



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:30pm ET on May 20. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 21 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian sources indicated that Russian forces are concentrating limited, understaffed, and incohesive forces in the Sumy direction, but even such a Russian grouping of forces will be able to achieve the likely desired effect of drawing and fixing Ukrainian forces in the international border area. The deputy commander of a Ukrainian brigade operating in northern Kharkiv Oblast reported on May 20 that Russian forces, including Chechen forces, are accumulating in the Sumy direction but that the limited number of Russian personnel suggests that the Russian objective is to draw and fix Ukrainian forces to the international border area.[1] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on May 20 that the Russian grouping in Kursk Oblast consists of 9,000–10,000 personnel.[2] Mashovets stated that this grouping consists of up to three under-strength motorized rifle regiments (each lacking one to two battalions); eight motorized rifle, tank, and infantry battalions; and one airborne (VDV) battalion all redeployed from various units, formations, and military districts; and at least two assault detachments at the echelon of a reinforced company or an under-strength battalion.[3] Mashovets also reported on May 5 that an unspecified VDV battalion is part of the Russian grouping in Kursk Oblast, and a Russian milblogger (who has an avowed bias against the VDV and "Dnepr" Grouping of Forces Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky) claimed that the Russian 3rd VDV Battalion of the 104th VDV Regiment (76th VDV Division) is in Kursk Oblast.[4] ISW continues to assess that even limited Russian activity in other areas of the international border below the threshold of Russian offensive operations could have the effect of stretching Ukrainian forces along a wider front and that Russian forces will be able to draw and fix Ukrainian forces to this area as long as Russia threatens penetrations of other border areas beyond northern Kharkiv Oblast.[5]

Kremlin officials expressed their condolences to senior Iranian officials following the announcement of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's and Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian's deaths on May 20. Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a condolence letter to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in which he called Raisi a "true friend of Russia." [6] Putin had a telephone call with Iranian Interim President Mohammad Mokhber on May 20 and expressed condolences to Mokhber, Khamenei, and the Iranian people.[7] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) stated that Putin and Mokhber discussed their desire to further strengthen Russo-Iranian relations.[8] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called Raisi and Abdollahian "true friends" who were "invaluable" in strengthening Russo–Iranian cooperation.[9] Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu stated that Russia is ready to help investigate the cause of the helicopter crash.[10] Putin instructed Head of the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations Alexander Kurenkov on May 19 to send specialists and equipment to assist in search and rescue operations in Iran.[11]

Russian President Vladimir Putin fired Russian Deputy Defense Minister Colonel General Yury Sadovenko on May 20, replacing him with former Deputy Economic Minister and current Federation Council Accounts Chamber Auditor Oleg Savelyev. [12] Sadovenko had held his position in the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) since January 2013, and a Russian insider source speculated that Sadovenko may become a defendant in a criminal case for violating anti-corruption laws.[13] The insider source added that some additional Russian deputy defense ministers who worked closely with former Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu may soon resign. Russian milbloggers observed that Savelyev's appointment is consistent with the Kremlin's effort to improve the wartime economy, given that Savelyev has an extensive background in economics and experience in overseeing the audits of defense, national security, and law enforcement activities.[14] The milblogger added that recently appointed Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov is

beginning to form his own team within the Russian MoD.[15] Putin likely replaced Sadovenko with Savelyev in an effort to remove Shoigu's allies from the Russian MoD and appoint economic advisors to the agency to improve the wartime economy.

Putin also dismissed Presidential Advisor Alexandra Levitskaya on May 20, but the reason for Levitskaya's dismissal is unclear.[16] Putin appointed Levitskaya as a presidential advisor in August 2013. Levitskaya previously served as the deputy minister of health and social development from 2007 to 2012, and the Russian Government's first deputy chief of staff in 2012.[17] Putin transferred several presidential assistants to the presidential advisor rank on May 14 as part of changes to the presidential administration leadership.[18]

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reiterated the White House's unwillingness to approve Ukraine's use of US-provided weapons in strikes against military targets in Russia following a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group (also known as the Ramstein format) on May 20. Austin stated that the US expects that Ukraine will "continue to use the weapons that [the US] provided on targets inside of Ukraine." [19] Austin vaguely noted that "the aerial dynamic is a little bit different," but stated that he would not speculate further. ISW continues to assess that US and other Western limitations on Ukraine's ability to strike military targets in Russia have created a sanctuary in Russia's border areas from which Russian aircraft can conduct glide bomb and missile strikes against Ukrainian positions and settlements and where Russian forces and equipment can freely assemble before entering combat.[20] These US and Western policies are severely compromising Ukraine's ability to defend itself against current Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast or any area along the international border where Russian forces may choose to conduct offensive operations in the future.[21] UK Foreign Minister David Cameron recently announced that Ukrainian forces may use UK-provided weapons to strike targets in Russian territory, and other European countries may be considering lifting similar restrictions.[22] French National Assembly Foreign Affairs Committee Chairperson Jean-Louis Bourlanges stated on May 19 that France should allow Ukrainian forces to use French-provided weapons to strike military targets inside of Russia and noted that "the right to self-defense excludes the right to protect the territory of the aggressor." [23] Bourlanges stated that lifting the current restriction is not a question of Western intervention in the theater of operations but would "lift an unjustifiable taboo."

Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas stated that some unspecified countries, presumably NATO member states, have already sent personnel to train Ukrainian soldiers "on the ground." [24] Kallas stated to the *Financial Times (FT)* on May 19 that some countries have assumed the risk of sending personnel to train Ukrainian soldiers "in a risk zone" during the war and stated that NATO states should not fear the risk of escalation from such deployments.[25] Kallas' statement is the latest in a series of back-and-forth comments between senior Estonian officials about whether Estonia is planning to send its own personnel to perform non-combat support roles in deep rear areas in Ukraine.[26]

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev amplified a known Russian information operation aimed at directly undermining Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's legitimacy as president. Medvedev gave a long interview to Kremlin newswire *TASS* on May 20 in which Medvedev doubled down on the Russian information operation falsely portraying Zelensky as an illegitimate president and deepened the information operation by tying it to other Kremlin rhetorical lines.[27] Other Russian officials and ultranationalist milbloggers either made or amplified similar statements on May 20 accusing Zelensky of now "illegally" holding office.[28] Medvedev likely timed his statements to reinject the narrative into the Russian information space on May 20, when Zelensky's current presidential term would have ended had Ukraine held presidential elections in March 2024. The Ukrainian constitution permits postponing elections and allows a sitting president to serve after the designated end of his term under martial law, and Zelensky's decision not to hold elections during its existential defensive war is fully in accord with Ukraine's constitution.[29]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian sources indicated that Russian forces are concentrating limited, understaffed, and incohesive forces in the Sumy direction, but even such a Russian grouping of forces will be able to achieve the likely desired effect of drawing and fixing Ukrainian forces in the international border area.**

- **Kremlin officials expressed their condolences to senior Iranian officials following the announcement of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's and Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian's deaths on May 20.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin fired Russian Deputy Defense Minister Colonel General Yury Sadoenko on May 20, replacing him with former Deputy Economic Minister and current Federation Council Accounts Chamber Auditor Oleg Savelyev.**
- **Putin also dismissed Presidential Advisor Alexandra Levitskaya on May 20, but the reason for Levitskaya's dismissal is unclear.**
- **US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reiterated the White House's unwillingness to approve Ukraine's use of US-provided weapons in strikes against military targets in Russia following a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group (also known as the Ramstein format) on May 20.**
- **Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas stated that some unspecified countries, presumably NATO member states, have already sent personnel to train Ukrainian soldiers "on the ground."**
- **Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev amplified a known Russian information operation aimed at directly undermining Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's legitimacy as president.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Vovchansk, Chasiv Yar, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and the Dnipro River Delta.**
- **Russian opposition outlet Vazhnye Istorii (iStories) reported that Russian military authorities and Kazakh law enforcement acting on Russian orders detained at least two more servicemen in Kazakhstan who had deserted from the Russian military.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 20, 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.

