



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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May 26, 2024, 4:35pm 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 12:00pm ET on May 26. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 27 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian forces are reportedly concentrating forces of unspecified size in western Belgorod Oblast near the border with Ukraine, likely to fix and draw Ukrainian forces to the area and prepare for offensive operations that aim to expand the Russian foothold in the international border area in northeastern Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on May 26 that Russian forces are preparing for new offensive actions and are concentrating a grouping of an unspecified size near the Ukrainian border 90 kilometers northwest of Kharkiv City.[1] Zelensky appears to be referring to the Grayvoron-Borisovka-Proletarskiy area in western Belgorod Oblast, and ISW has observed satellite imagery of the area that suggests that Russian forces have expanded activities at depots and warehouses in settlements in the area in recent weeks.[2] The current size of the possible Russian force concentration in the Grayvoron-Borisovka-Proletarskiy area remains unclear, however. Ukrainian State Border Service Representative Andrei Demchenko stated on May 26 that Russian forces may launch offensive operations into Sumy Oblast or areas of Kharkiv Oblast bordering Sumy Oblast in order to stretch and fix Ukrainian forces further along the international border area in northeastern Ukraine.[3]

The Grayvoron-Borisovka-Proletarskiy area would notably offer Russian forces opportunities to launch offensive operations to the south in the direction of Zolochiv and Bohodukhiv, two Ukrainian towns northwest of Kharkiv City within 25 kilometers of the international border, or to the west in the direction of settlements along the P-45 highway that connects Bohodukhiv with Sumy City. Russian forces could pursue offensive operations in either one or both directions, and the Russian concentration here could be intended to cause Ukrainian forces to commit manpower and materiel to a wider section of the border in Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts. Russian forces are also concentrating limited forces in Kursk and Bryansk oblasts close to the border with Sumy Oblast, and even limited concentrations in the areas

could aim to achieve the likely desired effect of further drawing and fixing Ukrainian forces in the international border area.[4] Russian forces are currently bringing the Northern Grouping of Forces in the international border area up to its reported planned end strength and will likely launch only limited offensive operations along the Sumy-Kharkiv axis until the Northern Grouping of Forces is closer to its end strength.[5] Even limited Russian offensive operations in these areas will add pressure that stretches Ukrainian manpower and materiel along a wider front and possibly allow Russian forces to establish tactical footholds to support subsequent operations either northwest of Kharkiv City or in the direction of Sumy City. The Northern Grouping of Forces, even at the upper limit of its reported end strength, will lack the necessary manpower needed to conduct a successful operation to envelop, encircle, or seize Kharkiv or Sumy cities, however.

Western officials continue to publicly debate Ukraine's right to use Western-provided weapons to strike military targets in Russia amid Russian efforts to persuade the West to continue its self-imposed limitations and divide the NATO alliance. Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski stated during an interview with *The Guardian* published on May 25 that Poland supports Ukraine's right to strike military targets within Russia and that the West must stop "constantly limiting" its support for Ukraine.[6] Sikorski noted that Russia continues to strike civilian infrastructure in Ukraine and that Europe must improve its ability to "play the escalation game... by keeping Putin guessing." Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani stated on May 26 that Ukraine should only use Italian-provided weapons within Ukraine, and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stated that there is "no reason" to lift the West's restrictions on Ukraine's use of Western weapons to strike within Russia as Germany's restrictions "work." [7] Chairperson of Ukraine's Permanent Delegation to NATO's Parliamentary Assembly Yehor Chernev insinuated that the White House is reviewing its policy restricting Ukraine's ability to strike targets in Russia with US-provided weapons, which is consistent with the *New York Times* May 22 report that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is urging US President Joe Biden to lift these restrictions.[8] ISW continues to assess that Western limitations on Ukraine's ability to strike military targets in Russia have created a sanctuary in Russia's border area from which Russian aircraft can conduct glide bomb and missile strikes against Ukrainian positions and where Russian forces and equipment can freely assemble before entering combat.[9]

Sikorski also insinuated during his May 25 interview that US officials have threatened to strike Russian military concentrations and frontline positions in Ukraine if Russia uses tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine, which prompted a response from Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev who threatened that a US strike against a Russian target in Ukraine would "start a world war." [10] Medvedev denied that the US has issued such a threat, criticized Sikorski as inept, and threatened that Poland would "get its share of radioactive ash" if NATO places tactical nuclear weapons in Poland. Medvedev issued this threat on his English language X (formerly Twitter) account, suggesting that his statements are meant for an international audience. Medvedev may be attempting to single out Sikorski's statements as escalatory in order to drive a wedge between Poland and other NATO member states. Russian officials will likely continue to demand that the West respect arbitrary "red lines" on Western support for Ukraine in the face of continual Russian war crimes and aggression, particularly as the West continues to debate allowing Ukraine to use Western weapons to strike targets in Russia.

Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) will reportedly manufacture and refurbish three times as many artillery shells as the West will produce in 2024, although Russian shells reportedly suffer from quality-control issues and Ukrainian artillery is reportedly more

precise than Russian artillery. *Sky News*, citing open-source research from US-based consulting firm Bain & Company, reported on May 26 that Russian DIB producers will likely be able to manufacture and refurbish 4.5 million artillery shells in 2024 compared to 1.3 million artillery shells that the US and European countries will collectively produce in 2024.[11] *Sky News* reported that it costs Western countries about \$4,000 to produce one NATO-standard 155mm shell – although this price "significantly" varies depending on the country of production – while it costs Russia about \$1,000 to produce one 152mm shell. The report does not make clear if the dollar value comparison between the price to produce one shell accounts for the difference in purchasing power parity between Western countries and Russia, however. A Ukrainian artillery battery commander operating in northern Kharkiv Oblast told *Sky News* that Russian forces operating in this area have a five-to-one artillery shell advantage but noted that Ukrainian forces can "completely destroy" a target using one to three shells. Ukrainian and Western officials and several Russian milbloggers previously stated that Ukrainian artillery is more precise than Russian artillery despite the fact that Russian artillery supplies greatly outnumber those of Ukrainian forces.[12] Russian milbloggers recently complained that the amount of gunpowder in Russian artillery shells widely varies, causing artillery systems to perform inconsistently.[13] The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) reported in March that Russia currently has about three million rounds of old artillery ammunition in its stockpiles, but that much of it is in poor condition.[14] RUSI and other Western analysts also assessed that Russia's current domestic ammunition production is not sufficient for its war in Ukraine, so Russia will likely continue relying on supplies from partners.[15] Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi reported in February that Russia had imported about 1.5 million rounds of ammunition from North Korea, but that about half of the munitions did not function and the other half required restoration or inspection before use.[16]

