

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, May 25, 2023

Karolina Hird, Riley Bailey, Nicole Wolkov, Layne Philipson, and Mason Clark

May 25, 2023, 5pm 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 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 cutoff for this product was 12pm ET on May 25. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 26 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.*

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin announced on May 25 that the Wagner Group began handing over its positions in Bakhmut to the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and claimed Wagner will entirely withdraw from the city on June 1. Footage posted on May 25 shows Prigozhin speaking with Wagner fighters in Bakhmut and announcing that Wagner began handing over their positions to the Russian MoD and withdrawing to rear areas of the city.[1] Prigozhin reminded some of the fighters that Wagner will withdraw from the city entirely and reconstitute, rest, and train following June 1.[2] Prigozhin also claimed that Wagner plans to leave behind ammunition and provisions for regular Russian troops if necessary and sardonically showed two Wagner fighters who he claimed he will leave behind for the Russian MoD.[3] ISW has previously reported that Prigozhin announced that Wagner would hand over its positions to the MoD starting on May 25 and withdraw from Bakhmut by June 1, but it remains unclear if Wagner will be able to withdraw the entirety of its contingent by June 1 and if Russian MoD troops will execute a successful relief in place.[4]

**Russia and Belarus signed agreements formally advancing preparations to deploy Russian tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus as part of a longstanding effort to cement Russia's *de facto* military control over Belarus, though Russia has not yet deployed nuclear weapons to Belarus and their possible deployment is highly unlikely to presage any Russian escalation.** Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin signed documents on the deployment of Russian non-strategic (tactical) nuclear weapons to Belarusian territory during a meeting of defense ministers of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in Minsk, Belarus on May 25.[5] Shoigu emphasized that Russia would retain control of the tactical nuclear weapons in the event of their deployment to Belarus and claimed that Belarusian aircraft are now capable of carrying nuclear weapons.[6] Russian President Vladimir Putin previously announced on March 25 that Russia would deploy tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus by July 1, likely to renew tired information operations about the potential for nuclear escalation over the war in Ukraine.[7] Russia has long fielded nuclear weapons that are able to strike any target that tactical nuclear weapons launched from Belarus could also hit, and ISW continues to assess that Putin is extraordinarily unlikely to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine or elsewhere.[8] Shoigu also announced that Russian forces will deploy additional military contingents to Belarus to develop military infrastructure, expand joint combat training, and conduct reconnaissance activities near the borders of the Union State.[9] The deployment of tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus requires both significant military infrastructure and Russian command and control over elements of

the Belarusian Armed Forces. The Kremlin likely intends to use these requirements to further subordinate the Belarusian security sphere under Russia.

**Russian President Vladimir Putin met with the leaders of the Eurasian Economic Union member states and several other post-Soviet heads of state at the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in Moscow on May 25, likely to expand sanctions evasion opportunities.** Armenian President Nikol Pashinyan, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, and Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov attended the meeting alongside leaders of non-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states, including Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon.[10] Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Executive Secretary Sergei Lebedev and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Secretary General Zhang Min also attended the meeting.[11] Putin, Pashinyan, and Tokayev all called on further development of the EAEU's relationship with third-party countries, including the negotiation of free trade agreements with the United Arab Emirates, India, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, and Iran.[12] Tokayev highlighted efforts to create new international transport routes to China, India, Pakistan, Iran, the Middle East, East Asia, and Southeast Asia.[13] Tokayev also offered to help Russia launch the 2873km Chelyabinsk-Bolshak-Iran high speed freight railway, a project similar to the recent agreement between Russia and Iran to build a segment of the North-South corridor railway project between Rasht and Astara in order to strengthen Russo-Iranian military-economic cooperation.[14] Putin also called for the EAEU to create technological alliances with third-party countries, likely aimed at securing critical components that Russia is struggling to produce or acquire itself.[15]

The Kremlin is likely attempting to convince EAEU member states and other post-Soviet countries to aid in the Kremlin's ongoing sanctions evasion schemes with China, Iran, and others by facilitating the logistics of those schemes.[16] Putin called for an increase in the number of new joint ventures under the common trademark "made in the EAEU," a measure likely aimed at rebranding Russian products as being EAEU products to avoid Western sanctions on exports.[17] Lukashenko and Tokayev both specifically called for the creation of a full-fledged Economic Union with a functioning common market, and Lukashenko claimed that EAEU representatives are discussing the creation of a common market for gas, oil, and petroleum products.[18] Belarus and Kazakhstan are likely both heavily involved in helping Russia evade sanctions, and the Kremlin is likely seeking to expand and formalize those relationships with the wider EAEU.[19] ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin appears to be leveraging its dominance in the CSTO to court member states to procure dual-use technologies that Russia cannot directly purchase due to Western sanctions, and it appears that the Kremlin is attempting to similarly leverage its role in the EAEU.[20]

**Belgorod Oblast Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov announced that Russian officials have created seven territorial defense battalions in Belgorod Oblast as of May 24, likely in order to posture his personal engagement in the defense of Russian border areas following the May 22 all-Russian pro-Ukrainian raid into Belgorod Oblast.**[21] Gladkov stated that the seven battalions comprise 3,000 people in total, noting that they are already combat-ready units.[22] Gladkov previously announced the creation of several territorial defense battalions in December 2022, and has likely re-upped discussion of them in response to increased anxiety in border areas following the May 22 raid.[23] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on May 24 that these battalions have a strong presence but are severely hindered by an inadequate weapons supply.[24] The milblogger claimed that United Russia Secretary General Andrey Turchak had urged President Putin to address the legal issues associated with providing weapons to the battalions a month ago.[25] These battalions, if left unfunded and unequipped, are very unlikely to have a substantial positive effect on the security of Russian border areas, however. The publicization of these

formations is also likely meant to support ongoing Russian information operations that aim to generate support for a protracted war by portraying Ukraine as existentially threatening Russia.

**Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin held a meeting with representatives of Russian oblasts bordering Ukraine to discuss fortifying border areas on May 24.**

Prigozhin proposed the creation of additional trenches, dugouts, and fire support along the Russia-Ukraine border, arguing that these structures can provide significant protection against possible military threats.[26] Prigozhin also emphasized the need to strengthen the presence of Russian forces along the border, expand the armament of border guards, and retrain them from using machine guns to grenade launchers.[27] Prigozhin stated that the May 22 raid of Belgorod Oblast by all-Russian pro-Ukrainian forces exposes how Russia lacks the rapid reaction forces needed to protect its borders against military threats.[28] Prigozhin stated that a general mobilization of the Russian population is inevitable, emphasizing the fact that Russian leadership can no longer snap its fingers to fix manpower shortcomings.[29] Prigozhin stated that a general mobilization should begin now in order to provide the people with the necessary training, a process that typically takes at least a minimum of four to six months.[30]

**Wagner and Russian forces have notably engaged in previous efforts to fortify border areas, and the recent Belgorod Oblast raid exposed major shortcomings in these efforts.** Belgorod Oblast Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov reported on March 9 that Russian authorities spent 10 billion rubles (about \$132 million) to construct the “Zasechnaya Line” of fortifications along Belgorod Oblast’s border with Ukraine.[31] Prigozhin announced the construction of a set of fortifications called the “Wagner Line” throughout Luhansk, Donetsk, and Belgorod oblasts in October 2022, and directly criticized the Russian bureaucracy for not supporting the construction of the line.[32] New calls to fortify Russian regions along the Russia-Ukraine border will likely have little substantial effect, with Russian and Wagner forces misallocating manpower that would be better suited supporting active offensive operations (or defenses in occupied Ukraine itself) by manning these fortifications. Existing fortifications and defensive preparations did little to thwart the limited May 22 raid into Belgorod. Prigozhin is likely taking advantage of information space anxieties surrounding this reality following the raid to build out his own domestic influence.

**Russian political strategist Konstantin Dolgov claimed on May 25 that he was fired as a result of his May 23 interview with Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin.** Dolgov published a post to his Telegram channel alleging that he was fired from his position with Russian propaganda platform *Telega Online* “because of an interview with Prigozhin” and refuted claims that he had previous plans to leave.[33] Prigozhin used his interview with Dolgov to highlight the massive scale of losses suffered by the Wagner Group during the Battle of Bakhmut, mount scathing critiques against Defense Minister Shoigu and Chief of the Russian General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov, attack the families of Russian elites, and vaguely threaten violence against the broader Russian military establishment.[34] Dolgov complained that he is being personally punished for Prigozhin’s replies because Russian authorities cannot do anything about Prigozhin himself and suggested that Russian President Vladimir Putin would disagree with his firing.[35] Dolgov’s firing may be part of a larger informational campaign pushed by Russian authorities that is aimed at quietly disenfranchising Prigozhin in an attempt to counterbalance Prigozhin’s ever-growing platform, which continues to deprive Russian military officials of informational oxygen.

**Russia conducted another massive Shahed-131/136 drone strike across Ukraine on the night of May 24 to 25.** Ukrainian military sources reported that Russian forces launched 36 Shahed-131/136 drones at Ukraine from the northern and southern directions and that Ukraine shot down all 36 of the drones.[36] Russian milbloggers claimed that some of the drones reached their intended targets through rear areas of Ukraine, including Kyiv Oblast.[37] Ukraine’s Southern

Operational Command noted on May 25 that Ukraine has destroyed 357 Shahed-type drones since Russia began using them in 2022.[38] The White House reported on May 15 that Russia has purchased over 400 drones (primarily Shaheds) from Iran since August 2022.[39] The suggestion that Ukraine has shot down 357 Shahed drones since August 2022 is likely inflated—Ukrainian officials may sometimes count drone crashes due to user error or technical malfunction as official shoot downs, so the actual number is likely to be somewhat lower.

