

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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

Russian President Vladimir Putin published an article in North Korean state-owned newspaper Rodong Sinmun praising Russian-North Korean cooperation on the eve of his visit to North Korea, likely to frame any future support that North Korea will lend to Russia as part of a common struggle against the West. [1] Putin invoked the history of the Soviet Union's support for North Korea during and following the Korean War in his June 18 article and noted that the Soviet Union was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea. Putin claimed that the Soviet Union's support helped North Korea strengthen its economy and establish a peaceful society following the Korean War and thanked North Korea for its support of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Putin praised Kim Jong-Un's dedication to his father's and grandfather's legacies and praised Pyongyang as a "staunch like-minded" nation who is standing with Russia in opposition to the collective West. Putin reaffirmed Russia's support for North Korea's struggle against its enemy — the United States. Putin also implied that Western states are common adversaries of Russia and North Korea. Putin noted that Russia, like North Korea, maintains its strong economy and independence despite Western sanctions and praised North Korea's long-term struggle against the West. Putin claimed that the West has refused peace offers from both leaders, although both leaders appear averse to serious, good-faith peace negotiations.[2] Putin stated that Russia and North Korea will cooperate to develop a security architecture for Eurasia and expressed hope that their bilateral relations will continue to deepen. Putin's intentional appeal to known propaganda narratives about the legacies of the Kim regime, the Korean War, and North Korea's historical struggle against the US and the West is likely setting conditions for Putin to justify his future requests or demands of the North Korean people in support of Russia's war effort in Ukraine. Putin's visit to North Korea is also a significant goodwill gesture towards Kim Jong-Un as the visit helps legitimize Kim's pariah regime both domestically and abroad. Foreign heads of state rarely visit North Korea, and Putin last visited North Korea in 2000. Putin may be using this visit as flattery to assist in extracting additional aid from North Korea in the future, which may range from additional requests for weapon supplies or even manpower; for example, reports in 2022 suggested that North Korea was considering sending North Korean workers to Russianoccupied Ukraine to help with reconstruction efforts.[3]

Select Western officials warned about the dangers of greater cooperation between global authoritarian regimes on June 17 in response to Putin's visit to North Korea. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated on June 17 that Russia's growing alignment with its "authoritarian friends" is making it "even more important" for NATO countries to work with their partners in the Indo-Pacific region and condemned the People's Republic of China's (PRC) and North

Korea's support for Russia's war effort. [4] US National Security Spokesperson John Kirby stated during a press conference that the US is alarmed by deepening Russian—North Korean relations due to both the consequences in Ukraine and the security of the Korean peninsula. [5] Kirby stated that the US is carefully monitoring the development of Russian—North Korea relations.

Ukrainian forces struck Russian oil depots in Rostov Oblast and Krasnodar Krai overnight on June 17 to 18, using domestically produced Neptune missiles against a ground target in Russia for the second time.[6] Sources in the Ukrainian Navy told Ukrainian media outlet Suspilne on June 18 that Ukrainian forces used Neptune anti-ship missiles, presumably modified to strike ground targets, to strike an oil terminal of the Yugneftekhimtransit LLC in the port town of Chushka, Krasnodar Krai overnight.[7] Russian opposition outlet Astra reported locals witnessed explosions near Chushka overnight and that a fire damaged the pipeline and areas with engineering or technical equipment.[8] Russian authorities did not confirm the strike, but the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on June 18 that Russian forces intercepted a Ukrainian Neptune missile in an unspecified area on June 17.[9] Sources in the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) told Ukrainian media outlets that Ukrainian forces conducted drone strikes against the Azovskaya and Azovnaftoprodukt oil terminals in Azov, Rostov Oblast, and geolocated footage shows that the resulting fire burned overnight on June 17 to 18 and well into the day on June 18.[10] Rostov Oblast authorities reported that the strikes set the oil tanks on fire.[11] The SBU sources stated that these depots combined have 22 fuel tanks, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Crimean service reported that up to 60 tons of petroleum products pass through these depots per month and that the storage tanks can hold up to 30 thousand cubic meters of petroleum products simultaneously.[12]

Ukrainian forces have now conducted two strikes with its own Neptune missiles against areas in Russian territory that are within range of US-provided ATACMS but that are also protected by US policy that has established a vast sanctuary in Russian territory. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on May 31 that Ukrainian forces used Neptune missiles to strike an oil depot near the port of Kavkaz, Krasnodar Krai, and former Ukrainian Naval Deputy Chief of Staff Andriy Ryzhenko stated that the May 31 strike was the first Ukrainian strike using Neptunes against ground targets.[13] Chushka and Kavkaz are port towns near the Kerch Strait and are roughly 250 kilometers from the current frontlines and within the 300-kilometer range of the US-provided longrange ATACMS.[14] The US has not allowed Ukrainian forces to use existing US-provided weapons to strike legitimate targets in Russian territory for much of the full-scale invasion thus far and still prohibits Ukraine from using ATACMS anywhere in Russia.[15] Ukraine first debuted Neptune antiship missiles against Russian naval targets in April 2022 and has had to further develop and modify these missiles to conduct deep strikes against Russian territory — a process that took over two years during which Russian forces in Russia enjoyed protection against Western-provided weapons.[16] ISW continues to assess that the US should allow Ukraine to strike legitimate military targets within Russia's rear with US-provided weapons, especially given that standing US prohibitions on how Ukrainian forces may use US-provided weapons will not prevent Ukraine or other Western weapons from striking Russia.