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

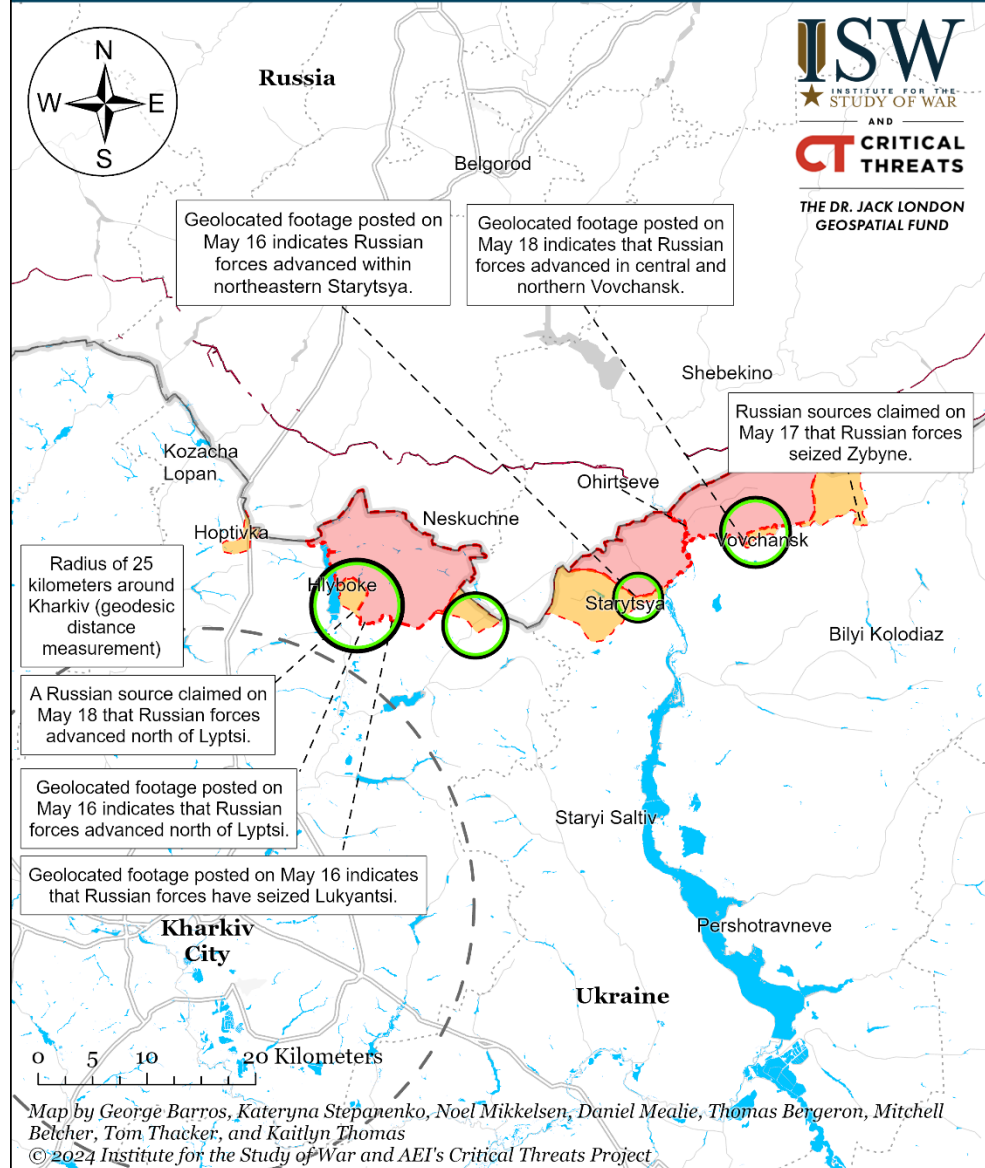
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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)

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Lyptsi (northeast of Kharkiv City) on May 20, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced 200 to 400 meters near Lyptsi and seized the dacha area north of Lyptsi.[30] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces also advanced near Zelene (east of Lyptsi).[31] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims, however. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continued offensive operations near Lyptsi and Zelene.[32] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 18th Motorized Rifle Division and 7th Motorized Rifle Regiment (both of the 11th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]), and the Russian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) Africa Corps attacked from Lukyantsi (northeast of Lyptsi) towards Lyptsi and along the Murom River towards Zelene.[33]

Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance in Vovchansk (northeast of Kharkiv City) amid continued Russian offensive operations in the area on May 20. Geolocated footage published on May 18 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in central Vovchansk north of the Vovcha River.[34] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced 150 to 600 meters in the Vovchansk direction.[35] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continued offensive operations near Vovchansk and Starytsya (southwest of Vovchansk).[36] A Russian milblogger claimed that there are positional battles near Starytsya and Buhruvatka (southwest of Vovchansk).[37] Russian sources claimed that Russian military personnel operating in the Vovchansk direction complained about how the area's open terrain does not allow for Russian ammunition supplies to arrive quickly at the frontline, likely referring to the fact Russian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) across open terrain are vulnerable to Ukrainian interdiction strikes.[38] Mashovets stated that unspecified elements of the 1st Guards Tank Army ([GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) - either elements of the 1st Tank Regiment and 1st Motorized Rifle Regiment (both of the 2nd Motorized Rifle Division) or elements of the 47th Tank Division - are operating in the forest area between Ohirtseve (northwest of Vovchansk) and Buhruvatka north of Siverskyi Donets River.[39] Mashovets stated that elements of the 138th and 25th motorized rifle brigades (6th Combined Arms Army, LMD) are operating within Vovchansk. Elements of the Chechen "Zapad-Akhmat" Battalion, 272nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (47th Tank Division, 1st GTA, MMD) and Rosgvardia are reportedly operating near Vovchansk.[40]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 20, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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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
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Field Fortifications

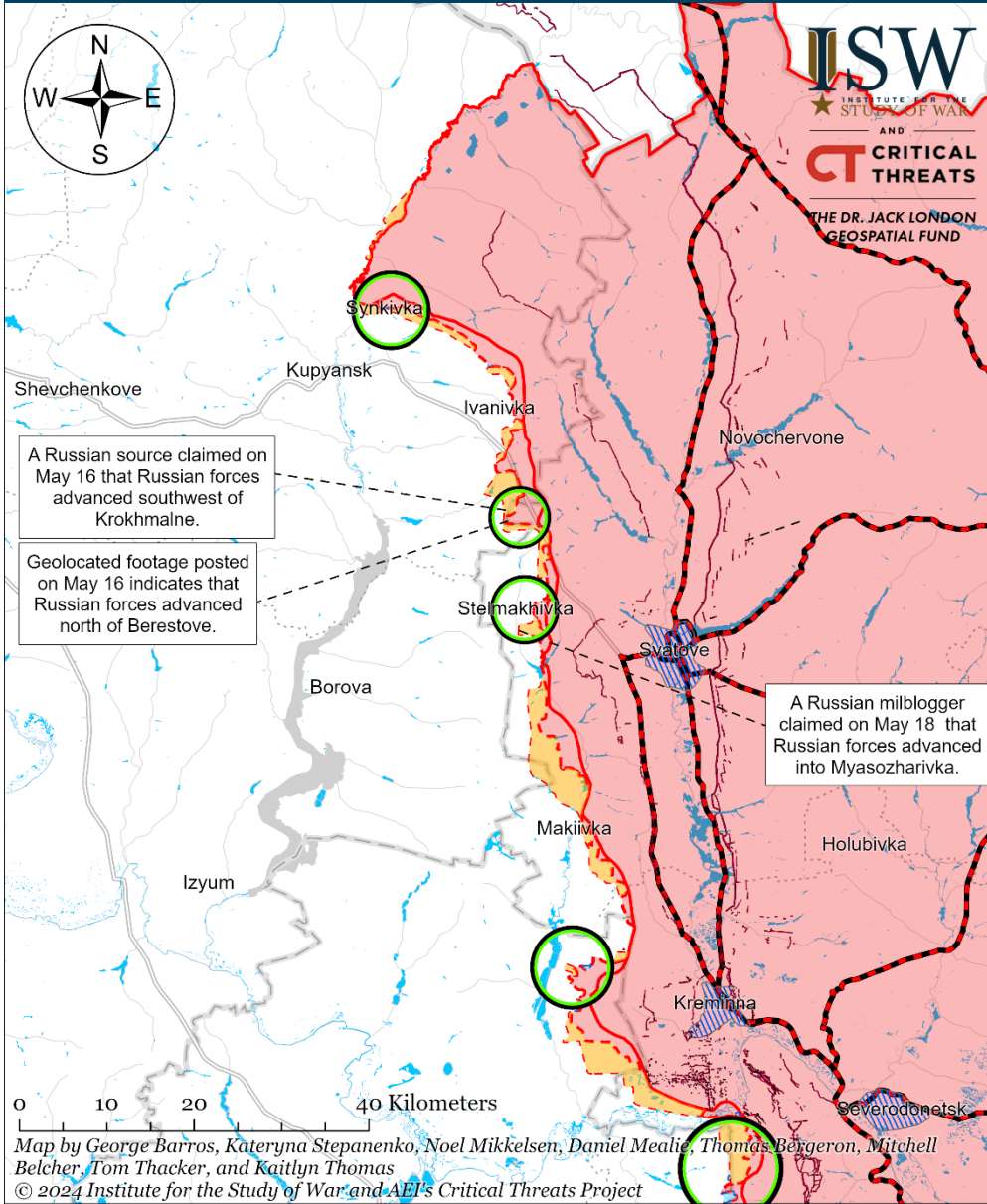
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on May 17 that the maximum extent of Russian advances into Kharkiv Oblast was 10 kilometers. A Russian source claimed on May 17 that Russian forces advanced between 300 and 600 meters toward Lyptsy. Russian sources claimed on May 16 that Russian forces advanced 2.89 kilometers wide and one kilometer deep in Vovchansk.