**Russian President Vladimir Putin continued attempts to portray Russia as an effective international mediator by mediating negotiations between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.** Kremlin newswire *RIA Novosti* reported on May 25 that Pashinyan stated that Armenia and Azerbaijan have agreed on a mutual recognition of territorial integrity.[40] Aliyev noted that Armenia and Azerbaijan could reach a peace agreement now that Armenia recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported that Pashinyan qualified that statement on May 22 and emphasized that Armenia would recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan on the condition that Azerbaijan ensures the security of Nagorno-Karabakh’s Armenian residents.[41] Russian media reported that Putin noted the importance of the agreement and facilitated bilateral talks with Pashinyan and Aliyev before holding a trilateral meeting.[42] European Council President Charles Michel has also held talks to normalize Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, and Putin is likely seeking to act as a diplomatic counter-balance to the European involvement in Eurasian affairs.[43]

## Key Takeaways

- **Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin announced on May 25 that the Wagner Group began handing over its positions in Bakhmut to the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and claimed Wagner will entirely withdraw from the city on June 1. It remains unclear if Wagner will be able to withdraw the entirety of its contingent by June 1 and if Russian MoD troops will execute a successful relief in place.**
- **Russia and Belarus signed agreements formally advancing preparations to deploy Russian tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus as part of a longstanding effort to cement Russia’s *de facto* military control over Belarus, though Russia has not yet deployed nuclear weapons to Belarus and their possible deployment is highly unlikely to presage any Russian escalation.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin met with the leaders of the Eurasian Economic Union member states and several other post-Soviet heads of state at the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in Moscow on May 25, likely to expand sanctions evasion opportunities.**
- **Belgorod Oblast Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov announced that Russian officials have created seven territorial defense battalions in Belgorod Oblast as of May 24, likely in order to posture his engagement in the defense of Russian border areas following the May 22 all-Russian pro-Ukrainian raid into Belgorod Oblast.**
- **Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin held a meeting with representatives of Russian oblasts bordering Ukraine to discuss fortifying border areas on May 24.**
- **Wagner and Russian forces have notably engaged in previous efforts to fortify border areas, and the recent Belgorod Oblast raid exposed major shortcomings in these efforts.**
- **Russian political strategist Konstantin Dolgov claimed on May 25 that he was fired as a result of his May 23 interview with Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin.**

- **Russia conducted another massive Shahed-131/136 drone strike across Ukraine on the night of May 24 to 25.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin continued attempts to portray Russia as an effective international mediator by mediating negotiations between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.**
- **Russian forces continued limited ground attacks northeast of Kupyansk and south of Kreminna.**
- **Russian forces continued limited ground attacks around Bakhmut as Wagner Group forces reportedly began their withdrawal from frontline areas the city.**
- **Russian forces continued ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line.**
- **Russian sources claimed that Russian forces shot down six drones over Crimea.**
- **Russian forces are reportedly continuing to recruit personnel with various diseases.**
- **Russian occupation officials continue to announce partnerships with various local Russian officials to improve the standard of living in occupied territories.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 25, 2023, 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 these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.***

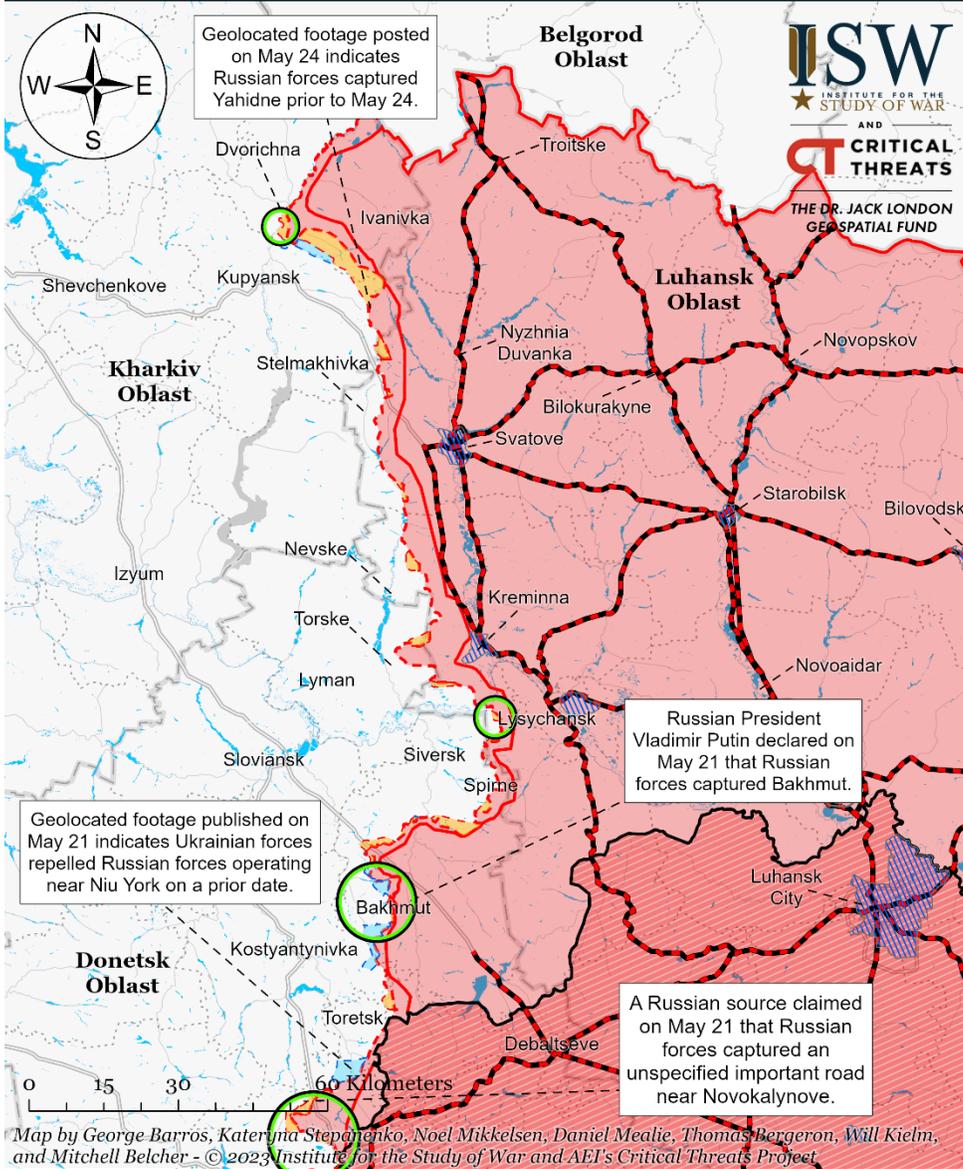
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas

### **Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine**

#### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)**

Russian forces continued limited ground attacks northeast of Kupyansk and south of Kreminna on May 25. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Masyutivka, Kharkiv Oblast (13km northeast of Kupyansk) and Bilohorivka, Luhansk Oblast (12km south of Kreminna).[44] Geolocated footage published on May 24 shows Ukrainian forces recapturing positions on the eastern outskirts of Spirne (25km south of Kreminna) on an unspecified date.[45] A Russian milblogger claimed that positional battles continued near Bilohorivka and Spirne and that Russian forces did not conduct offensive operations in the Kreminna area on May 24.[46]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of May 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

\* 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 Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian Objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

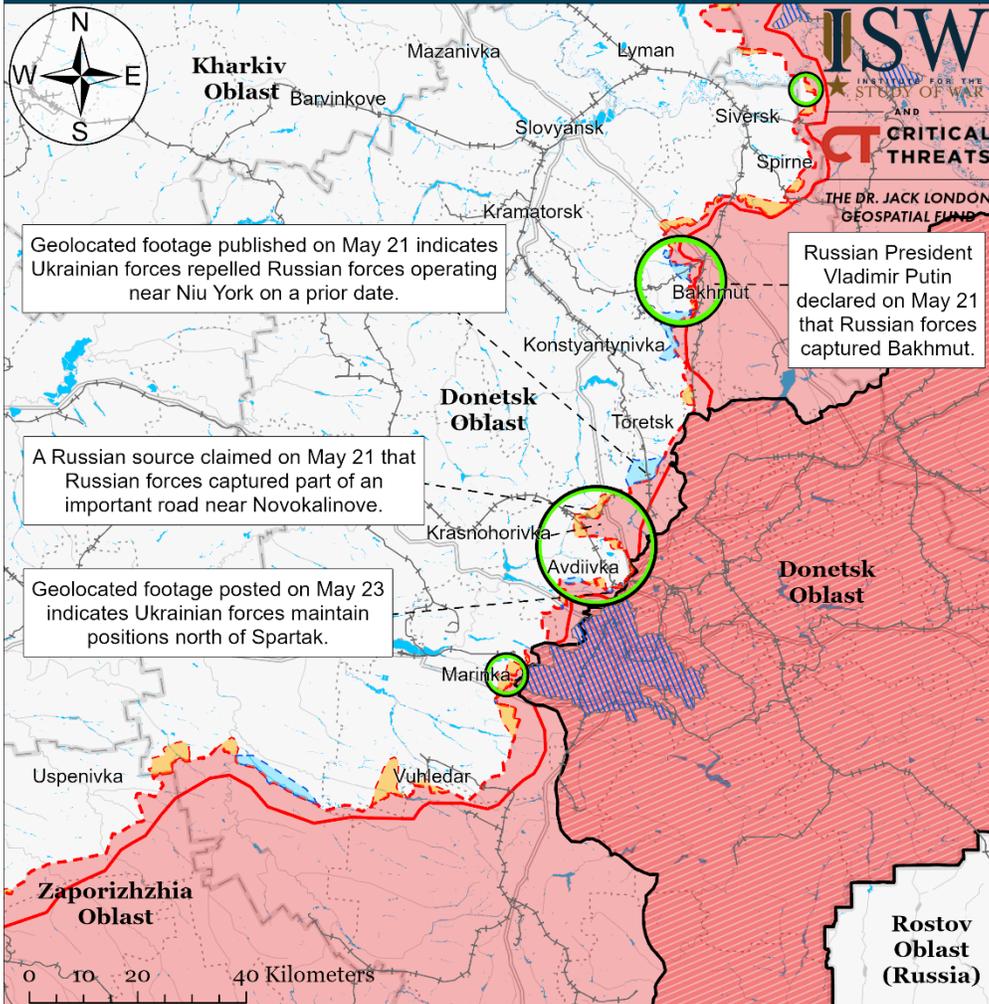
***Click here to read ISW's new retrospective analysis on the Battle for Bakhmut.***

