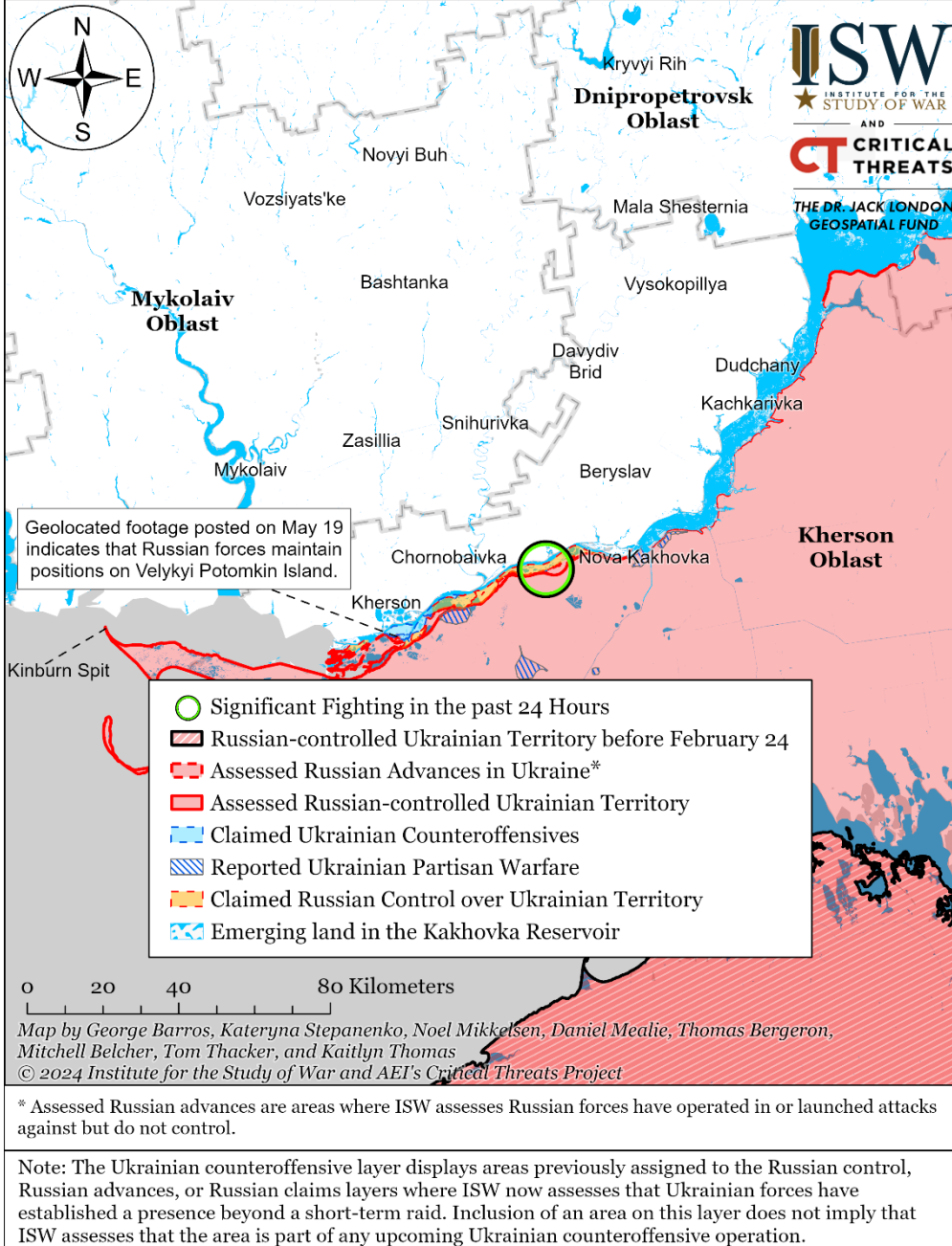


# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of May 22, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional engagements continued in left (east) bank Kherson Oblast, including near Krynyky, on May 22.[73]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 22, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian and Ukrainian sources claimed on May 22 that Ukrainian forces launched multiple rocket launch (MLRS) strikes from a maritime drone against Russian positions near the occupied Kinburn Spit, Mykolaiv Oblast.[74]

The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) Russian occupation authority claimed on May 22 that Ukrainian forces conducted a loitering munition strike against a transport workshop at the ZNPP, but that the strike did not cause damage.[75] The ZNPP occupation authority also claimed that Ukrainian



forces have launched several drone strikes against residential and social facilities at the ZNPP in the past two days. Russian sources repeatedly claimed in April that Ukrainian forces had conducted drone strikes against the ZNPP.[76] Russia has routinely raised the specter of a radiological incident at the ZNPP to prompt negotiations with international organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), that aim to force these organizations to meet with Russian occupation officials and legitimize Russia's occupation of the ZNPP and by extension Russia's occupation of sovereign Ukrainian land.[77]

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

Russian forces conducted drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of May 21 to 22 and missile and glide bomb strikes against Kharkiv Oblast during the day on May 22. Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk reported that Russian forces launched 24 Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai, Kursk Oblast, and occupied Crimea and that Ukrainian forces shot down all 24 Shaheds over Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Donetsk, Sumy and Odesa oblasts on the night of May 21 to 22.[78] The Kharkiv Oblast Prosecutor's Office reported that Russian forces struck Chuhuiv with two S-400 missiles on the morning of May 22, injuring eight civilians.[79] Ukrainian authorities also reported that Russian forces struck Kharkiv City with two D-30SN guided glide bombs with universal joint glide munitions (UMPB), injuring 12 civilians.[80]

The Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office reported on May 22 that it is investigating a May 21 Russian missile strike against Pokrovsk, Donetsk Oblast, and noted that Russian forces have used Iskander ballistic missiles in previous strikes against the settlement.[81]

A Ukrainian brigade operating in Donetsk Oblast stated on May 18 that it has shot down four Russian Su-25 attack aircraft in the past two weeks.[82] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Major Ilya Yevlash stated on May 22 that the brigade used man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) to shoot down the aircraft and noted that Russian aircraft have been operating closer to the frontline under the assumption that Ukrainian forces continue to lack munitions.[83] ISW has not observed independent confirmation of the downing of these Russian aircraft.