Kremlin officials continue to indicate that Russia is not interested in meaningful negotiations with Ukraine and promote Kremlin information operations that aim to push the West to make concessions on Ukraine's sovereign territory and people. Chairperson of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin claimed on May 26 that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky violated the Ukrainian constitution by "canceling" elections and is not the legitimate leader of Ukraine.[17] Volodin alleged that Zelensky therefore has no right to make official decisions, including announcing mobilization. Volodin claimed that Ukraine "ceased to exist as a rule of law state" in 2014 and that "any agreements with an illegitimate president are invalid and may be challenged in the future." Volodin's statements are in line with multiple longstanding Kremlin narratives about Ukrainian electoral law and Ukraine's legitimacy over the past decade. Putin claimed on May 24 that the Ukrainian parliament and constitutional court need to examine the Ukrainian constitution to determine the legality of officials remaining in office past their stated terms.[18] The Ukrainian law defining martial law, which Ukraine has been under since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, clearly states that "conducting elections of the President of Ukraine" is "prohibited in the conditions of martial law." [19] The Kremlin has also consistently promoted narratives that the Ukrainian state and government lost its legitimacy, sovereignty, and independence as a result of the EuroMaidan movement in 2014.[20] Volodin's May 26 statement suggests that Russia does not consider any agreements it made with Ukraine since 2014 as valid and that Russia will likely also not respect any future agreements it makes with the current Ukrainian government, including any possible future negotiated settlement. The Kremlin has repeatedly promoted information operations that aim to persuade the West to make concessions on Ukrainian territorial integrity and sovereignty.[21] Any negotiated settlement that does not directly involve the legitimate government of Ukraine would be ignoring Ukraine's sovereignty as an independent state.

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian forces are reportedly concentrating forces of unspecified size in western Belgorod Oblast near the border with Ukraine, likely to fix and draw Ukrainian forces to the area and prepare for offensive operations that aim to expand the Russian foothold in the international border area in northeastern Ukraine.**
- **Western officials continue to publicly debate Ukraine's right to use Western-provided weapons to strike military targets in Russia amid Russian efforts to persuade the West to continue its self-imposed limitations and divide the NATO alliance.**
- **Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) will reportedly manufacture and refurbish three times as many artillery shells as the West will produce in 2024, although Russian shells reportedly suffer from quality-control issues and Ukrainian artillery is reportedly more precise than Russian artillery.**
- **Kremlin officials continue to indicate that Russia is not interested in meaningful negotiations with Ukraine and promote Kremlin information operations that aim to push the West to make concessions on Ukraine's sovereign territory and people.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Svatove, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City.**
- **Former Wagner Group fighters reportedly continue to form new units under Rosgvardia and Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 26, 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

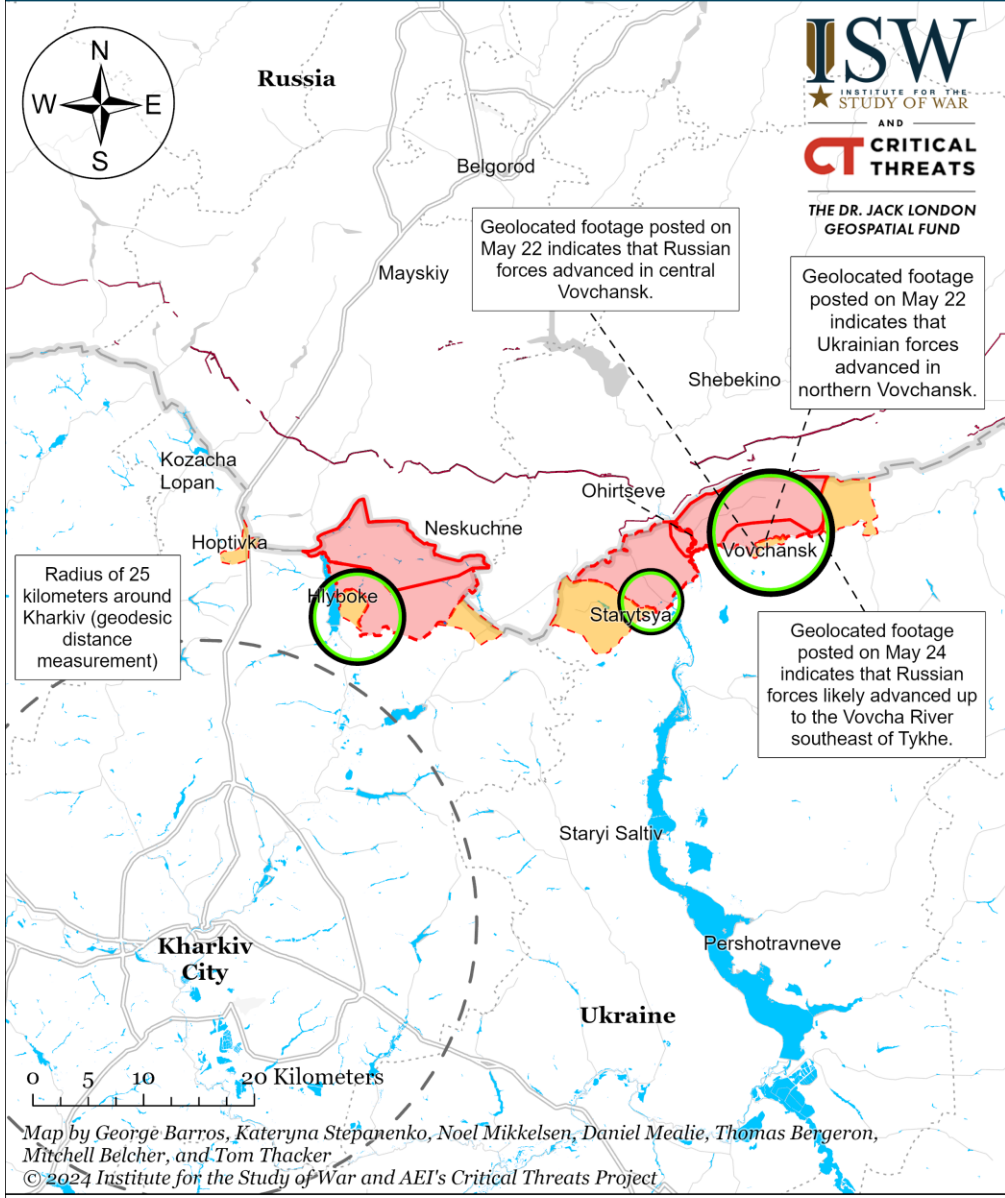
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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)