Russian forces continued limited ground attacks around Bakhmut as Wagner Group forces reportedly began their withdrawal from frontline areas the city on May 25. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops conducted unsuccessful offensive operations in the direction of Bakhmut and Ivanivske (3km southwest of Bakhmut).[47] Footage posted on May 25 shows Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin speaking with Wagner fighters in Bakhmut and discussing how they have begun to withdraw to the rear of Bakhmut and will entirely withdraw from the city on June 1.[48] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have shifted their focus to the T0504 Chasiv Yar-Bakhmut and O0506 Khromove-Bakhmut highways and remarked that heavy fighting continues on the flanks of Bakhmut.[49] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces are now trying to capture Ivanivske and Khromove (3km due west of Bakhmut).[50] Several Russian sources indicated that forces of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) are increasingly arriving in Bakhmut and supplanting Wagner fighters within the city.[51]

Russian forces continued ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on May 25. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops conducted unsuccessful offensive operations north of Donetsk City near Avdiivka and Novokalynove; on the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka; and on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City near Marinka.[52] Geolocated footage posted on May 22 shows that Russian forces have made a marginal advance towards Polihrafichna Street in western Marinka.[53] Additional geolocated footage posted on May 23 shows that Ukrainian troops may hold positions south of Avdiivka near Opytne.[54] Russian milbloggers claimed that positional battles continued in the Avdiivka area near Novobakhmutivka and Novokalynove.[55]

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed or claimed ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on May 25.[56]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of May 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

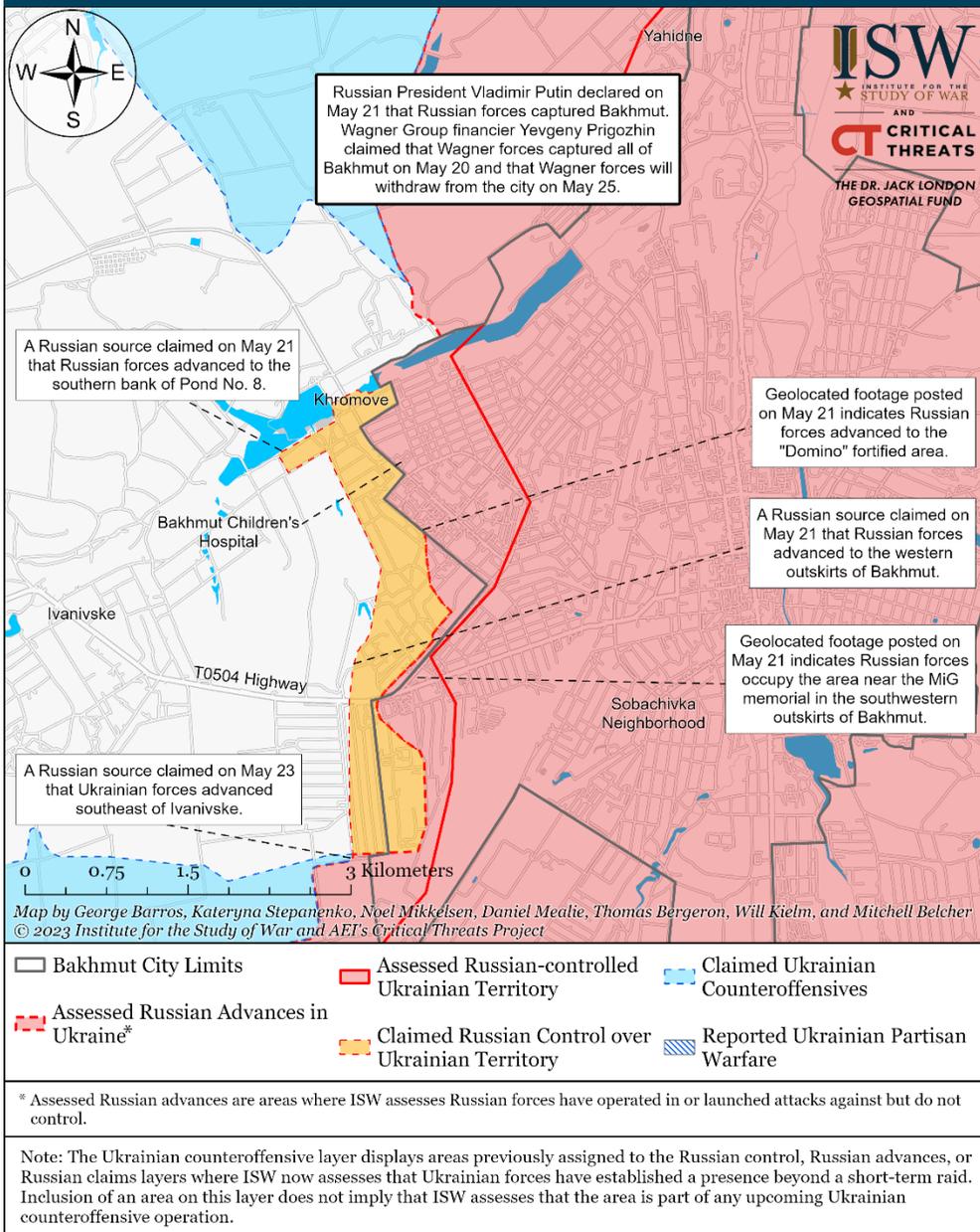


	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours		Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory		Major Railroads
	Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24		Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory		Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*		Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives		

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

Note: 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.