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

Russian forces reportedly recently advanced near Kreminna amid continued ground attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on May 20. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces seized Bilohorivka (south of Kreminna), but Russian milbloggers criticized the MoD's claim as premature or otherwise untrue.[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced northeast of Berestove (northwest of Svatove) and west of Dibrova (south of Kreminna).[42] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims, however. Russian forces also continued ground assaults northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; northwest of Svatove near Berestove, Ivanivka, and Stelmakhivka; and southwest of Svatove near Novoyehorivka.[43] Reconnaissance elements of the Russian 15th Motorized Rifle Regiment (2nd Motorized Rifle Division, 1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) reportedly continue operating in the Kupyansk direction.[44]

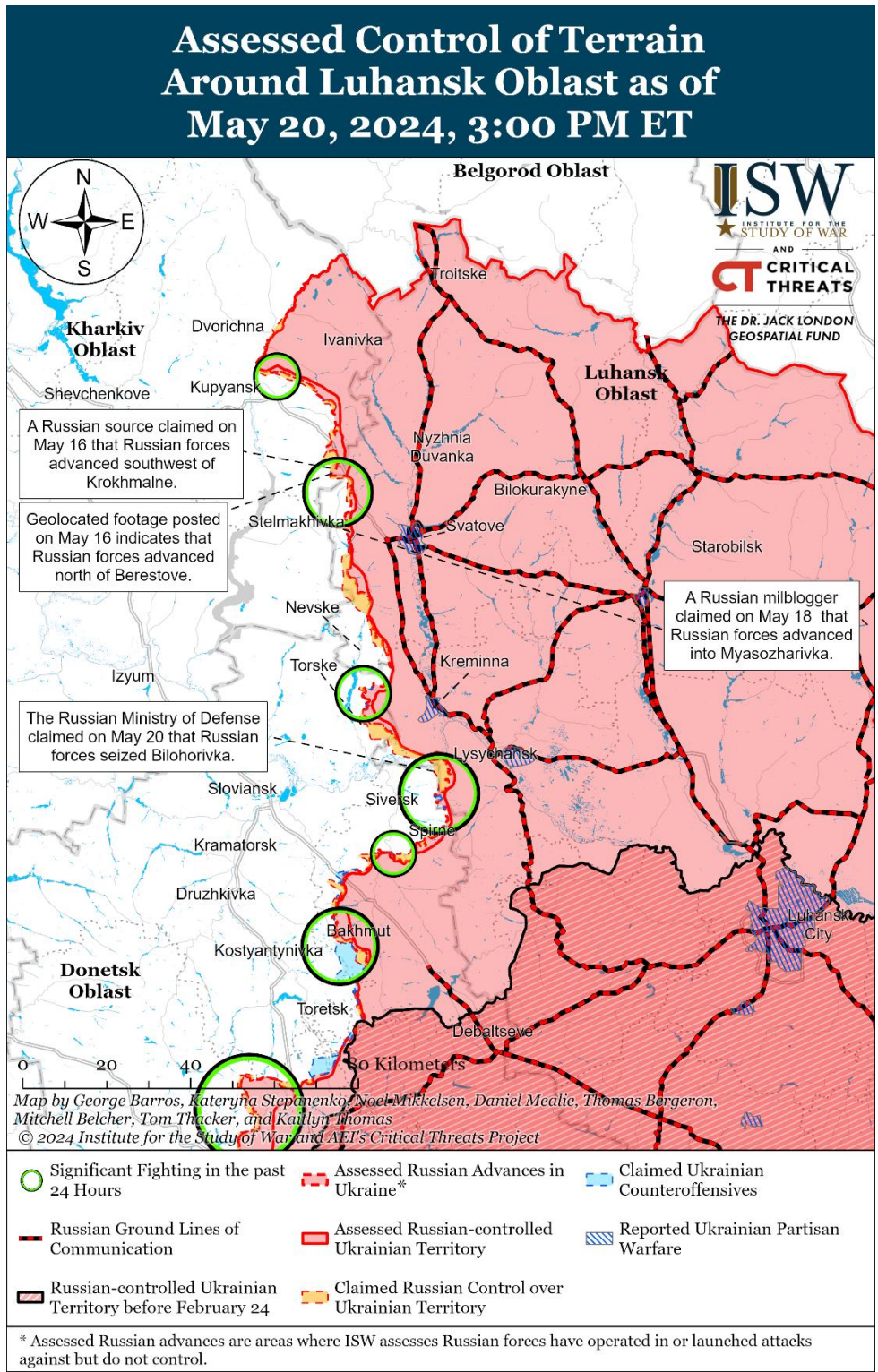
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kupyansk as of May 20, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

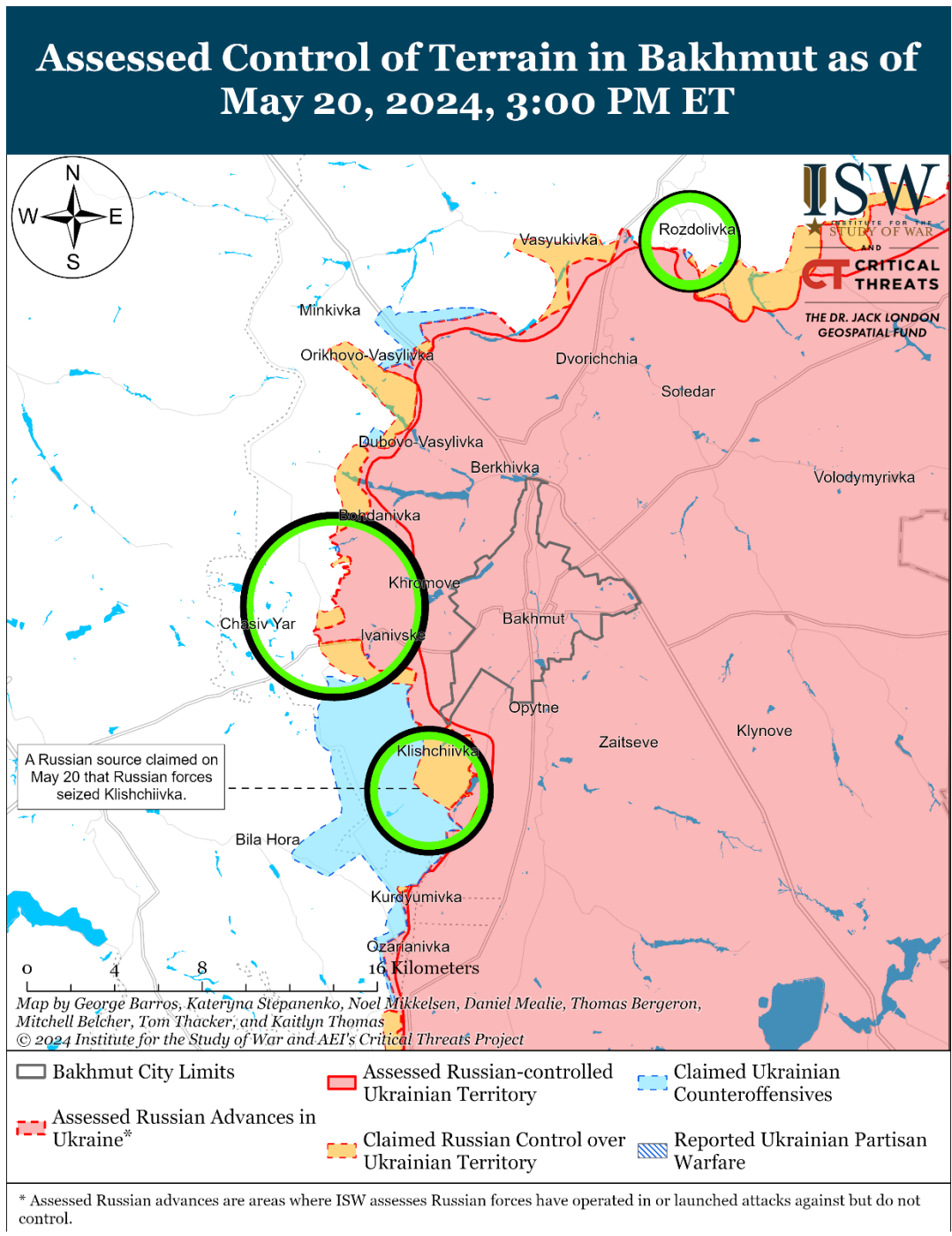
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted a strike against the suburbs of occupied Luhansk City on May 20. Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces struck Katerynivka - a settlement formerly known as Yuvileyne on the western outskirts of Luhansk City - with either Storm Shadow or SCALP-EG missiles.[45] Russian and Ukrainian sources speculated that Ukrainian forces struck the Luhansk Academy of Internal Affairs, which Russian forces had previously used to house military personnel.[46]