Ukrainian forces reportedly recently regained positions near Lyptsi (north of Kharkiv City) amid continued fighting in the area on May 26, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Voloshyn stated on May 26 that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces out of positions in the direction of Strilecha-Hlyboke (north Lyptsi) and that Russian forces continue attempting to break through to Lyptsi but that Ukrainian forces are preventing Russian forces from advancing along the Hlyboke-Lyptsi road.[22] Fighting continued near Lyptsi; north of Lyptsi near Hlyboke; and east of Lyptsi near Lukyantsi and Neskuchne.[23] Several Russian milbloggers continued to characterize the fighting in northern Kharkiv Oblast as "positional."[24]

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Vovchansk (northeast of Kharkiv City) on May 26, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. Voloshyn stated that Russian infantry units are conducting assaults in Vovchansk but that Ukrainian forces are pushing Russian forces out of unspecified positions.[25] Fighting also continued within Vovchansk and west of Vovchansk near Starytsya.[26] Elements of the Russian 138th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) reportedly continue operating within Vovchansk.[27]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Tom Thacker
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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	

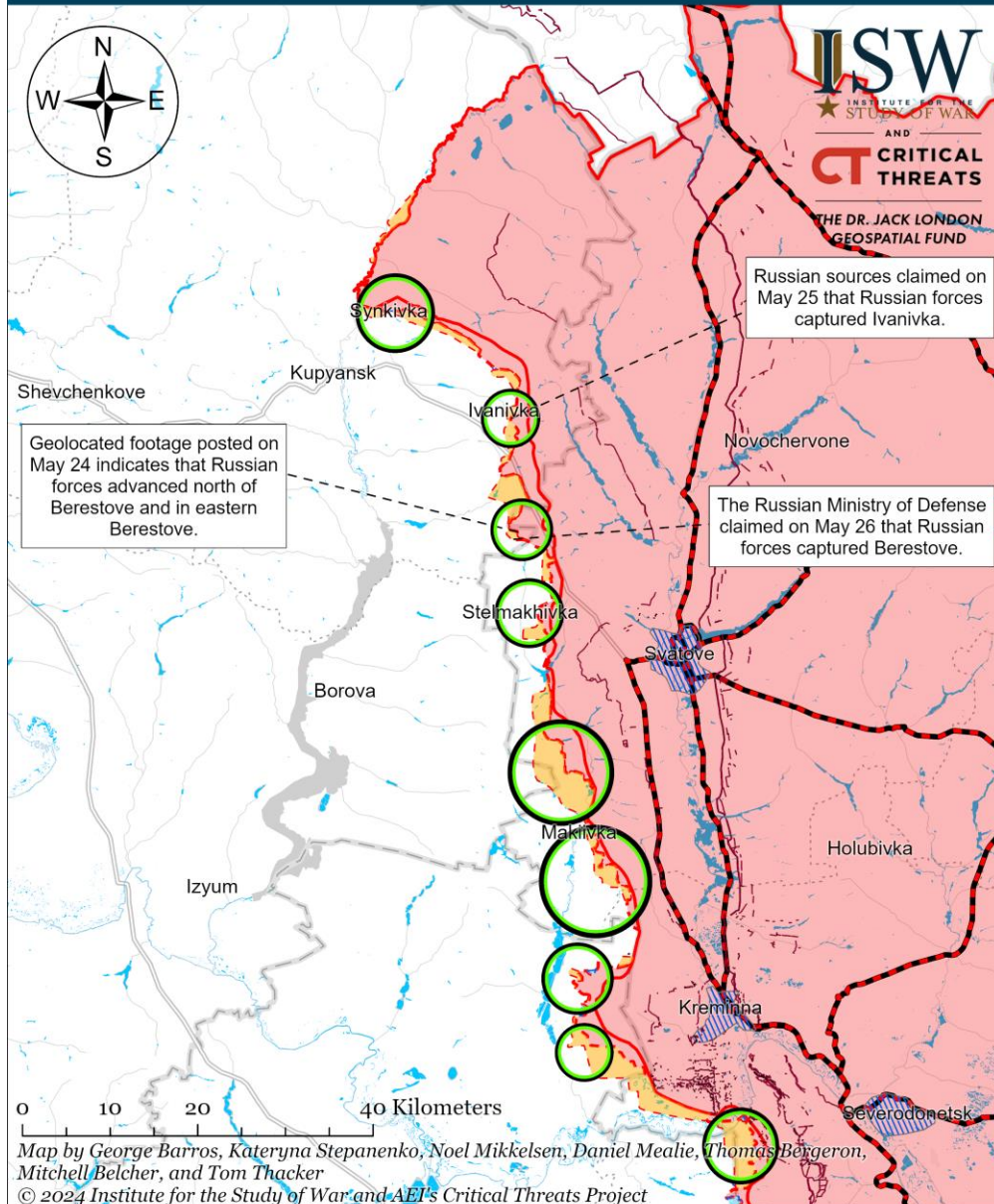
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on May 23 that Russian forces were advancing 500 meters per day in the Lyptsi direction. 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.

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 recently advanced northwest of Svatove and continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line on May 26. Geolocated footage published on May 26 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced into southeastern Ivanivka (northwest of Svatove).[28] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces seized Berestove (northwest of Svatove) and Russian milbloggers continued to claim that elements of the Russian 26th Tank Regiment (47th Tank Division, 1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) seized Ivanivka, although ISW has not observed confirmation that Russian forces have seized either settlement.[29] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced south of Ivanivka and advanced along a front two kilometers wide and 1.37 kilometers deep north of Kyslivka (northwest of Svatove and immediately south of Ivanivka).[30] Russian milbloggers claimed on May 25 and 26 that Russian forces advanced near Kotlyarivka (northwest of Svatove and south of Kyslivka) and closer to Stepova Novoselivka (northwest of Svatove and immediately west of Ivanivka).[31] ISW has not observed confirmation of these Russian claims. Russian forces also continued offensive operations northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka; west of Svatove near Myasozharivka; and southwest of Svatove near Novoyehorivka, Hrekivka, and Druzhelyubivka.[32] Elements of the Russian 752nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (3rd Motorized Rifle Division, 20th Combined Arms Army, [CAA], MMD) are reportedly operating near Novoyehorivka.[33]