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of May 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



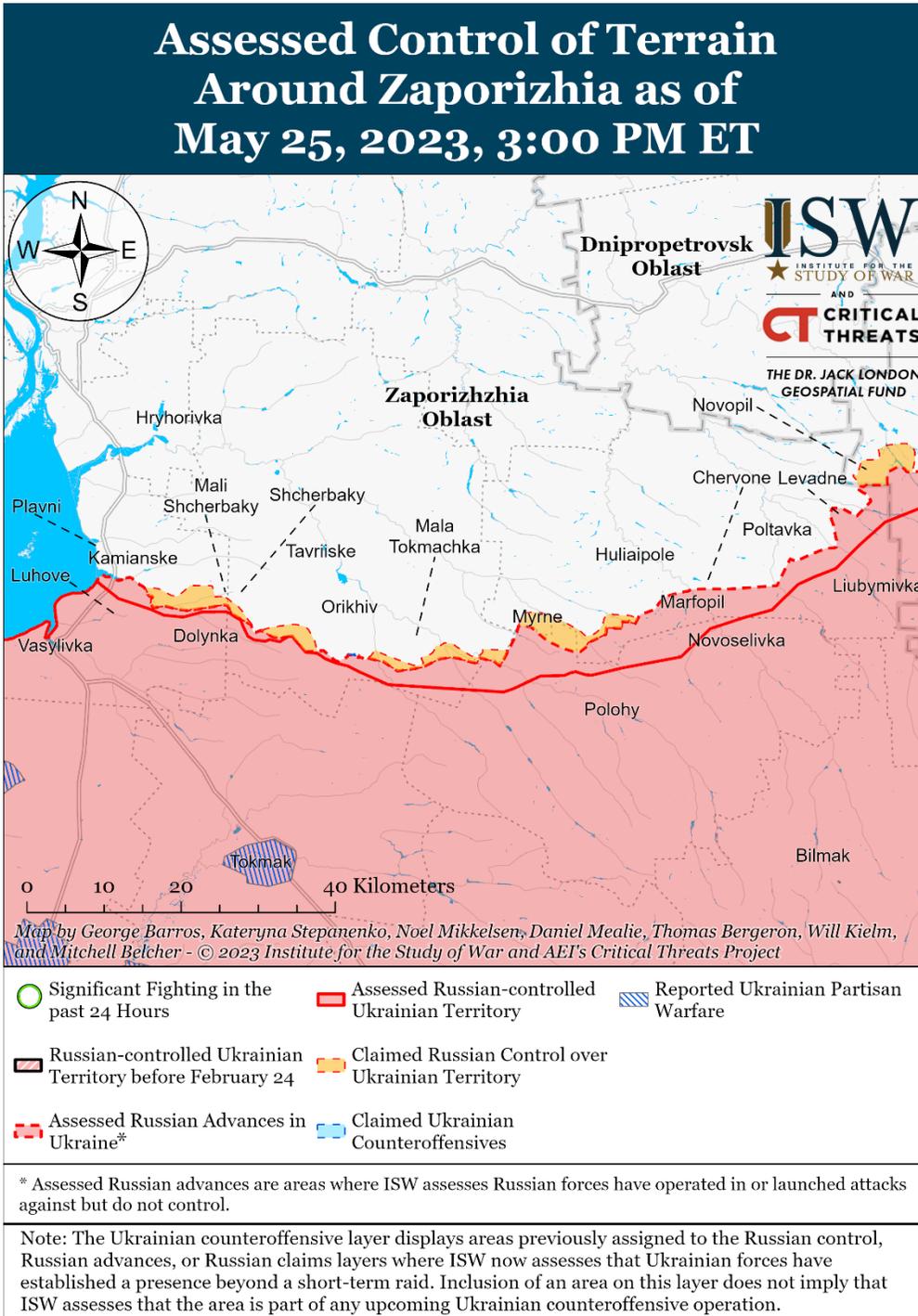
## **Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

Russian sources claim that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian Su-25 attack aircraft over Zaporizhia Oblast on May 25. A Russian milblogger published footage purportedly showing the aftermath of a Ukrainian anti-aircraft missile defenses striking a Russian Su-25 in an unspecified location in Zaporizhia Oblast.[57] Other milbloggers amplified reports of smoke near Melitopol and claimed that Ukrainian forces downed the Su-25.[58]