The Russian government is charging Ukrainian servicemen and military officials with crimes in absentia as part of its efforts to enforce Russian federal law outside of its jurisdiction and insinuate that Ukraine should not exist as an independent state. The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) placed former Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Pyotr Mekhed and former Deputy Chief of the Ukrainian General Staff Viktor Bokiy on Russia's wanted list

on June 18 and charged the men with unspecified war crimes in absentia. [17] The Russian Investigative Committee ruled on June 17 to detain a Ukrainian commander in absentia on charges that the commander helped down a Russian A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft in February 2024 — a legitimate act of war and a normal event for two warring states.[18] The Russian MVD previously absurdly placed multiple officials from most NATO member countries on its western flank on Russia's wanted list for violating various Russian laws while the officials were in their respective countries where Russian law has no jurisdiction.[19] Russian officials similarly temporarily placed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Lieutenant General Oleksandr Pavlyuk, and former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on its wanted list for allegedly violating Russian law while those officials were not in Russia.[20] ISW continues to assess that Russia's decision to place Western officials on its wanted list for violating Russian federal laws outside of Russia is part of its effort to violate the sovereignty of NATO member states and justify possible future Russian aggression against NATO.[21] The Kremlin's prosecution of Ukrainian military personnel and political leadership who are engaged in a fully lawful, defensive war against an invasion by a foreign power in a manner akin to domestic terrorists highlights Russia's enduring belief that the Ukrainian state does not and should not exist as a political entity separate from Russia.

Founder of the Kremlin-linked Rybar Telegram Channel, Mikhail Zvinchuk, gave his second uncharacteristically public interview within a month in which he criticized the state of Russia's war effort in Ukraine and acknowledged that Western sanctions are negatively affecting Russia's industry and economy. Republika Srpska (the Serbian entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina) media portal *BanjaLuka.net* published an interview with Zvinchuk on June 18 to promote his recently established "Rybar media school" in the Balkans.[22] Zvinchuk gave an unusually frank and critical view of the Russian military when asked to discuss the current state of Russia's war in Ukraine. Zvinchuk stated that the war has not proceeded as the Russian military had planned, in part, because of Russia's poor planning. Zvinchuk also claimed that Russian forces have learned to fight at the platoon, company, and battalion levels but still lack the capability to fight at any higher echelons. Zvinchuk noted that Russian forces have "learned" to seize the battlefield initiative but have only done so in select unspecified locations and that Russian forces are only able to make slow tactical gains. Zvinchuk claimed that if Russia could seize the strategic initiative that Russian forces would seize "a city per week, not a house or village per week." Zvinchuk also assessed that Russia does not have enough materiel to take the strategic initiative but acknowledged that Russia is attempting to accelerate its defense industrial base (DIB) output. Zvinchuk acknowledged that international sanctions against Russia have hindered Russia's ability to maintain its technological capabilities, noting that some Russian oil refineries are not working, which has resulted in a 10 percent increase in fuel prices. Zvinchuk gave an interview to Russian-language diaspora-focused outlet RTVi on May 18 shortly after Russian President Vladimir Putin replaced Sergei Shoigu with Andrei Belousov as Russian Defense Minister - in which Zvinchuk criticized the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and speculated on possible changes within the MoD.[23] ISW assessed that Zvinchuk may be trying to use his public interviews to gauge the Kremlin's response to critical voices or that the Kremlin may have tasked Zvinchuk with criticizing the Russian MoD publicly while dictating the content and severity of his statements. Zvinchuk's decision to give his second public interview within a month to a Republika Srpska media portal indicates Zvinchuk's interest in publicizing his efforts to spread pro-Russian informational influence in Europe and support long-term Russian efforts to destabilize the Westernbrokered Dayton Accords in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Key Takeaways:

- Russian President Vladimir Putin published an article in North Korean stateowned newspaper *Rodong Sinmun* praising Russian–North Korean cooperation on the eve of his visit to North Korea, likely to frame any future support that North Korea will lend to Russia as part of a common struggle against the West.
- Ukrainian forces struck Russian oil depots in Rostov Oblast and Krasnodar Krai overnight on June 17 to 18, using domestically produced Neptune missiles against a ground target in Russia for the second time.
- Ukrainian forces have now conducted two strikes with its own Neptune missiles against areas in Russian territory that are within range of US-provided ATACMS but that are also protected by US policy that has established a vast sanctuary in Russian territory.
- The Russian government is charging Ukrainian servicemen and military officials with crimes in absentia as part of its efforts to enforce Russian federal law outside of its jurisdiction and insinuate that Ukraine should not exist as an independent state.
- Founder of the Kremlin-linked Rybar Telegram Channel, Mikhail Zvinchuk, gave his second uncharacteristically public interview within a month in which he criticized the state of Russia's war effort in Ukraine and acknowledged that Western sanctions are negatively affecting Russia's industry and economy.
- Russian forces recently marginally advanced near Vovchansk, Svatove, and Avdiivka
- Russian President Vladimir Putin continues efforts to groom Russian military personnel for positions in the Russian government through the Kremlin's "Time of Heroes" program.
- Russian occupation officials continue their efforts to militarize Ukrainian youth in occupied Ukraine.

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



Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2024

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

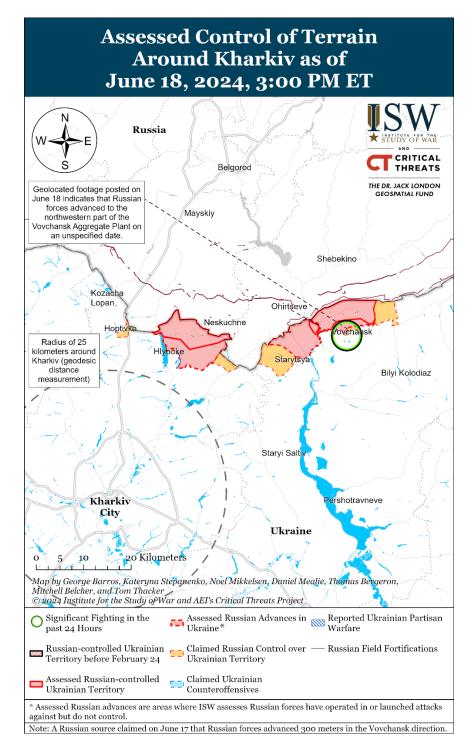
Russian Main Effort — Eastern Ukraine

<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 — Kharkiv Oblast (</u>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 have reportedly recently recaptured positions near Lyptsi amid continued fighting north of Kharkiv City on June 18. The deputy commander of a Ukrainian drone battalion operating in the area stated that Ukrainian forces have recaptured positions near Hlyboke (north of Lyptsi) over the past several days and that fighting is ongoing within Hlyboke.[24] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Ukrainian forces continued to counterattack near Hlyboke.[25] A Ukrainian battalion commander stated that Russian forces are constantly conducting assaults and are quickly replenishing reserves in the Kharkiv direction, which contributes to the high intensity of fighting in the area.[26] Several Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces are deploying reinforcements closer to the frontline in northern Kharkiv Oblast, potentially in an effort to recapture the area that Russian forces occupied.[27] Fighting also continued near Lyptsi, and Zelene and Neskuchne (both northeast of Lyptsi) on June 17 and 18.[28]

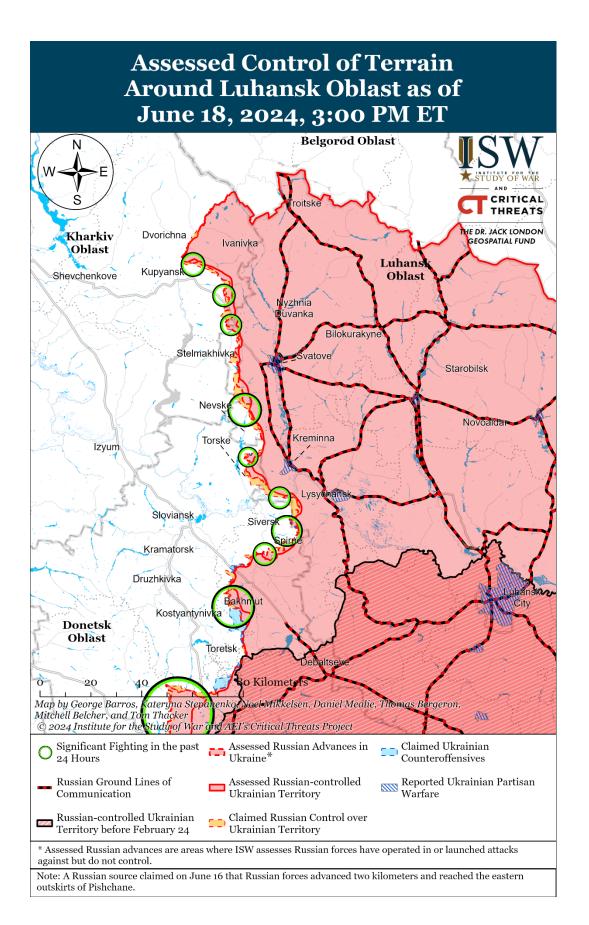
Russian forces recently advanced within Vovchansk amid continued Russian ground attacks in the area on June 18. Geolocated footage published on June 18 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced on the grounds of the Aggregate Plant in central Vovchansk.[29] Fighting continued within Vovchansk on June 18, and a Russian milblogger claimed that the frontline in Vovchansk is often unclear since Ukrainian and Russian forces can hold positions "a few meters" apart.[30] A Ukrainian air reconnaissance soldier stated that an assault battalion of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade

(Pacific Fleet), a battalion of the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet), a battalion tactical group (BTG) of the 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic Army Corps [DNR AC]), elements of Rosgvardia's 116th Special Purpose Brigade, and elements of the newly recreated 18th Mechanized Brigade are operating near Vovchansk.[31] A Ukrainian official recently stated that the elements of the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) redeployed to the Kharkiv direction.[32] ISW continues to assess that these reports indicate a possible redeployment of some Russian units from the Kherson and Donetsk directions to the Kharkiv direction.[33]



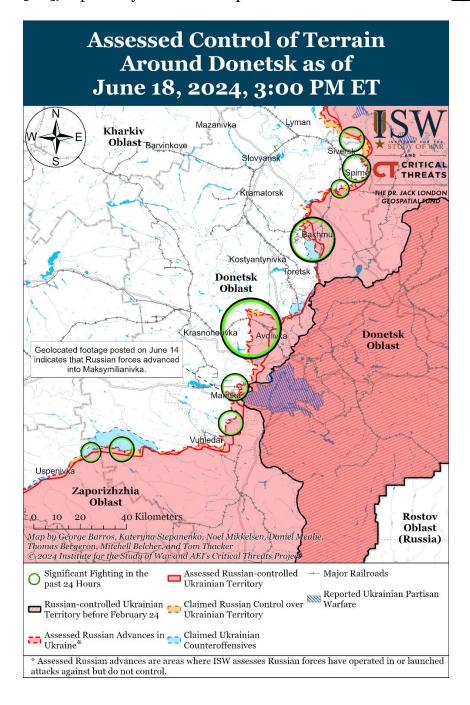
<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 — Luhansk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces recently marginally advanced west of Kreminna amid continued ground attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on June 18. Geolocated footage published on June 18 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced northeast of Torske (west of Kreminna).[34] A Ukrainian brigade operating in the Svatove direction stated that elements of the Russian 3rd and 144th motorized rifle divisions (20th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Moscow Military District [MMD]), including tank regiments and reinforced by additional Spetsnaz detachments and private military companies (PMCs), are attempting to advance along the Cherneshchyna-Pershotravneve line (southwest of west of Svatove) to seize Borova (west of Svatove).[35] The brigade noted that Russian forces significantly intensified their operations in the Svatove direction on June 18. Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces are concentrating a large grouping of up to 10,000 personnel and 450 pieces of military equipment, including 200 artillery systems, along the Raihorodka-Novovodyane line (southwest of Svatove) and that Russian forces have been probing for weak points in Ukraine's defenses in the area for several weeks, although a Russian milblogger denied these reports.[36] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced west of Krokhmalne towards Pishchane (southeast of Kupyansk) on June 17 and 18.[37] Russian forces continued ground attacks northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Ivanivka, Stepova Novoselivka, Kotlyarivka, and Berestove; southwest of Svatove near Hrekivka and Makiivka; west of Kreminna near Terny; and southwest of Kreminna near the Serebryanske forest area on June 17 and 18.[38]