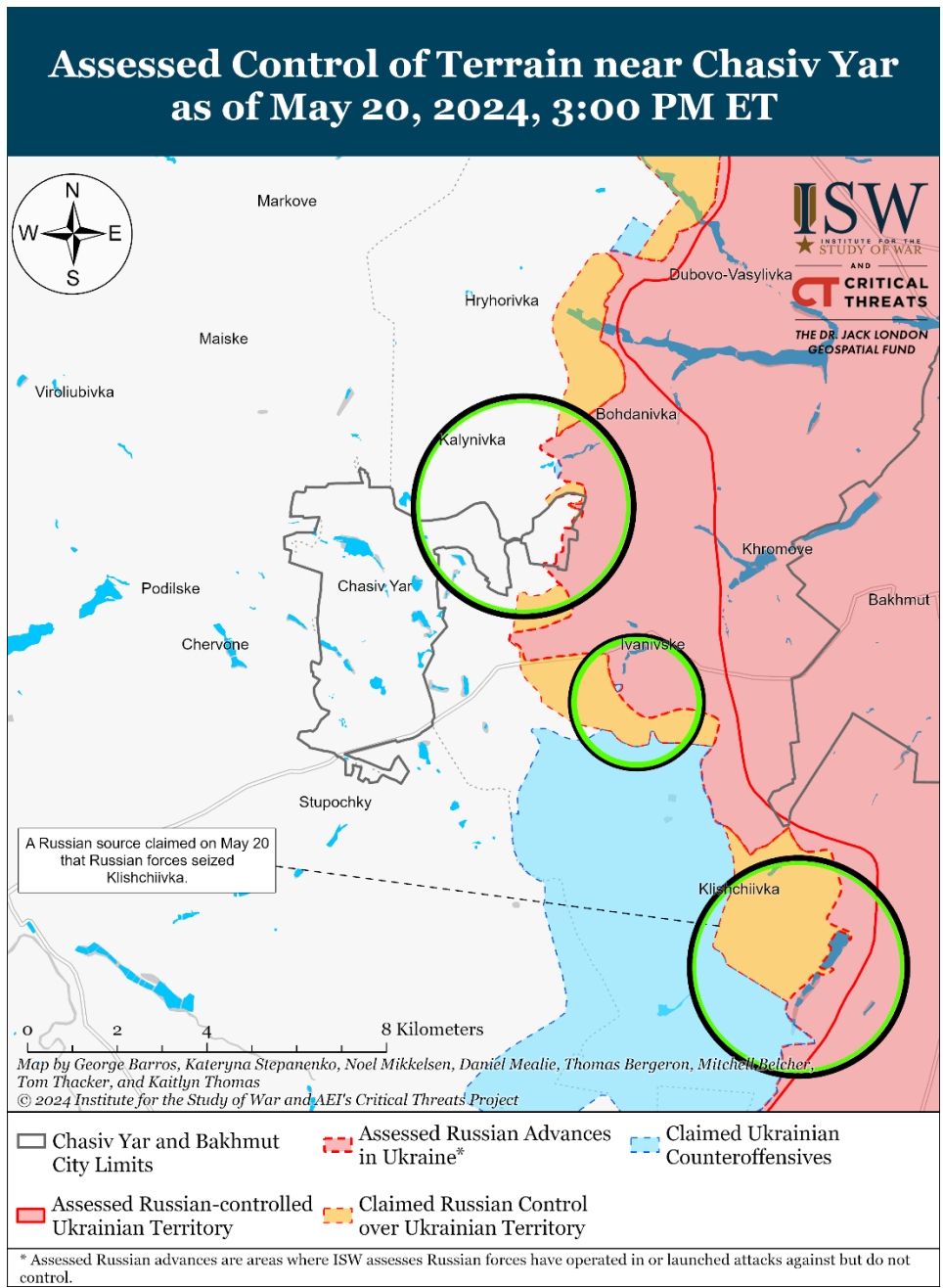


Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

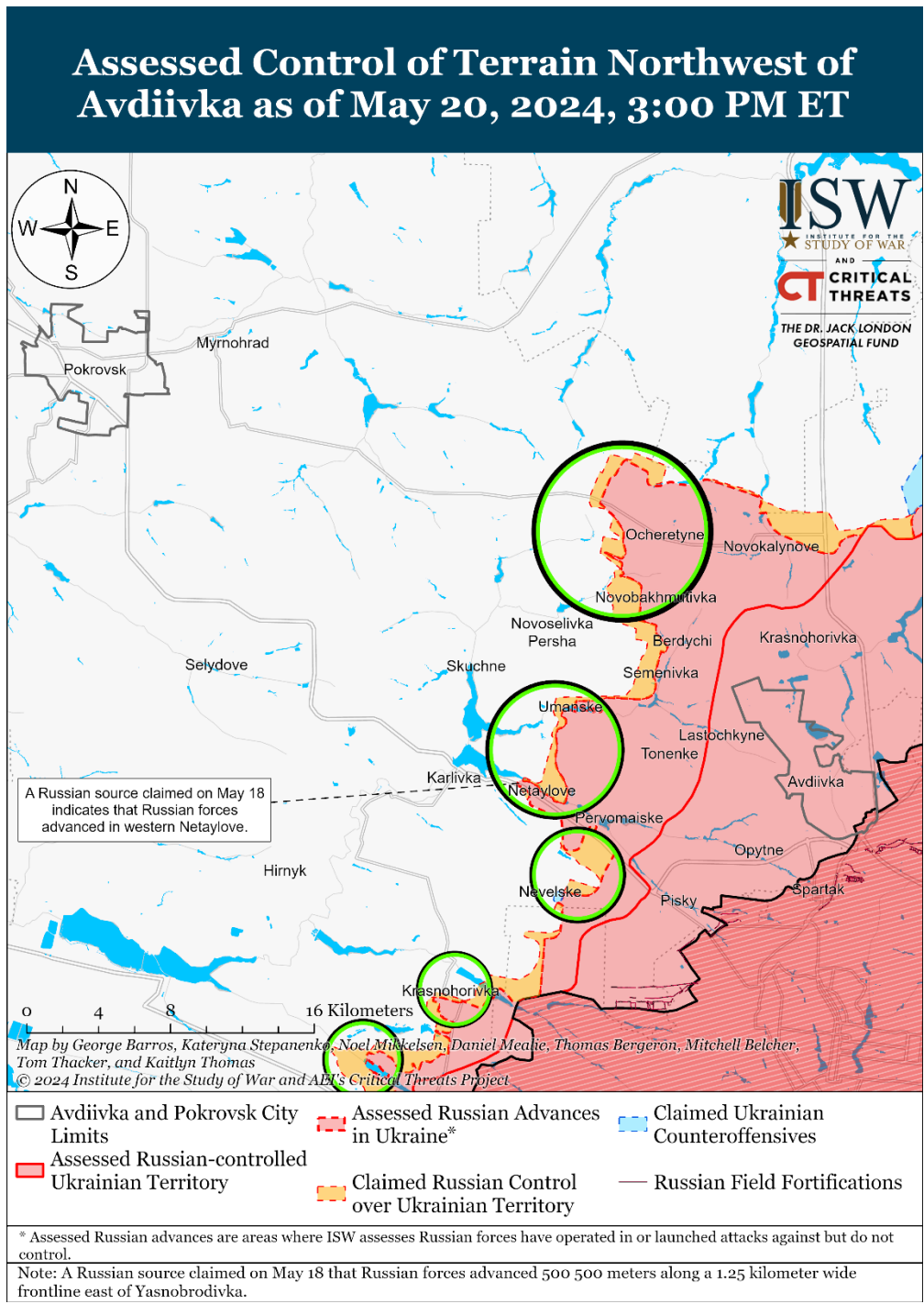
Russian forces continued ground assaults in the Siversk direction (northeast of Bakhmut) on May 20, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Vesele (south of Siversk), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[47] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces attacked east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske, south of Siversk near Rozdolivka, and southeast of Siversk near Ivano-Darivka and Vyimka.[48] Elements of the Russian 106th Airborne (VDV) Division reportedly continue operating in the Siversk direction.[49]