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

Russian courts reportedly began forcibly hospitalizing Russians charged with political crimes such as spreading "fake" information about the Russian military, in psychiatric hospitals. Russian opposition outlet *Agentstvo Novosti* reported the Russian courts sentenced Russians involved in political cases to psychiatric care five times more often since 2023 than in 2021 and 2022.[84] Russian courts reportedly elected compulsory treatment as a punishment in at least 33 political cases over the past year and a half, despite on average sending up to three people to psychiatric hospitals every year before 2020, seven people in 2021, and three in 2022. Press secretary of the Russian human rights organization *OVD-Info* Dmitry Anisimov explained to *Agentstvo Novosti* that the Russian government began to

prosecute Russians who were charged with discrediting the Russian military and protesting the Kremlin's war in Ukraine in 2023, which increased the number of compulsory treatment sentences. Russian human rights activists told *Agenstvo Novosti* that the real number of Russians sentenced to compulsory treatment may be higher since more than half of such sentences issued between 2018 and 2023 occurred after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russian human rights activists also told *Agenstvo Novosti* that the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs previously sent political prisoners to specialized psychiatric hospitals in the late 1980s, although at a significantly larger scale than that reported in 2023 and 2024.[85]

Ukrainian investigative portal *Evocation.info* reported that an unnamed commander of the Russian 58th Combined Arms Army (CAA) personally prevented the removal of the BARS-8 irregular volunteer battalion from the Melitopol direction in late summer 2023, despite the battalion's extensive crimes against locals. *Evocation.info* published a profile report on the commander of the BARS-8 battalion, Denis Sidorenko (also known under the alias Maestro), who previously commanded the Russian 63rd Spetsnaz Regiment in Chechnya in the 1990s before facing corruption charges. *Evocation.info* reported that Russian officials offered Sidorenko command of the BARS-8 battalion in 2023 and that this battalion committed numerous kidnappings, extortion, and murders of several farmers and entrepreneurs in occupied Polohy Raion, Zaporizhia Oblast. *Evocation.info* reported that other Russian irregular volunteer units demanded the removal of the BARS-8 battalion from the frontline, but the commander of 58th CAA intervened in the scandal, causing BARS-8 personnel to stop committing crimes against locals. *Evocation.info* reported that BARS-8 began suffering significant casualties over winter 2024 partly due to poor training and materiel support, and because Sidorenko left the battalion without a commander to take an extended vacation.

The Russian State Duma adopted a bill in its first reading on May 21 about issuing payments to Russian troops fighting in Ukraine without requiring veterans and servicemembers to file an application.[86] Member of the Russian State Duma Committee on State Construction and Legislation Dmitry Vyatkin stated that the Russian government had already introduced a temporary non-declaration procedure in 2023 and that the Russian Social Fund established a mechanism to receive information about servicemen automatically receiving combat veteran statuses, which allow them to receive state compensations. The Russian government, however, has employed many irregular forces in combat that are likely not accounted for as veterans.

The Russian government is increasingly involving mercenaries from African countries, Cuba, and Serbia in combat engagements in Ukraine. A Russian state media broadcast revealed that a mercenary from Guinea fought in Ukraine.[87] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that 46 Cubans have been fighting in Ukraine since summer 2023 but have not received compensation from the Russian government.[88] A Russian milblogger also amplified a video reportedly showing African and Serbian mercenaries fighting in Ukraine.[89]

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

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) published footage on May 22 claiming to show Russian Su-30SM naval aviation fighters reportedly using long-range R-37M air-to-air missiles and a pair of R-77-

1 short-range missiles over the Black Sea.[90] A Russian milblogger claimed that this is the first video showing Russian Su-30SM using R-77-1 missiles.[91]

**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 propagandists and milbloggers amplified a false narrative that Ukrainian officials are unresponsive to Russian offers to carry out prisoner of war (POW) exchanges, likely as part of efforts to erode Ukrainians’ confidence in the Ukrainian government.[92] Russian propagandists and milbloggers amplified a document purportedly showing names of 500 Ukrainian POWs, whom Russian propagandist Margarita Simonyan claimed Ukrainian officials refused to exchange over the past four months.[93] Simonyan claimed that Ukrainian officials only wanted to return 38 servicemen from the Ukrainian Azov unit, and that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky does not care about returning the rest of the POWs. Ukrainian and Russian forces last conducted a one-to-one POW exchange on February 8.[94] Ukrainian officials, however, routinely report that the Russian government has been refusing to conduct POW exchanges since February 2024.[95] Ukrainian officials also warned that the Russian officials call relatives of Ukrainian POWs to convince them that the Ukrainian government does not want to return its POWs in an effort to undermine the social and political situation in Ukraine.[96]

The Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) attempted to compare the assassination attempt on Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico to the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme.[97] The SVR claimed that the assassination attempt against Fico shows that “adherents of the globalist sect” in the West are “moving towards open political terror against opponents” and are calling for the elimination of other “nationally oriented leaders” such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić. The SVR claimed that the crime against Fico is analogous to the murder of King and Palme, because they also tried to go against the “mainstream.”

**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)**

Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin met with Equatorial Guinean National Defense Minister Divisional General Victoriano Bibang Nsue Okomo in Belarus on MAY 22 and discussed bilateral military cooperation.[98]

**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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