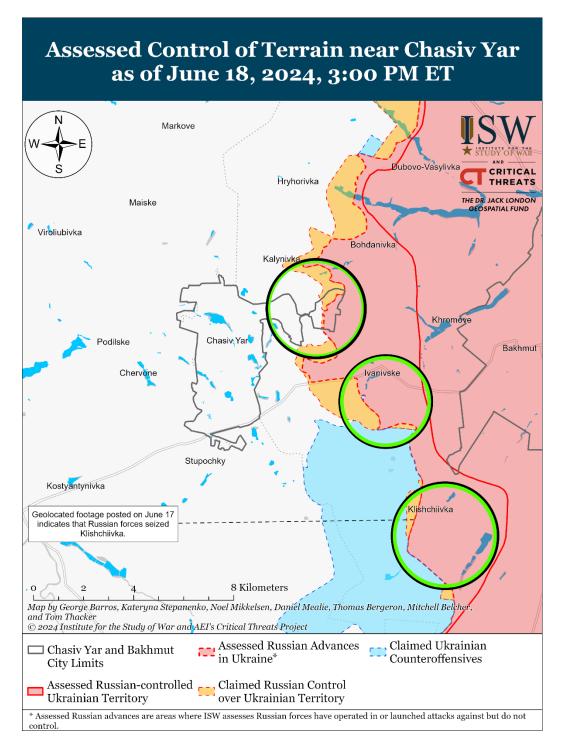


<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 — Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces intensified localized offensive operations in the Siversk direction on June 18. Russian forces continued attacks east of Siversk near Verkhnokamyanske, southeast of Siversk near Spirne and Vyimka, and south of Siversk near Rozdolivka on June 17 and 18.[39] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces intensified offensive operations in the Siversk direction on June 18.[40] Elements of the Russian 2nd Artillery Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) reportedly continue to operate in the Siversk direction.[41]

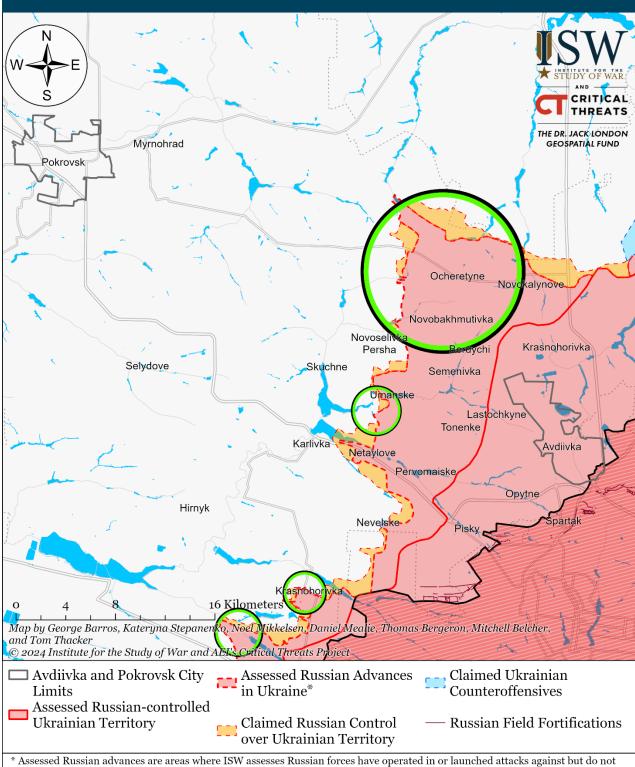


Russian forces continued attacks around Chasiv Yar on June 18, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian forces continued ground attacks within eastern Chasiv Yar in Novyi microraion, north of Chasiv Yar near Hryhorivka, northeast of Chasiv Yar near Bohdanivka, east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske, and southeast of Chasiv Yar near Klishchiivka and Andriivka on June 17 and 18.[42] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces also conducted five ground attacks in the Toretsk (south of Chasiv Yar) direction near Niu York, Pivnichne, and Pivdenne (all immediately south to southeast of Toretsk) on June 18.[43]



Russian forces recently advanced northwest and west of Avdiivka amid continued ground attacks in the area on June 18. Geolocated footage published on June 18 shows that Russian forces advanced north of Sokil (northwest of Avdiivka), and a Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced even farther north of the settlement.[44] Additional geolocated footage published on June 17 and 18 shows that Russian forces also advanced in fields approaching the eastern outskirts of Yasnobrodivka (west of Avdiivka).[45] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced northwest of Arkhanhelske (northwest of Avdiivka), within Sokil, west of Sokil towards Yevhenivka, northeast of Yevhenivka, and north of Umanske (west of Avdiivka).[46] ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims, however. Fighting also continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novooleksandrivka, Novoselivka Persha, Kalynove, Oleksandropil, and Novopokrovske and west of Avdiivka near Umanske and Netaylove on June 17 and 18.[47] The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade likely fighting in Donetsk Oblast stated that Russian forces operate in small groups of 5-6 personnel that carry mobile electronic warfare devices, likely for protection against Ukrainian drones.[48] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets assessed that the Russian Center Grouping of Forces has about 87,000 personnel, 365 tanks, 864 armored combat vehicles, of which about 68,000-70,000 personnel, 310-320 tanks, and about 576 armored fighting vehicles are currently deployed in the Pokrovsk direction (likely counting the frontline and near rear areas).[49] Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 27th Motorized Rifle Division (2nd Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) and 132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC) are conducting offensive operating towards Kalynove and Stara Mykolaivka (northwest of Avdiivka), and that the Center Grouping of Forces' 2nd and 41st CAAs (both of the CMD), including half of the 90th Tank Division (41st CAA), and at least two separate motorized rifle brigades of the 1st DNR AC and 8th CAA (Southern Military District [SMD]) are also fighting in the Avdiivka direction.[50] Mashovets also reported that four motorized rifle brigades of the 2nd and 41st CAAs reinforced by at least two regiments of the 90th Tank Division are pushing towards Vozdvizhenka (northwest of Novooleksandrivka). Elements of the Russian 433rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (27th Motorized Rifle Division) are reportedly fighting near Sokil.[51]