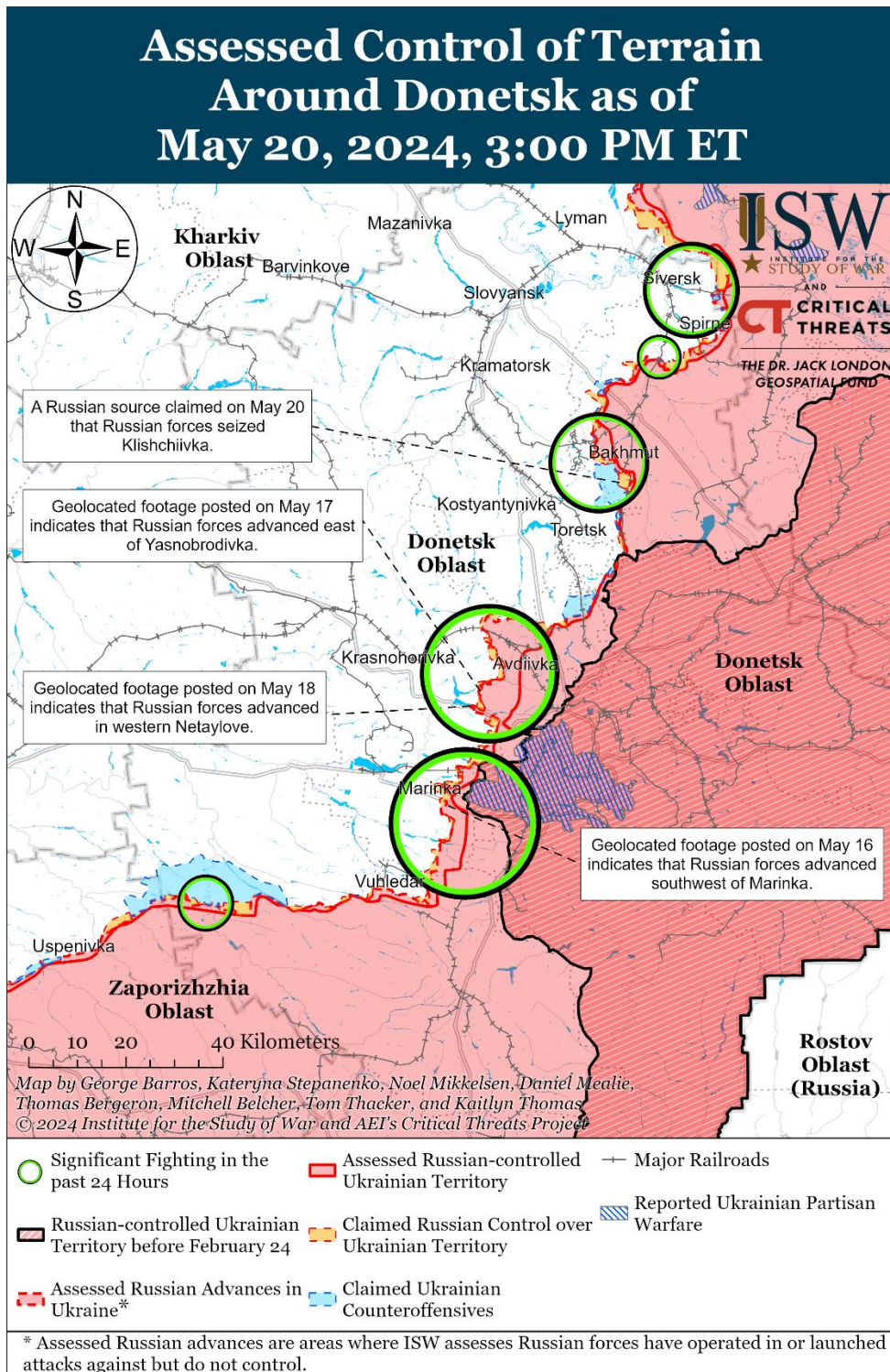
Russian forces recently advanced near Chasiv Yar amid continued Russian offensive operations in the area on May 20. Geolocated footage published on May 18 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced during mechanized assaults on May 17 and May 18 in the southern part of the Kanal Microrraion (easternmost Chasiv Yar).[50] Geolocated footage published on May 19 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in southern Klishchiivka (southeast of Chasiv Yar).[51] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces completely seized Klishchiivka, although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[52] Russian sources also claimed that elements of the Russian 98th VDV Division advanced in the Novyi Microrraion (eastern Chasiv Yar) and that Russian forces advanced near Bohdanivka (northeast of Chasiv Yar).[53] Russian forces also continued attacking north of Chasiv Yar near Kalynivka, east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske, and southeast of Chasiv Yar near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[54] Elements of the Russian 6th Motorized Rifle Division (3rd Army Corps [AC]) reportedly continue operating near Klishchiivka.[55] A Russian milblogger, who previously served as a Storm-Z instructor, claimed that Russian forces "critically" lack drone operators and anti-drone protection on armored vehicles in the Chasiv Yar area.[56]