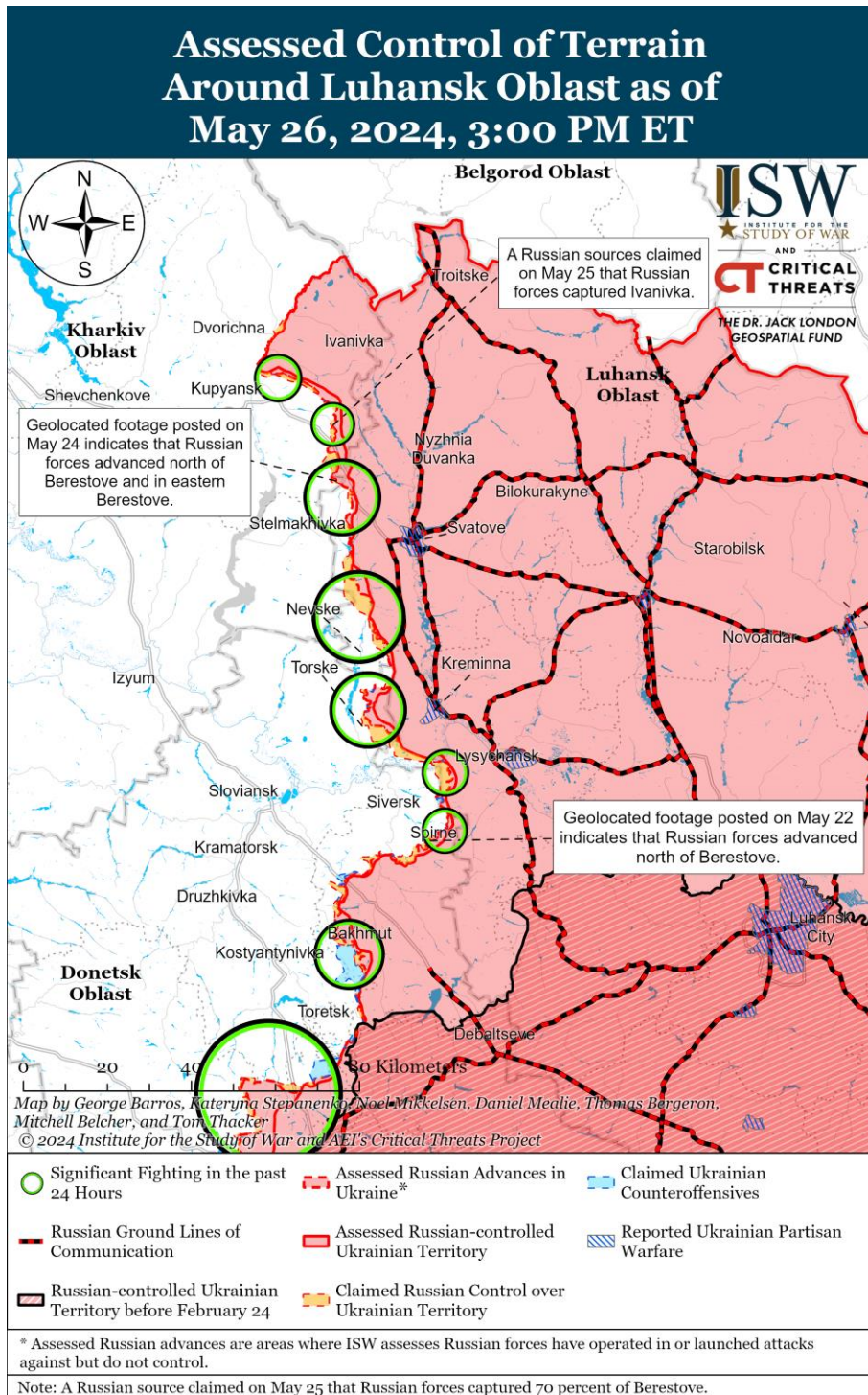
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kupyansk as of May 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



- 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
- Russian Field Fortifications

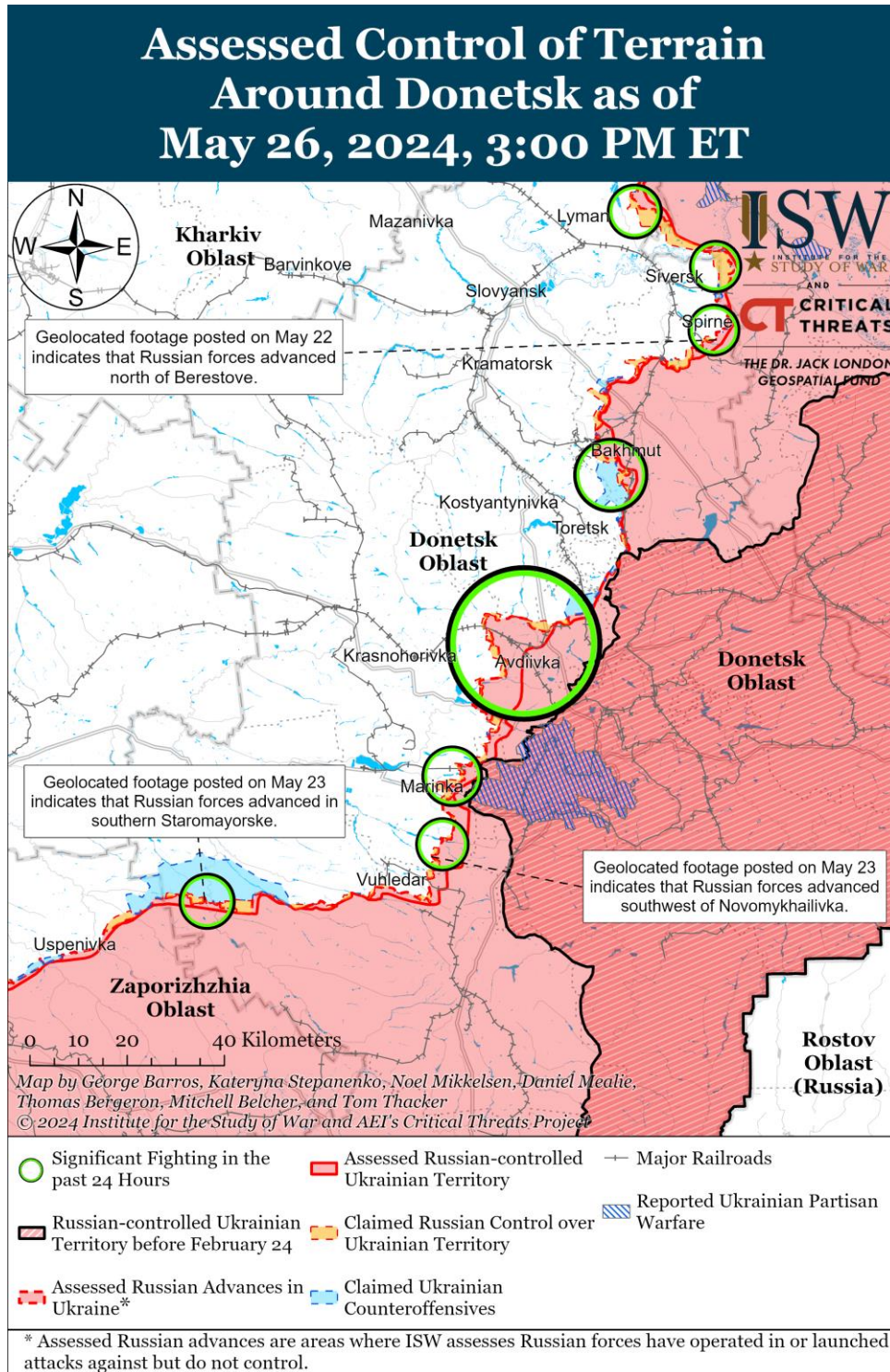
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kreminna area on May 26 but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian forces continued offensive operations northwest of Kreminna near Nevske; west of Kreminna near Terny and Torske; and south of Kreminna near the Serebryanske forest area and Bilohorivka.[34]