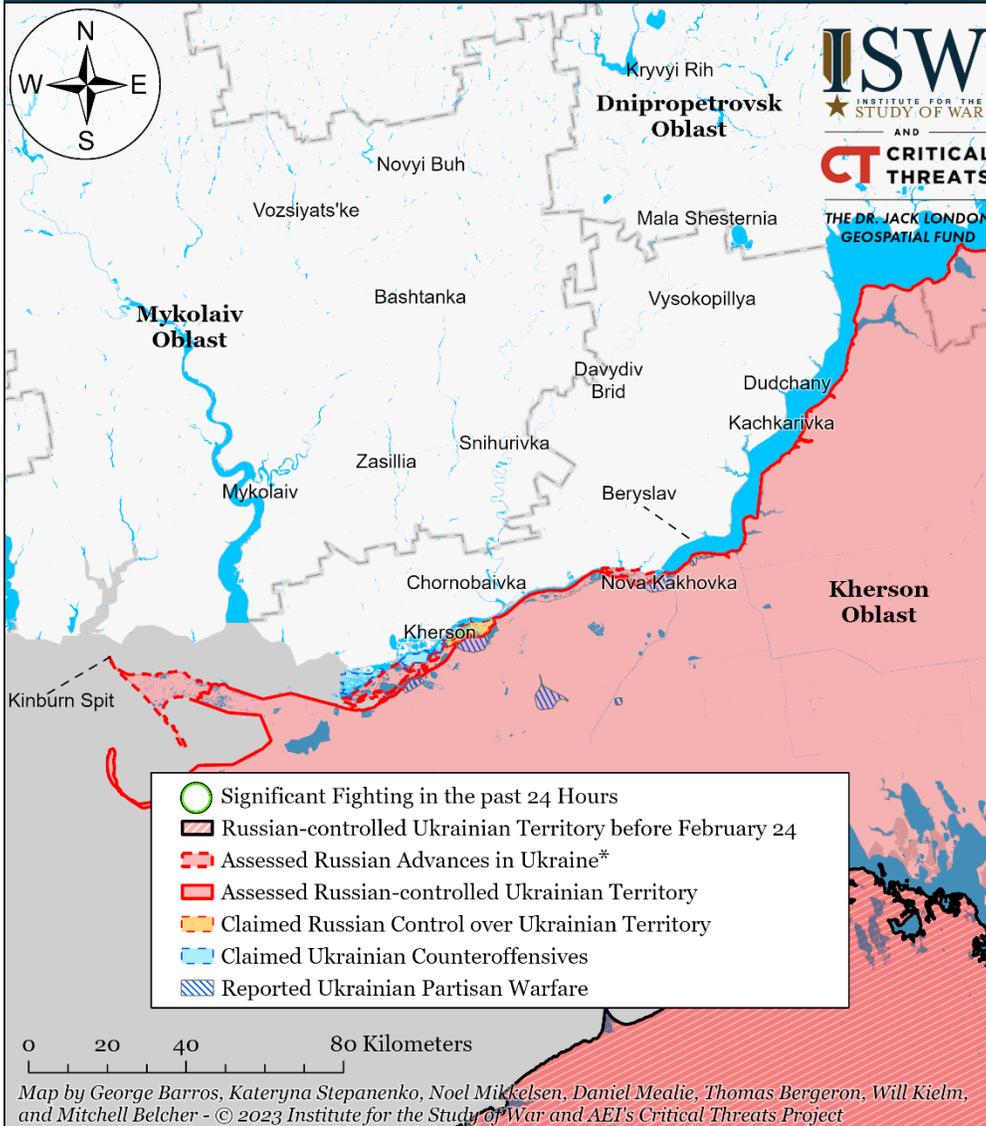
Russian forces continued to target Ukrainian positions in southern Ukraine with FAB-500 aerial bombs on May 25. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces conducted

two KAB (a FAB-500 variant) strikes near Beryslav in Kherson Oblast.[59] Milbloggers published footage purportedly showing Russian aerial bomb strikes near Beryslav on May 24 and 25.[60]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces shot down six drones over Crimea on May 25. Crimean occupation administration head Sergei Aksyonov and Sevastopol occupation governor Mikhail Razvozhayev claimed that Russian air defenses and elements of the Black Sea Fleet shot down six drones over Sevastopol and other areas of Crimea on the night of May 24 to 25.[61] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces launched seven drones, which Russian forces downed near Dzhankoi, Sterehushche, Maslove, and Zavetne.[62]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 25, 2023, 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 Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)**

Russian forces are reportedly continuing to recruit personnel with various diseases as part of an ongoing crypto-mobilization campaign. *BBC's* Russian service reported on May 5 that the Russian MoD refused to expand the list of diseases that would exempt an individual from mobilization.[63] Russian independent news outlet *Verstka* reported that Russian forces recruit personnel who are HIV positive, have tuberculosis, and hepatitis.[64] *Verstka* reported that a minimum of hundreds of Russian military personnel, including contract soldiers, mobilized personnel, and volunteers, have

HIV. ISW has previously reported on Russian forces and the Wagner Group recruiting personnel with various diseases.[65]

The Russian defense industrial base (DIB) continues to face production challenges due to personnel shortages. Russian First Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Vasily Osmakov reportedly stated that the main challenge facing Russian industry is a lack of personnel, not sanctions.[66] Director for Special Assignments of Concern at Uralvagonzavod (Russia's sole tank factory) Kirill Fedorov reportedly claimed that one of Uralvagonzavod's manufacturers ChTZ-Uraltrak increased the number of its employees by 30 percent in order to increase production for the war, however.[67] ISW has previously reported on Russian defense firms struggling with personnel and specialist shortages.[68]