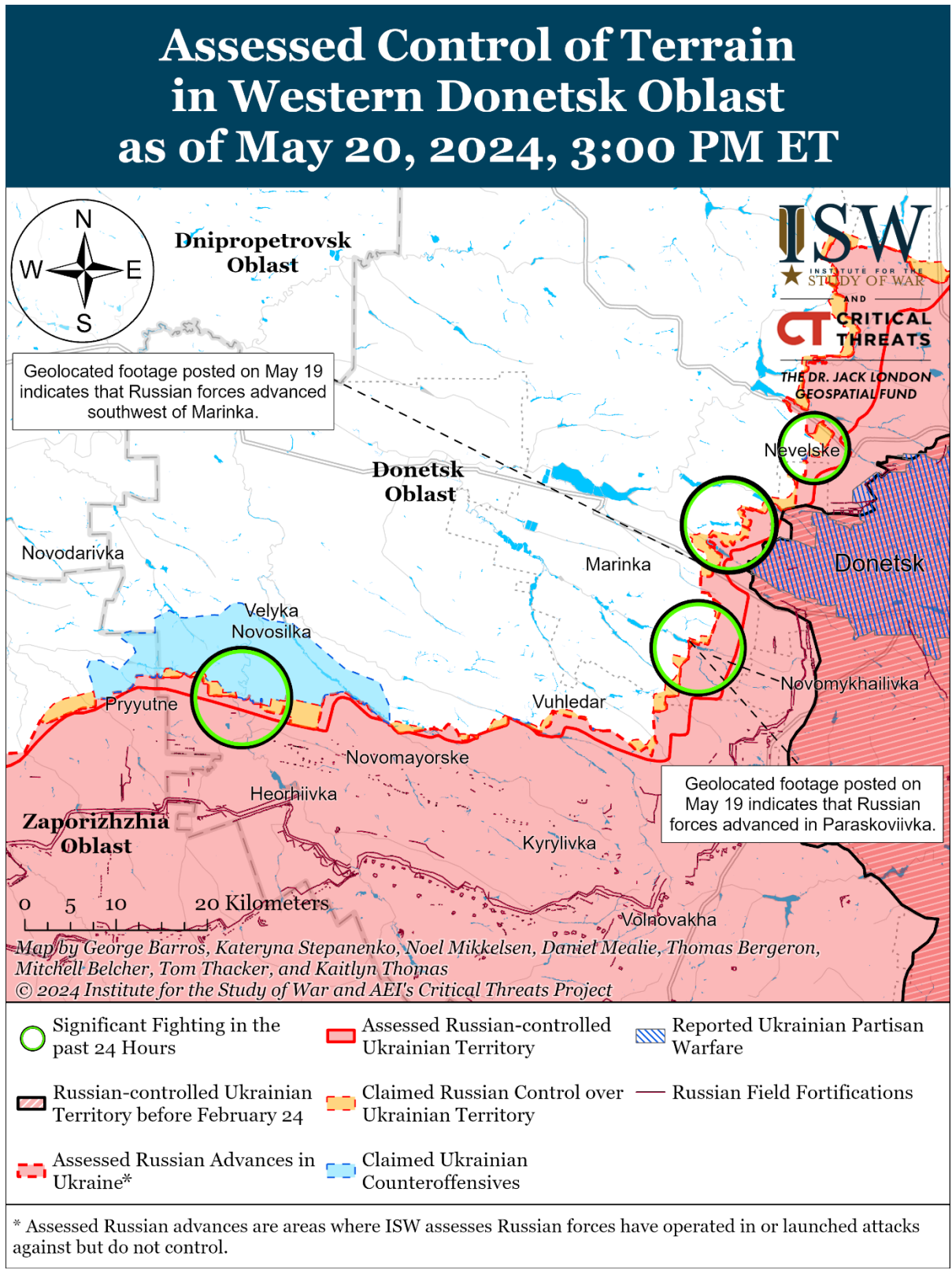
Russian forces recently advanced west of Avdiivka amid continued Russian offensive operations in the area on May 20. Geolocated footage published on May 18 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in western Netaylove (west of Avdiivka).[57] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced northeast of Novokalynove (north of Avdiivka) in an area 2.92 kilometers wide and up to 1.34 kilometers deep toward the H-20 (Donetsk City-Kostyantynivka) highway and northwest of Semenivka (northwest of Avdiivka).[58] Fighting also continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novooleksandriivka, Lozuvatske, Arkhanhelske, Yevhenivka, Sokil, Novopokrovske, and Novoselivka Persha and west of Avdiivka near Sieverne, Umanske, and Yasnobrodivka.[59] Elements of the Russian 15th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly operating near Ocheretyne (northwest of Avdiivka).[60]



Russian forces recently advanced west of Donetsk City amid continued Russian offensive operations in the area on May 20. Geolocated footage published on May 20 indicates that Russian forces advanced southeast of Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City).[61] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced east, southeast, and south of Paraskoviivka (southwest of Donetsk City) and seized more than half of the settlement.[62] Fighting also continued west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City Novomykhailivka and Vodyane.[63] Elements of the Russian 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Paraskoviivka.[64]

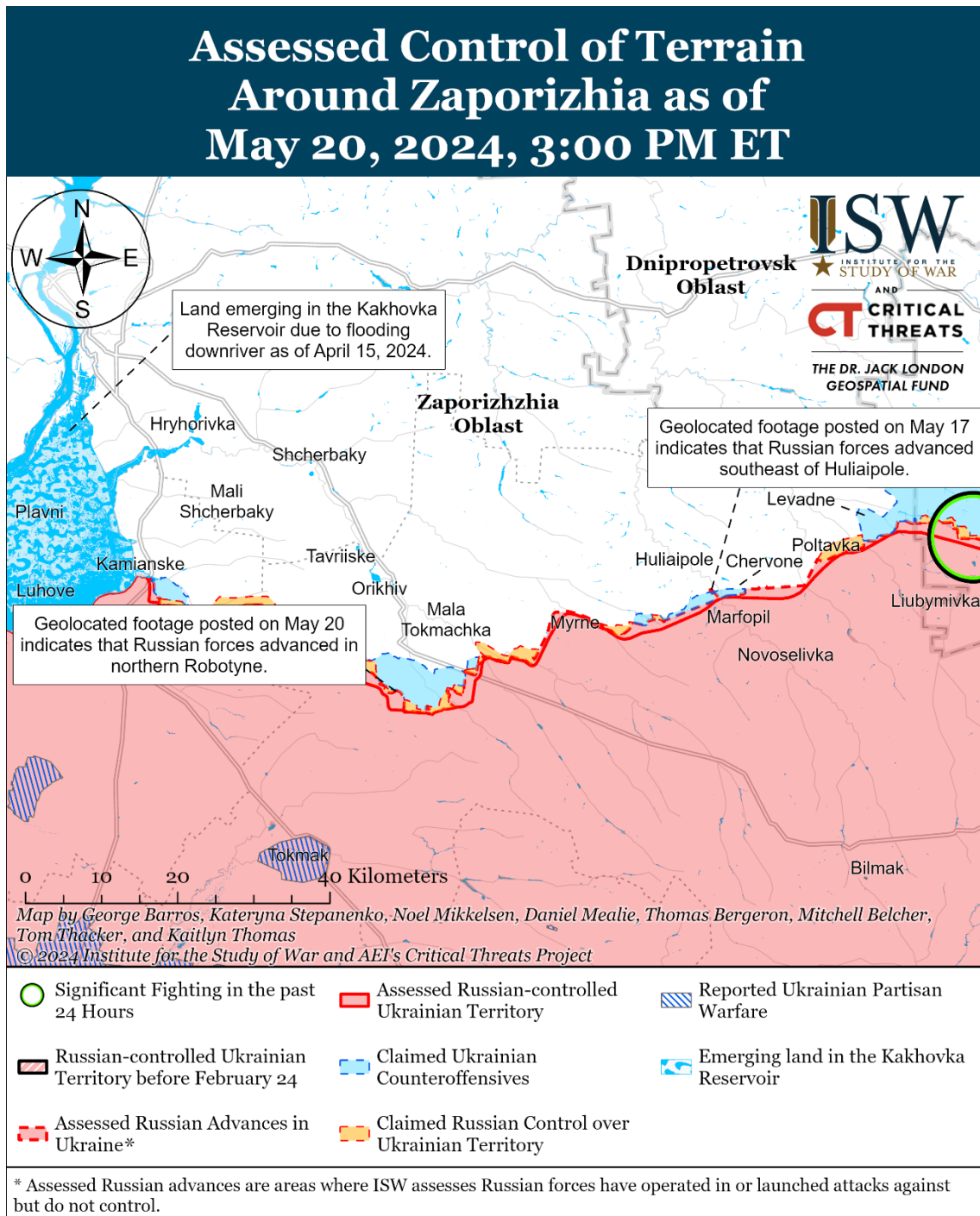


Russian forces continued ground assaults in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on May 20, including south of Velyka Novosilka near Urozhaine and Staromayorske.[65]