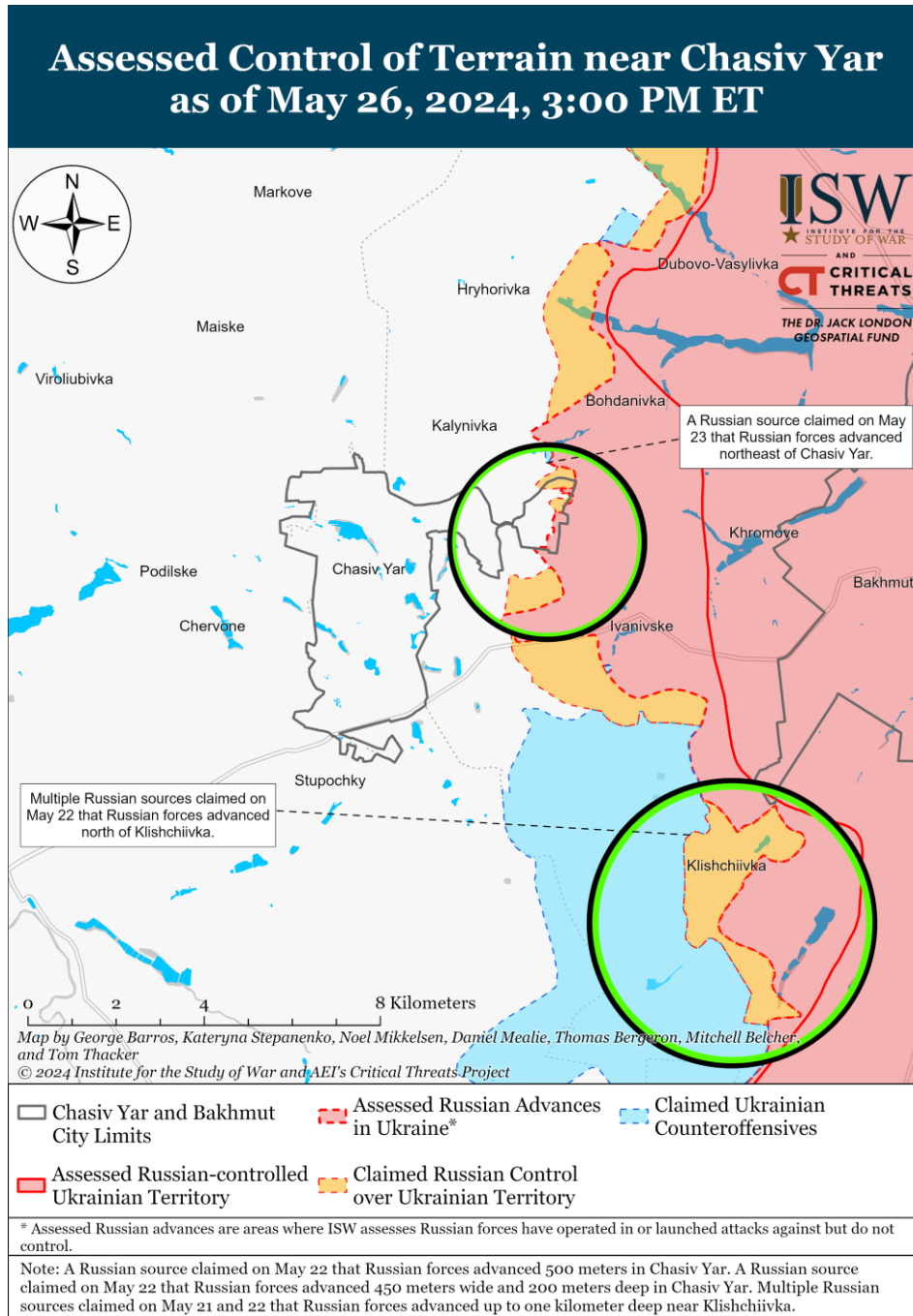


Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

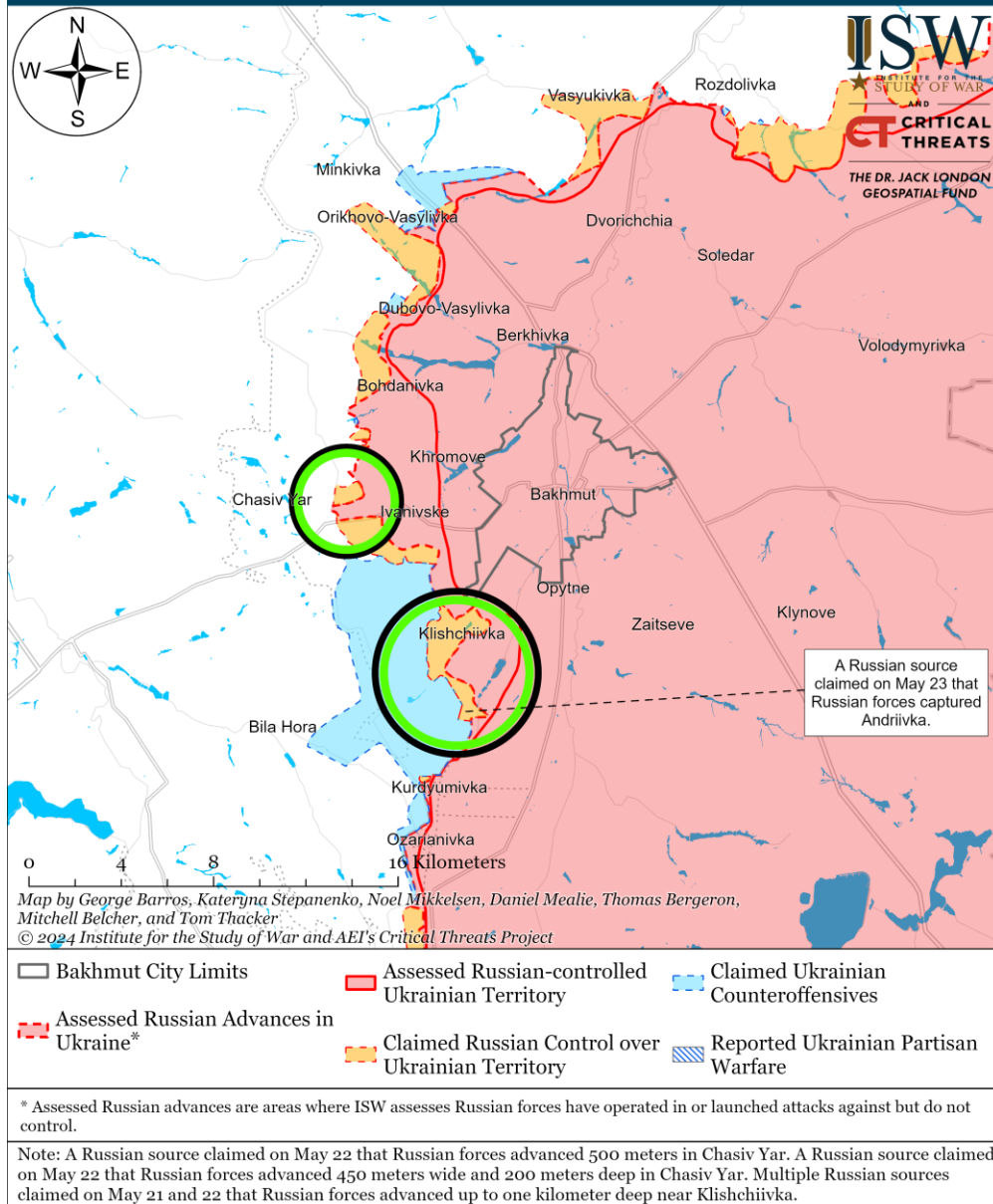
The Ukrainian General Staff reported on May 26 that Russian forces continued ground assaults in the Siversk direction near Verkhnokamyanske (southeast of Siversk).[35]