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



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

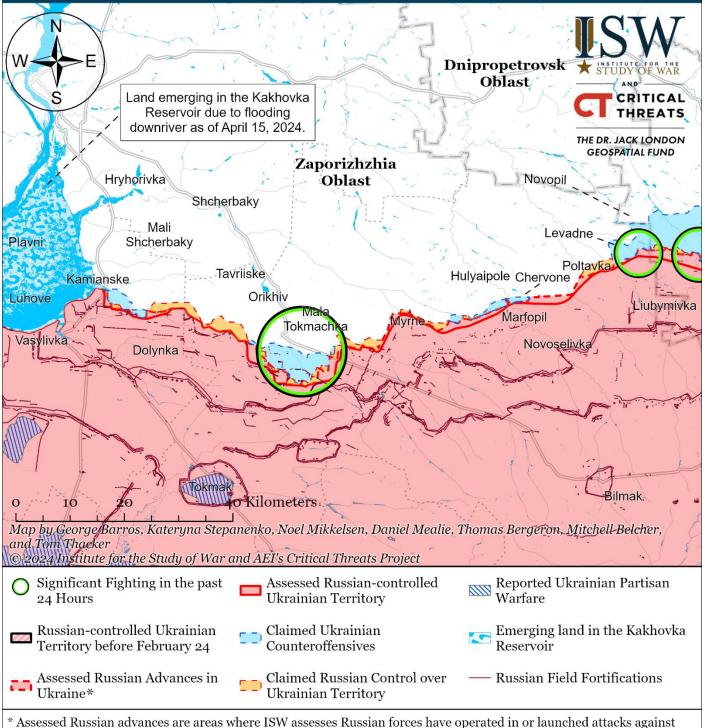
Russian forces continued offensive operations west and southwest of Donetsk City on June 18, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian forces continued ground attacks west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Paraskoviivka, Maksymilyanivka, Kostyantynivka, and Volodymyrivka on June 17 and 18.[52] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are attacking near the outskirts of Kostyantynivka and Maksymilyanivka but have not entered the settlement yet.[53] A milblogger claimed that Russian forces have pushed Ukrainian forces from Paraskoviivka but that Russian forces do not yet control the whole settlement.[54] Elements of the Russian 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) and "Grachi" Spetsnaz detachment are operating near Krasnohorivka, and elements of the 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR AC) are operating in the Kurakhove direction.[55]

Russian forces continued ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area near Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka) and Novodarivka (southwest of Velyka Novosilka) on June 17 and 18, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline.[56] Russian Radiological, Chemical, and Biological Defense Forces of the 36th CAA (Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating TOS-1A thermobaric artillery near Urozhaine, and elements of the 11th Air Force and Air Defense Army (Russian Aerospace Forces [VKS] and EMD) also reportedly continue to operate near Urozhaine.[57] Geolocated footage published on June 18 shows Ukrainian forces striking a Russian TOS-1A thermobaric artillery system east of Staromlynivka (south of Urozhaine) with a first-person view (FPV) drone.[58]

<u>Russian Supporting Effort — Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

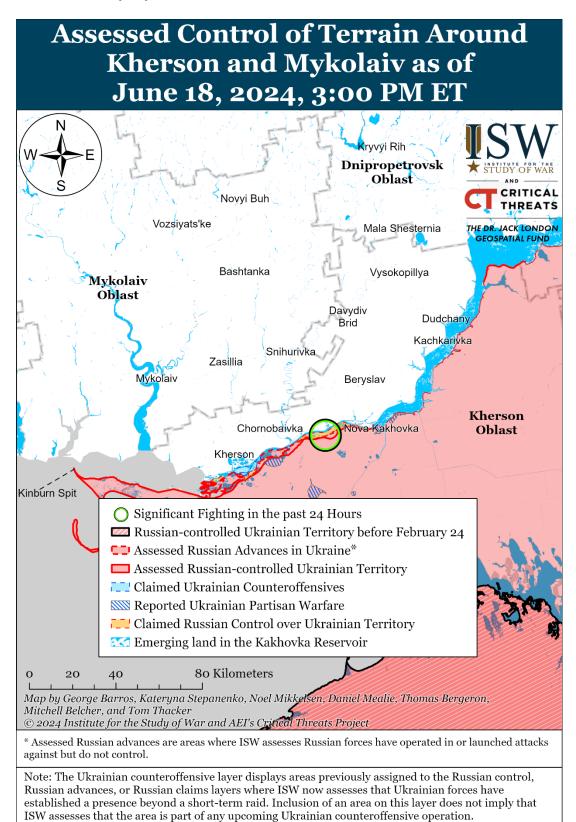
Russian forces continued assaults in western Zaporizhia Oblast on June 17 and 18 but did not advance. Russian forces reportedly attacked near Mala Tokmachka (northeast of Robotyne) and Novodanylivka (north of Robotyne).[59] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continue to operate a large number of first-person view (FPV) drones in the Zaporizhia direction and that these drones continue to complicate Russian attacks in the area.[60] Reconnaissance elements of the Russian 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating northeast of Robotyne.[61] A prominent Russian milblogger amplified footage purportedly showing elements 503rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD), which are reportedly operating in the Robotyne area, and denied previous social media reports that Russian servicemen from Republic of Ingushetia refused to fight in Ukraine.[62]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of June 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued to engage in positional battles in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast near Krynky and Kozachi Laheri on June 17 and 18.[63]