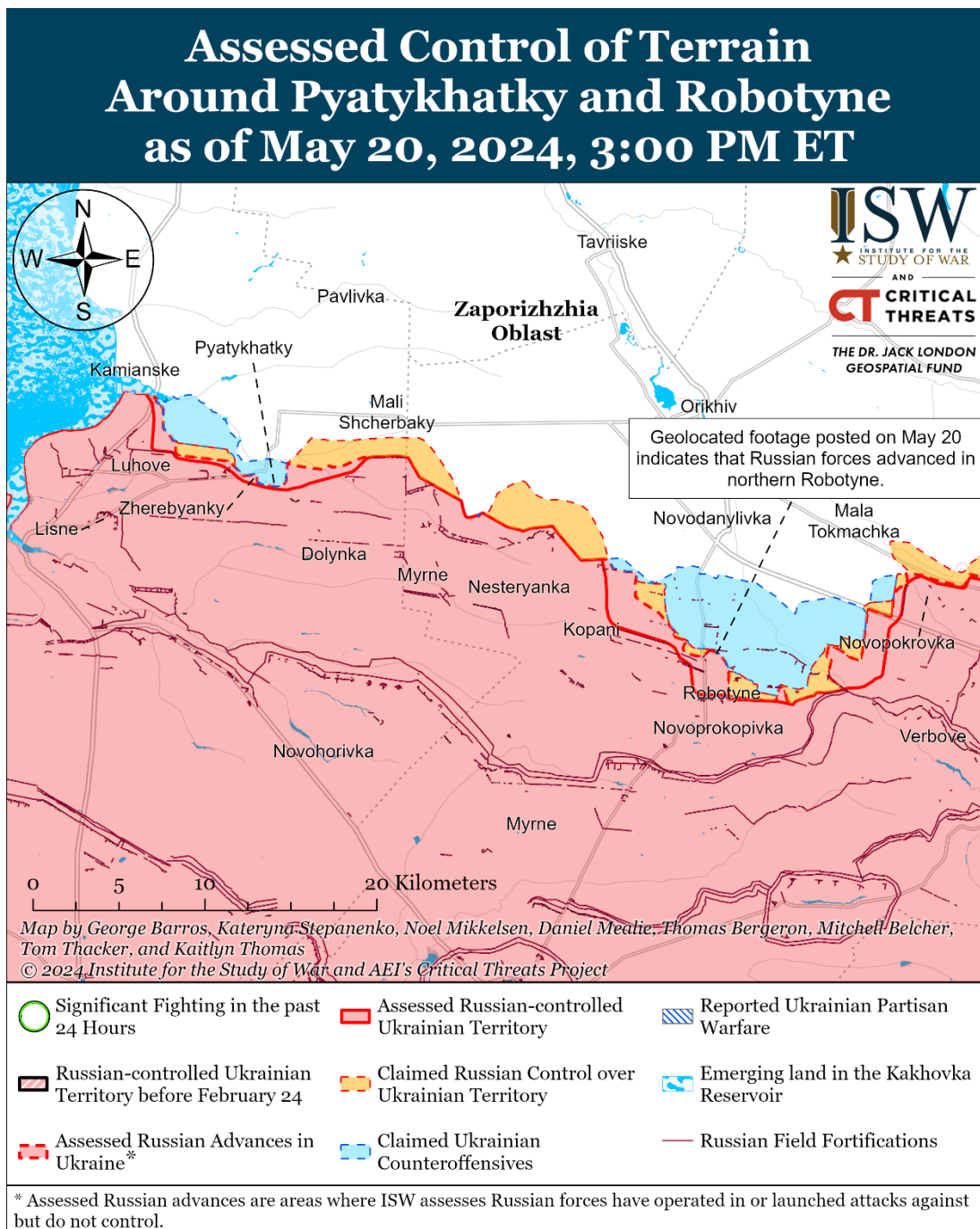


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

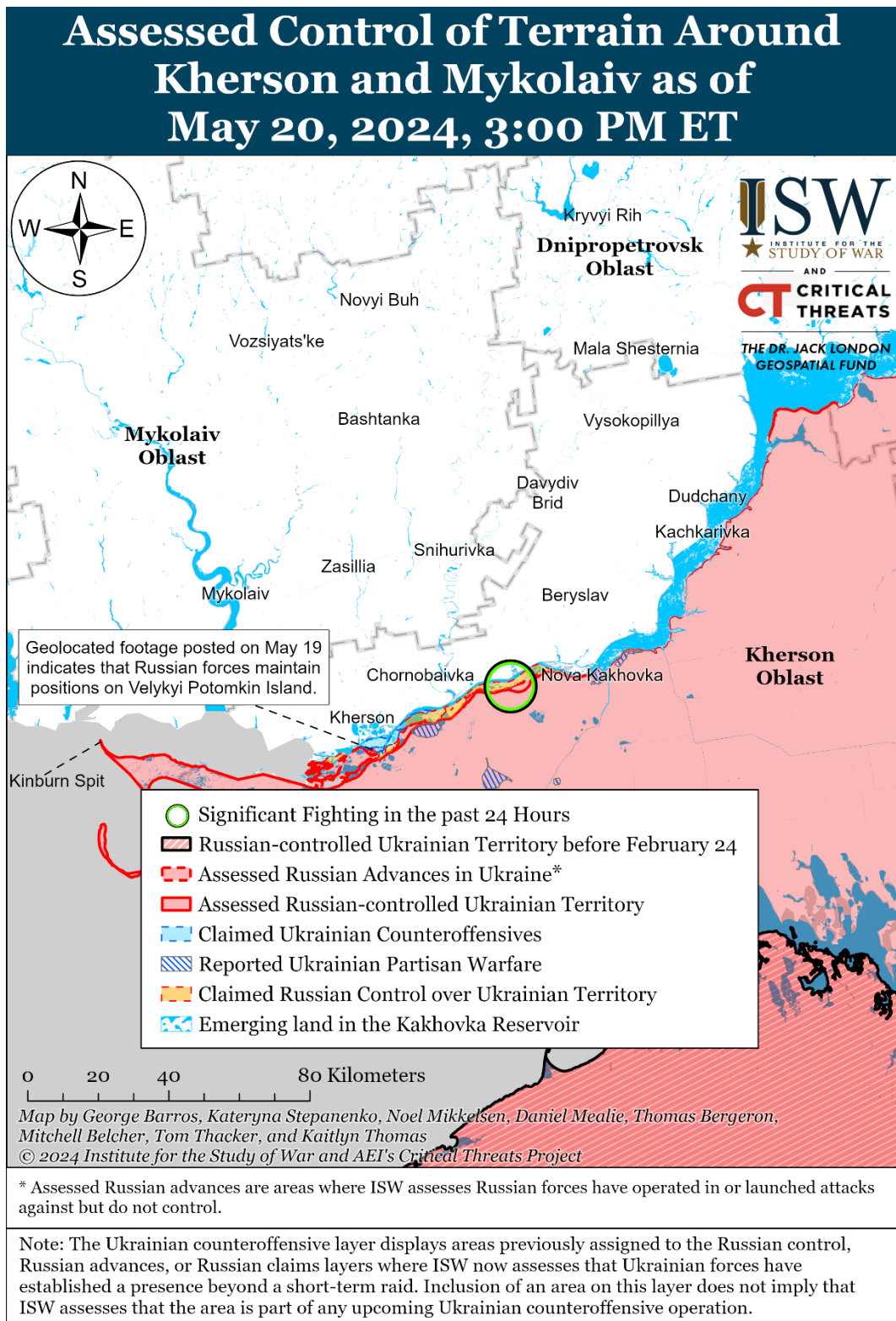
A Russian occupation official denied Russian claims from May 19 that Russian forces advanced nearly two kilometers towards Hulyaipole. Zaporizhzhia Oblast occupation senator Dmitry Rogozin stated that he could not confirm Zaporizhzhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov's claim that Russian forces advanced up to 1.5 kilometers towards Hulyaipole.[66] A Russian milblogger similarly expressed doubt about the accuracy of Rogov's claim, while another milblogger implied that elements of the Russian 247th Guards Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) may be operating in the Hulyaipole direction.[67]



Russian forces recently marginally advanced in northern Robotyne and have likely seized the settlement.[68] Geolocated footage published on May 18 showed a Russian soldier surrendering in northeastern Robotyne, and geolocated footage published on May 20 showed Ukrainian forces striking Russian forces also in northwestern Robotyne.[69] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 3.45 kilometers wide and 1.16 kilometers deep southeast of Robotyne and secured positions along a section of the Robotyne-Verbove (east of Robotyne) road to a depth of 620 meters.[70] Positional engagements continued near Robotyne and northwest of Verbove.[71] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces use artillery more intensely than Ukrainian forces, but that Ukrainian forces use first-person view (FPV) drones more intensely than Russian forces in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[72] Elements of the Russian 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) reportedly make munitions for FPV drones in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[73]



Russian forces recently marginally advanced on Velykyi Potemkin Island in the Dnipro River Delta. Geolocated footage published on May 19 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced to the southern part of the Velykyi Potemkin Island.[74] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted to gain a foothold on Nestryha Island in the Dnipro River Delta on May 18 and 19.[75]