Russian forces continued offensive operations near Chasiv Yar on May 26, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized a dormitory and several high-rise buildings and continued to advance along Zelena Street in the Kanal Microraion in easternmost Chasiv Yar.[36] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have a shortage of electronic warfare (EW) systems in the Chasiv Yar area.[37] Russian forces continued assaults northeast of Chasiv Yar near Bohdanivka and Kalynivka; in the Novyi Microraion in eastern Chasiv Yar; east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske; and southeast of Chasiv Yar near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[38] Elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division and the Sever-V Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar.[39]

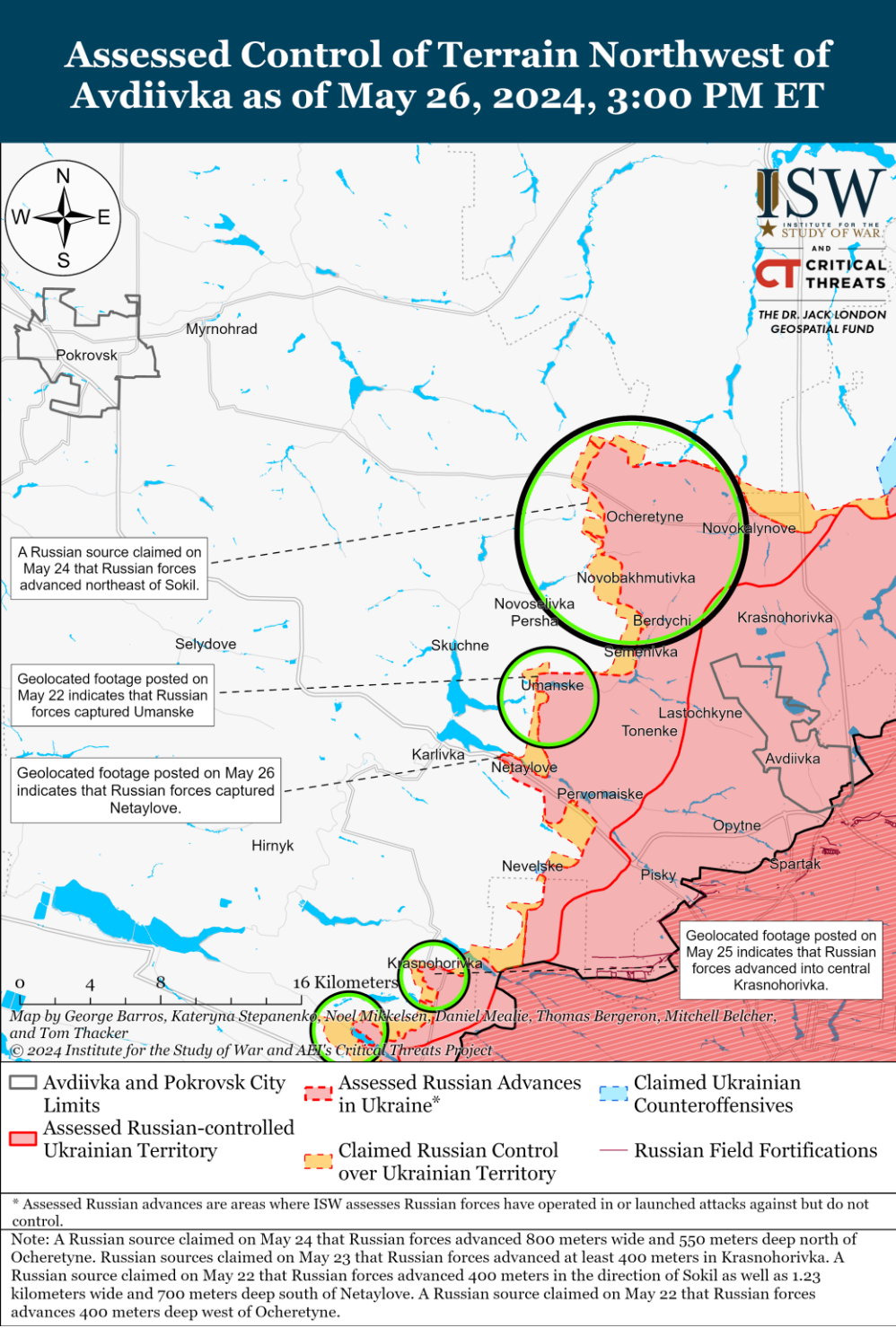


Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of May 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces recently marginally advanced southwest of Avdiivka amid continued fighting in the area on May 26. Geolocated footage published on May 26 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced within the western outskirts of Netaylove (southwest of Avdiivka), and Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps [AC]) seized Netaylove.[40] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces recently conducted a mechanized assault on the outskirts of Novooleksandrivka (northwest of Avdiivka) but that it is unclear if Russian forces seized new positions during the assault.[41] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces also advanced southwest of Solovyove (northwest of Avdiivka). Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced 1.9 kilometers in depth west of Umanske (west of