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

Russian occupation officials continue to announce partnerships with various local Russian officials to improve the standard of living in occupied territories. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) head Denis Pushilin stated on May 25 that he met with Kemerovo Oblast Governor Sergey Tsvilev to discuss restoring roads, schools, hospitals, and other civilian infrastructure in occupied Horlivka, to which Kemerovo Oblast is a patron.[69] Tsvilev announced that Kemerovo Oblast has organized a "summer vacation" for 500 children of occupied Donetsk Oblast.[70] Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo stated on May 25 that a group of Russian federal officials visited occupied Kherson Oblast for a two-day working trip to discuss opportunities to improve socio-economic conditions in the region, including developing schools and regulating the price and supply of medicine.[71] Crimean occupation head Sergey Aksyonov thanked Russian President Putin on May 25 for authorizing the provision of 6.7 rubles (about \$83.7 million) for road repair.[72]

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to consolidate economic control of occupied territories. Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo stated on May 24 that his administration has officially introduced a decree aimed at regulating retail prices during the ongoing period of martial law.[73] Saldo stated that the occupied Kherson Oblast Department of Retail and Trade created a list of goods that are regulated against maximum prices, to which individual entrepreneurs, occupation authorities, and legal entities must adhere. Saldo stated that those who violate the order will first receive a warning and, for additional offenses, face fines ranging from 20,000 rubles (about \$250) to 100,000 (about \$1,250).[74]

Russian occupation authorities continue to advertise the successful provision of housing certificates and lump-sum social support payments to residents of occupied territories. Kherson Oblast occupation Ministry of Labor and Social Policy claimed on May 25 that every applicant who applied for housing certificates and one-time payments between January 2023 and June 2023 will receive housing certificates and a one-time, lump-sum payment.[75]

**Significant activity in Belarus (ISW assesses that a Russian or Belarusian attack into northern Ukraine in early 2023 is extraordinarily unlikely and has thus restructured this section of the update. It will no longer include counter-indicators for such an offensive.)**

**ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus, but these are not indicators that Russian and Belarusian forces are preparing for an imminent attack on Ukraine from Belarus. ISW will revise this text and its**

**assessment if it observes any unambiguous indicators that Russia or Belarus is preparing to attack northern Ukraine.**

See topline text.

**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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[1] <https://t.me/readovkanews/59497>; [https://t.me/grey\\_zone/18830](https://t.me/grey_zone/18830); [https://t.me/concordgroup\\_official/1040](https://t.me/concordgroup_official/1040); [https://t.me/z\\_arhiv/21580](https://t.me/z_arhiv/21580); <https://t.me/sotaproject/59586>; <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/05/25/evgeniy-prigozhin-ob-yavil-o-nachale-vyvoda-podrazdeleniy-chvk-vagnera-iz-bahmuta>; [https://t.me/istories\\_media/2578](https://t.me/istories_media/2578)

[2] <https://t.me/readovkanews/59497>; [https://t.me/grey\\_zone/18830](https://t.me/grey_zone/18830); [https://t.me/concordgroup\\_official/1040](https://t.me/concordgroup_official/1040); [https://t.me/z\\_arhiv/21580](https://t.me/z_arhiv/21580); <https://t.me/sotaproject/59586>; <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/05/25/evgeniy-prigozhin-ob-yavil-o-nachale-vyvoda-podrazdeleniy-chvk-vagnera-iz-bahmuta>; [https://t.me/istories\\_media/2578](https://t.me/istories_media/2578)

[3] <https://t.me/readovkanews/59497>; [https://t.me/grey\\_zone/18830](https://t.me/grey_zone/18830); [https://t.me/concordgroup\\_official/1040](https://t.me/concordgroup_official/1040); [https://t.me/z\\_arhiv/21580](https://t.me/z_arhiv/21580); <https://t.me/sotaproject/59586>; <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/05/25/evgeniy-prigozhin-ob-yavil-o-nachale-vyvoda-podrazdeleniy-chvk-vagnera-iz-bahmuta>; [https://t.me/istories\\_media/2578](https://t.me/istories_media/2578)

[4] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar052223>

[5] [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/26833](https://t.me/mod_russia/26833); [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/26832](https://t.me/mod_russia/26832); [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/26834](https://t.me/mod_russia/26834); <https://t.me/modmilby/28149>; <https://t.me/modmilby/28148>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/59496>; <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/05/25/v-minske-podpisany-dokumenty-o-razmeschenii-rossiyskogo-yadernogo-oruzhiya-vbelarusi>

[6] [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/26833](https://t.me/mod_russia/26833); [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/26832](https://t.me/mod_russia/26832); [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/26834](https://t.me/mod_russia/26834); <https://t.me/modmilby/28149>; <https://t.me/modmilby/28148>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/59496>; <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/05/25/v-minske-podpisany-dokumenty-o-razmeschenii-rossiyskogo-yadernogo-oruzhiya-vbelarusi>

[7] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar032523>

[8] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar032523>

[9] [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/26829](https://t.me/mod_russia/26829)

[10] <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/71204>

[11] <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/71204>

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[13] <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/71204>

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