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

Russian forces conducted a limited series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of June 17 to 18. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 10 Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai, and Ukrainian mobile fire groups and air defenses destroyed all 10 Shahed drones over Zaporizhia and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.[64] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces struck Mykolaiv Oblast with a ballistic missile on June 17, causing a fire, and conducted a cruise missile strike against Odesa Oblast on the night of June 17 to 18 that did not cause any damage.[65] Kharkiv Oblast Police Head Volodymyr Tymoshko stated that Russian forces struck a civilian object in Borivska Hromada with an Iskander-M ballistic missile on the morning of June 18.[66]

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

Russian President Vladimir Putin continues efforts to groom Russian military personnel for positions in the Russian government through the Kremlin's "Time of Heroes" program. The Russian 106th Reconnaissance Squad, formed in June 2023, announced that the Kremlin selected its commander to be one of 83 participants in the Time of Heroes program out of 45,000 applicants. [67] The 106th Reconnaissance Squad stated that Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev, and Presidential Administration Deputy Head Maxim Oreskhin are mentoring the program participants. [68] Putin announced the establishment of the Time of Heroes program during his address to the Russian Federal Assembly in February 2024 and noted that the program aims to train Russian military veterans to hold positions in the Russian government. [69] Putin also recently met with program participants on June 14. [70]

The Russian Pacific Fleet began military exercises in the Sea of Japan and Sea of Okhotsk on June 18 that will run until June 28.[71] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported that Russian Pacific Fleet Commander Admiral Viktor Liina is overseeing the exercises, which include over 40 ships, boats, and support vessels.[72] The Russian MoD stated that the exercises are the first joint exercise between the Pacific Fleet and the Joint Command of Troops and Forces in northeast Russia and will include exercises with anti-submarine operations, ship defenses, joint missile strikes, repelling unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and naval drone strikes, and combat training. The Kremlin may have timed the Pacific Fleet exercises to coincide with Putin's visit to North Korea to posture against South Korea and Japan.

Russian Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Alexander Moiseev stated on June 18 that the Russian Navy will receive 12 new vessels, including surface ships and nuclear submarines, by the end of 2024. [73] Moiseev stated that the Russian Navy implemented a program in 2024 to provide it with 50 various ships, vessels, and boats over an unspecified time period and that the 12 vessels it will receive are part of this program. Moiseev stated that the Russian Navy plans to complete tests of small missile ships in the Baltic and Caspian seas.

Russia continues to use the People's Republic of China (PRC) to import foreign computer numerical control (CNC) machine tools — key technologies to support Russia's domestic weapons production. The

US Center for Advanced Defense Studies (C4ADS) think tank published a report on June 18 that found that Russia has been evading international sanctions to acquire CNC machine tools through deals with companies based in the PRC, Hong Kong, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[74] US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated on May 1 that the PRC's exports of dual-use goods to Russia have helped Russia significantly increase its defense production and that Russia is acquiring 70 percent of its machine tools and 90 percent of its microelectronics are from the PRC.[75]

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

A Russian milblogger accused several other more prominent milbloggers of providing faulty "Borey" electronic warfare (EW) systems to frontline Russian servicemen with crowdsourced funds in an article published on June 18.[76] The milblogger claimed that a highly experienced Russian EW unit struggle to use milblogger-provided EW systems because the systems overheat due to poor construction and faulty wiring. The milblogger also claimed that the EW systems' antennas are poorly constructed and not compatible with the systems' frequencies, and that these systems are so heavy that they often break the flimsy cases. The accused milbloggers responded to the article and justified themselves by claiming that any EW system is likely to have issues after a few months of use and questioned why the first milblogger did not lodge a complaint with Russian authorities.[77] The accused milbloggers criticized the first milblogger for complaining about their crowdfunded systems instead of helping frontline Russian servicemen.

<u>Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts</u> (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.