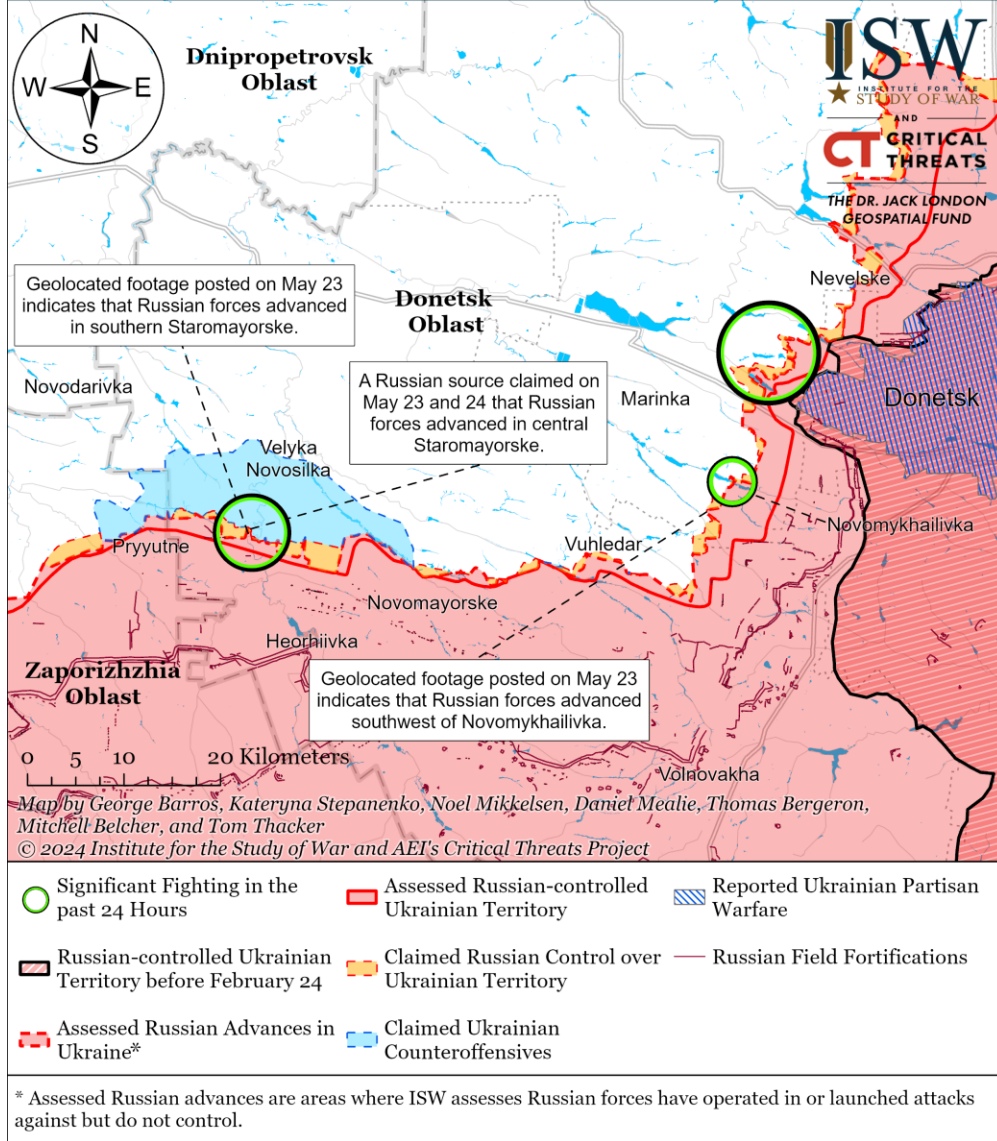
Avdiivka) and gained a foothold on the outskirts of Novopokrovske (northwest of Avdiivka), although ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims.[42] Russian forces continued assaults northwest of Avdiivka near Arkhanhelske, Kalynove, Sokil, Berdychi, and Semenivka; west of Avdiivka near Yasnobrodivka; and southwest of Avdiivka near Nevelske.[43]



Russian forces recently marginally advanced west of Donetsk City amid continued fighting in the area on May 26. Geolocated footage published on May 25 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced during a roughly platoon-sized mechanized assault within central Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City), and a Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR AC) advanced up to 400 meters within Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City).[44] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Paraskoviivka (southwest of Donetsk City), but refuted claims about the Russian seizure of the settlement as premature.[45] Russian forces continued assaults west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda, Kostyantynivka, and Vodyane.[46] Elements of the Russian 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR AC) are reportedly operating near Krasnohorivka.[47]

Russian forces continued assaults in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on May 26, including southeast of Velyka Novosilka near Volodymyrivka and south of Velyka Novosilka near Urozhaine and Staromayorske.[48]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Donetsk Oblast as of May 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