Russian milbloggers confirmed previous claims that elements of the Russian 76th VDV Division redeployed from western Zaporizhia Oblast to the Krynky area in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast.[76] Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 76th VDV Division pushed Ukrainian forces out of Krynky and seized the settlement.[77] A Russian milblogger noted that Russian forces did not reestablish full control over Krynky despite some Russian sources claiming that Russian forces are clearing the village.[78] Positional engagements continued near Krynky, and the Ukrainian General Staff observed that the intensity of Russian attacks in the Dnipro direction (also known as the Kherson direction) somewhat decreased.[79] ISW previously observed unconfirmed reports that the Russian military is redeploying elements of the 76th and 7th VDV divisions from Zaporizhia Oblast to various new directions, including eastern Ukraine and Kherson Oblast, and numerous milblogger claims suggest that at least some elements of the 76th VDV Division redeployed to Kherson Oblast.[80]

Ukrainian and Russian sources reported that Ukrainian forces struck the Russian *Tsyklon* Karakhut-class small missile ship in Sevastopol Bay on May 19 with three US-provided ATACMS missiles, but ISW cannot independently confirm these reports at this time. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command and Navy Spokesperson Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk stated on May 20 that there is a possibility that Ukrainian forces struck the *Tsyklon*, which is reportedly the only remaining cruise missile carrier in occupied Crimea.[81] Pletenchuk stated that there is no official confirmation of the strike, and ISW did not observe any visual evidence. Unnamed sources in the Crimean occupation emergency services told Russian opposition outlet *Astra* that three ATACMS missiles struck the *Tsyklon*, and *Astra* reported that the ship sank.[82]

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

Russian forces continued drone and missile strikes against Ukraine overnight on May 19 to 20 and during the day on May 20. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces launched 29 Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai and Kursk Oblast overnight and that Ukrainian forces shot down all 29 drones over Odesa, Mykolaiv, Poltava, and Lviv oblasts.[83] The Kharkiv Oblast Prosecutor General's Office stated that Russian forces also conducted an Iskander ballistic missile strike against the House of Culture in Izyum, Kharkiv Oblast just after midnight on May 20, but Russian sources claimed that Russian forces struck a Ukrainian military target in Izyum.[84] Ukraine's Eastern Air Command reported that Ukrainian forces downed a Russian Kh-59/69 cruise missile over Kryvyi Rih Raion, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast during the day on May 20.[85]

Russia and its allies continue to circumvent international sanctions to produce weapons to use against Ukraine. The director of the Kyiv Scientific Research Institute of Foreign Examinations, Oleksandr Ruvin, stated on May 20 that the institute found over 290 foreign-produced microelectronics components in a North Korean missile that Russian forces launched at Ukraine.[86] Ruvin stated that microelectronics components produced by over 25 companies in the United States, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Singapore, Switzerland, and Taiwan were in the missile and that some of these components specifically contributed to the missile's navigation system.[87]

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

Russian opposition outlet *Vazhnye Istorii (iStories)* reported that Russian military authorities and Kazakh law enforcement acting on Russian wanted orders detained at least two more servicemen in Kazakhstan who had deserted from the Russian military. The head of the Russian 496th Military Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee reportedly attempted to contact one deserter in Kazakhstan. Another deserter claimed that Kazakh plainclothes officers detained him after receiving a wanted order from Russia.[88] The *BBC News Russian Service* reported on May 18 that Russian military authorities in Astana, Kazakhstan, detained a Russian contract servicemember (*kontraktnik*) for desertion on April 23.[89]

Wives and mothers of mobilized Russian servicemembers continue to complain about the poor treatment Russian troops fighting in Ukraine. Wives and mothers of mobilized servicemembers of the Russian 5th Combined Arms Army (Eastern Military District) complained that the Russian military command is forcefully holding around 90 wounded and ill mobilized personnel in barracks to make them continue fighting in Ukraine.[90] A Russian opposition outlet also reported that a group of wives and other relatives of mobilized men applied to hold a rally in Novosibirsk on June 1 and that this rally will focus on how mobilization deprived children of their fathers.[91]

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)

Ukraine's Western partners continue to provide additional military support to Ukraine. The Danish Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on May 16 a military aid package for Ukraine worth 5.6 billion kroner (about \$815 million).[92] The Danish MoD stated that the package will include 2.4 billion kroner (about \$349 million) for air defense and funding for artillery systems and shells, anti-tank mines, and donations of F-16 aircraft. The Danish MoD stated that part of the funds will also go to maintaining Danish-provided weapons and equipment and direct investments in the Ukrainian defense industrial base (DIB). Spanish Defense Minister Margarita Robles announced on May 20 that Spain will provide a new military aid package to Ukraine, which includes Leopard tanks, that Ukraine should receive at the end of June.[93] The Lithuanian MoD announced on May 17 that Lithuania delivered 5.56x45mm artillery ammunition, drones, and anti-drone equipment to Ukraine.[94] German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius stated on May 17 that Lithuania will provide six Amber-1800 radars to Ukraine as part of the German-created Immediate Action on Air Defense initiative.[95] UK Defense Secretary Grant Shapps stated on May 20 that the UK has delivered 80 air defense missiles, over 20 mine clearing systems, long-range surveillance and reconnaissance drones, over one million rounds of ammunition, and 20 Viking Amphibious Armored All-Terrain Vehicles to Ukraine in the past three weeks.[96] Shapps said that the UK will deliver a total of 100 air defense missiles by the end of May. The Austrian Foreign Ministry announced on May 16 that the Austrian Ministry of Finance and Austrian export credit agency Oesterreichische Kontrollbank AG (OeKB) are creating a credit fund totaling 500 million euros (about \$542 million) over the next five years to support Austrian exports to Ukraine and the reconstruction of Ukraine.[97]

German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall continues efforts to open facilities to help the Ukrainian defense industrial base (DIB) both in Ukraine and neighboring states. Rheinmetall CEO Armin Papperger stated on May 15 that Rheinmetall plans to create another enterprise in Ukraine to produce air defense systems and that production will likely begin in one to two years.[98] Rheinmetall also announced on May 17 that it opened a Rheinmetall Automecanica SRL plant in Medias, Romania that will support Ukrainian military vehicles.[99]

Ukraine continues efforts to develop its DIB and technological innovations. The founder of Ukrainian drone company Vyriy Drone, Oleksiy Babenko, stated on May 16 that Ukraine has begun serial production of self-guided first-person view (FPV) drones that use a thermal imaging camera to identify targets.[100] Babenko stated that Vyriy Drone will deliver several thousand of these drones to the Ukrainian government in May 2024.[101] The Ukrainian Army of Drones project reported on May 17 that Ukraine developed a new Ukropchik quadcopter drone that can carry a payload of 1.5 kilograms, fly for 29 minutes without cargo, and has optional GPS.[102] The Army of Drones project reported on May 20 that Ukraine developed the Ratel-S ground-based strike robot to attack Russian armored vehicles. The Ratel S can drive up to 24 kilometers per hour, has a maximum range of six kilometers, and can drive for two hours on a single charge.[103] Ukrainian Digital Transformation Minister Mykhailo Fedorov stated on May 15 that Ukrainian forces destroy the majority of Russian armored vehicles they kill with Ukrainian-produced drones.[104] The Ukrainian MoD reported on May 16 that it approved 18 samples of domestically-produced weapons for the Ukrainian military since May 9 and will have approved a total of 80 samples from January through May 2024.[105]

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

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

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian actors continue efforts to discredit the new Ukrainian mobilization law designed to help Ukraine reconstitute its forces to maintain its defense against the Russian invasion. Russian ultranationalist milbloggers continued to amplify provisions of the new law and claimed that Ukrainian forces are engaged in illegal activities.[106] Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo amplified rhetoric aimed at dividing the Ukrainian people and government.[107]

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and People's Republic of China (PRC) Foreign Minister Wang Yi met in Astana on May 20 and emphasized boilerplate rhetoric about Russia-Chinese strategic partnership and friendship.[108]

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)

Union State Secretary Dmitry Mezentsev stated on May 19 that the Union State of Russia and Belarus is implementing seven programs in the field of space, microelectronics, electronics, and the automotive industry.[109] Mezentsev also stated that the Union State is implementing the “Biomembrane” medical program and discussed issues relating to improving the quality of professional education as part of the unified industrial policy.

Belarus continues to expand its relations with Russian federal subjects. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko met with Magadan Oblast Governor Sergei Nosov on May 20 and discussed increasing trade and economic relations, especially related to the development of non-ferrous metals in Magadan Oblast.[110]

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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