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

Russian occupation officials continue their efforts to militarize Ukrainian youth in occupied Ukraine. Luhansk Oblast Military Administration Head Artem Lysohor stated on June 18 that Luhansk National University in occupied Starobilsk will hold drone operation courses during the upcoming school year. [78] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that occupation authorities are inviting Rosgvardia soldiers to teach propagandistic history lessons and weapons and combat training courses to high schoolers in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast. [79] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on June 17 that occupation authorities are creating a history textbook on the "history of Novorossiya" and are re-writing Russia's aggression against and occupation of southern and eastern Ukraine. [80] Ukraine's Presidential Representative in occupied Crimea reported that occupation authorities created the "Young Sevastopol" patriotic movement to indoctrinate Ukrainian kindergarteners into Russian historical and cultural narratives. [81] Occupation authorities will force the kindergarteners to take a "patriotic oath" to Russia during a ceremony, during which the kindergarteners will meet with Yunarmiya personnel (a military-patriotic movement that instills pro-Russian and militarized ideals in youth in Russia and occupied Ukraine) and Russian Black Sea Fleet servicemen. Luhansk Oblast

occupation officials announced on June 16 that occupation officials opened a Yunarmiya House, a multidisciplinary center for training, education, and development of youth in line with the principles of Yunarmiya, in occupied Luhansk Oblast.[82]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian state media, officials, and milbloggers continued to misrepresent Armenia's efforts to distance itself from the Russian security bloc and procure military systems from the West as a deliberate Western intervention in the region and the "erosion of Armenia's sovereignty." Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan and French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu met in France, and Papikyan signed a military cooperation agreement between the Armenian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and European military-industrial holding company KNDS (KNDS the result of a merger between the German Krauss-Maffei Wegmann copmany and French Nexter Systems) on June 17.[83] Lecornu also announced that Armenia signed a contract to purchase French 155mm CAESAR howitzers.[84] Prominent Russian milbloggers responded to this acquisition by claiming that Armenia is trying to prove to Russia that it no longer depends on the Kremlin, that Armenia is destroying itself, and that Russian soft power efforts had failed in Armenia just like in Ukraine.[85] Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin claimed on June 17 that the West is using Armenia as one of the "hybrid war instruments" against Russia and other countries in the southern Caucasus and that the US, European Union (EU), and NATO are "calling on Yerevan to sever all ties with Moscow." [86] Galuzin added that "further erosion of Armenia's sovereignty in the security sphere" and the transition to the US and NATO "paper umbrella" security bloc will "make it impossible to maintain a single defense space" between Armenia and Russia within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).[87] Russian officials are simultaneously attempting to reassure the Russian public that Armenia is still part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). CIS Secretary General Sergei Lebedev claimed on June 18 that Armenia did not signal any intent to leave the CIS framework and that Armenian officials reaffirmed their intent to continue cooperating within the EAEU.[88]

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev chaired the International Inter-party Forum on the "Global Majority for a Multipolar World" with representatives of BRICS and partner countries on June 17 and 18 in Vladivostok in an effort to continue the Kremlin's efforts to cast itself as the main actor within the "world majority."[89] The Kremlin has previously defined the concept of the "world majority" as "a civilizational and cultural community that objectively opposes" the West (using the word "objectively" in an echo of the Soviet Union's Communist ideology).[90] Participants of the forum, which included Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgeny Ivanov, discussed the role of BRICS in creation of a new multipolar world order and featured a meeting of the United Russia Party-led "For the Freedom of Nations" anti-neocolonial movement. Russian officials notably continued to ignore the Russian Empire's and Soviet Union's legacies of colonizing and Russifying their neighboring nations and Russia's modern campaigns to assert Russian dominance over Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, and Central Asia.[91]

A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger continued to infiltrate the information space of Republika Srpska (the Serbian political entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina) likely in support of the Kremlin's long-term efforts to destabilize the Western-brokered Dayton Accords in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[92] The milblogger, who recently announced his cooperation with Republika Srpska Head of the Information and Communication Technologies Agency Drajan Visnjic, amplified numerous Kremlin narratives in a June 18 interview with Republika Srpska media portal *BanjaLuka.net*.[93] The milblogger claimed that

the Balkans "will catch on fire" when other conflicts start to die down and that he had recently lectured Republika Srpska representatives about how the West may try to strip the region's language and identity over generations. The milblogger added that once the war in Ukraine "calms down," other conflicts in the Balkans, Baltic States, Scandinavian countries, and the Asia-Pacific region will emerge. The milblogger continued to insinuate that the West has always tried to destroy Orthodoxy and claimed that he is confident that Russia would support Serbs if there were a renewed conflict with the West.

<u>Significant activity in Belarus</u> (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 announced during a meeting of the Belarusian Security Council on June 18 that Belarus has developed a new unspecified methodology for assessing military security that factors in the international situation outside Belarus.[94] Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko stated during the meeting that Belarus must clearly understand the military, political, economic, and other situations outside of Belarus and that certain regulatory provisions are "not enough."[95]

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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