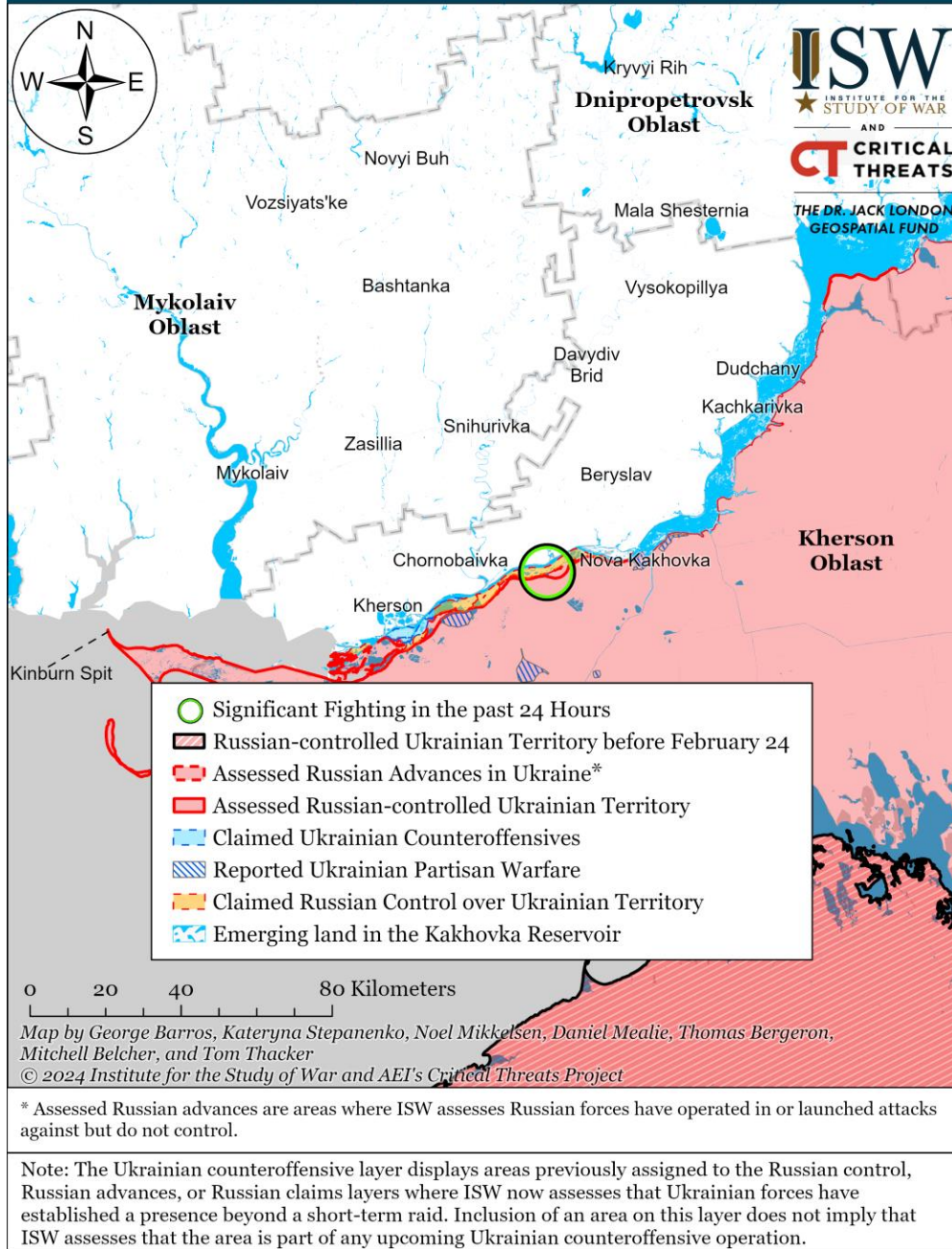
Positional fighting continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on May 26 but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional fighting occurred near Robotyne, east of Robotyne near Verbove, north of Robotyne near Mala Tokmachka, and northwest of Robotyne near Novoandriivka.[49] Russian sources also claimed that elements of the Russian 19th Motorized Rifle Division (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District) attacked Ukrainian positions in the Vasylivka direction (west of Robotyne along the Kakhovka Reservoir).[50] Elements of the Russian 291st Motorized Rifle

Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating west of Robotyne.[51]



Positional fighting continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast, including near Krynky, on May 26.[52] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk stated that Ukrainian forces maintain their limited tactical bridgehead in Krynky but that logistics across the Dnipro River are difficult.[53] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces remain within Krynky and also hold positions on Milkyi and Frolova islands in the Dnipro River Delta.[54]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted missile strikes against Russian targets in occupied Crimea on the night of May 25 to 26. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces launched an unspecified number of R-360 Neptune anti-ship missiles against unspecified targets in occupied Crimea, and another milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces launched an unspecified number of ATACMS missiles.[55] Sevastopol occupation governor Mikhail Razvozhayev announced air raid alerts on the evening of May 25 but did not provide further comments.[56] A Russian milblogger

claimed that residents heard explosions near Sevastopol and that Russian air defenses were activated near Yevpatoria, Saky, and Chornomorske.[57] Russian and Ukrainian officials have not commented on the reported strikes and ISW has not observed evidence of the reported strikes causing damage to Russian targets.

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 strikes against Ukraine on the night of May 25 to 26. Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk stated that Russian forces launched 31 Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk and Yeysk, Krasnodar Krai, and occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea; two Kinzhal aeroballistic missiles from MiG-31 aircraft; and 12 Kh-101/555 cruise missiles from Tu-95MS aircraft.[58] Oleshchuk reported that Ukrainian forces shot down all 12 Kh-101/555 missiles and all 31 drones over Mykolaiv, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, Poltava, Zaporizhia, Khmelnytskyi, Kirovohrad, Vinnytsia, and Chernihiv oblasts. Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces targeted critical energy infrastructure and military facilities.[59] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces struck Ukrainian energy and military facilities in Starokostyantyniv, Khmelnytskyi Oblast.[60]

Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov reported on May 26 that Russian forces have launched about 10,000 glide bombs at Ukraine since the start of 2024.[61]

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

Former Wagner Group fighters reportedly continue to form new units under Rosgvardia and Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz. A Russian insider source claimed that a former Wagner Group commander with the call sign "Zombie" is hoping to recruit about 3,500 former Wagner personnel for the newly formed "Vostok" volunteer reconnaissance assault brigade under Rosgvardia.[62] The insider source also claimed that there are about 1,000 former Wagner fighters in the "Kamerton" detachment under the Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz. The insider source later claimed that an unspecified source refuted some of these initial claims.[63] The source reportedly claimed that "Zombie" will be unable to recruit 3,500 personnel to the "Vostok" brigade and that the "Kamerton" detachment had no more than 150 former Wagner fighters but "died as a combat unit," forcing its personnel to move to the newly formed "Kashtan" unit.

Ukraine-based open-source organization Frontelligence Insight reported that Russian cruise missile manufacturer Raduga has been able to bypass US sanctions and import Western and Chinese machinery since 2022.[64] Frontelligence analyzed documents that the Ukrainian Cyber Resistance group obtained and found that Raduga's Plan for Technical Modernization and Reconstruction for 2023 listed equipment from Italian, German, and Chinese companies. Frontelligence stated that other documents showed that Raduga had successfully implemented part of these plans on time, suggesting that Raduga had purchased some of the foreign equipment. Frontelligence noted that it is unclear, however, if Raduga purchased this equipment from third parties or countries but assessed that in some cases, Raduga likely dealt directly with the company.

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

Nothing significant to report.

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 Russian-occupied areas today.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

A Kremlin-awarded Russian milblogger continued efforts to claim that officials from the ruling Georgia Dream party are not pro-Russian.[65] Kremlin and Georgia Dream officials have both recently promoted established Kremlin information operations, however.[66]

Russian milbloggers responded to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's interview on May 25 with several Central Asian journalists with claims that the West is trying to destabilize Russia and the former Soviet space. One milblogger claimed that Ukraine is trying to open a second front against Russia in Central Asia and implied that the West is involved in this effort.[67] Another milblogger claimed that American non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were involved in the interview and are engaged in subversive activity in Central Asia.[68]

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 Gomel Oblast Executive Committee Chairperson Ivan Krupko and Russian Altai Krai Governor Viktor Tomenko met on May 26 to discuss strengthening cooperation.[69]

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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BABELSTREET

[1] <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/mi-ne-hochemo-shob-tak-samo-yak-ci-knizhki-zgoriv-statut-oon-91137>

[2] Commercially available satellite imagery via Planet Labs PBC

[3] <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/dpsu-otsinili-situatsiyu-kordoni-sumskiy-1716727096.html>

- [4] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar052024>
- [5] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-25-2024>
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