

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, May 30

Karolina Hird, Mason Clark, and George Barros

May 30, 3:30pm ET

Mounting casualties among Russian junior officers will likely further degrade Russian capabilities and lead to further morale breakdowns. The UK Ministry of Defense stated on May 30 that Russian forces have suffered devastating losses amongst mid and junior ranking officers. The UK MoD reported that battalion and brigade level officers continue to deploy forwards and into harm's way—rather than commanding from rear areas and delegating to lower-ranking officers—due to senior Russian officers holding them to an “uncompromising level of responsibility” for their units.¹ The British Defense Ministry further reported that junior officers are in charge of low-level tactical operations due to a lack of professionalism and modernization within the Russian Armed Forces and that the continued losses of these junior officers will complicate command and control efforts, particularly in Battalion Tactical Groups (BTGs) cobbled together from the survivors of multiple other units.² ISW previously assessed that continued demoralization and poor command and control among Russian forces could present Ukrainian forces opportunities to conduct prudent counteroffensives, particularly as the Russian military continues to pour resources into the battle of Severodonetsk at the cost of other lines of effort.

Domestic dissent within Russian military circles, claiming that the Kremlin is not doing enough to win the war, continues to grow. Former Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Igor Girkin (also known as Strelkov) condemned Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statements about the priority of the “special operation” in Ukraine being the liberation of the Donbas.³ Girkin claimed that the Kremlin has forgone the ideological underpinnings of the conflict by focusing the conflict on the Donbas, rather than the entirety of Ukraine. Girkin complained that Kremlin officials are no longer questioning the legitimacy of the existence of Ukraine and that the concepts of “denazification” and “demilitarization” have been forgotten. Girkin accused the Kremlin of appeasement policies and stated that the threat of defeat continues to grow.

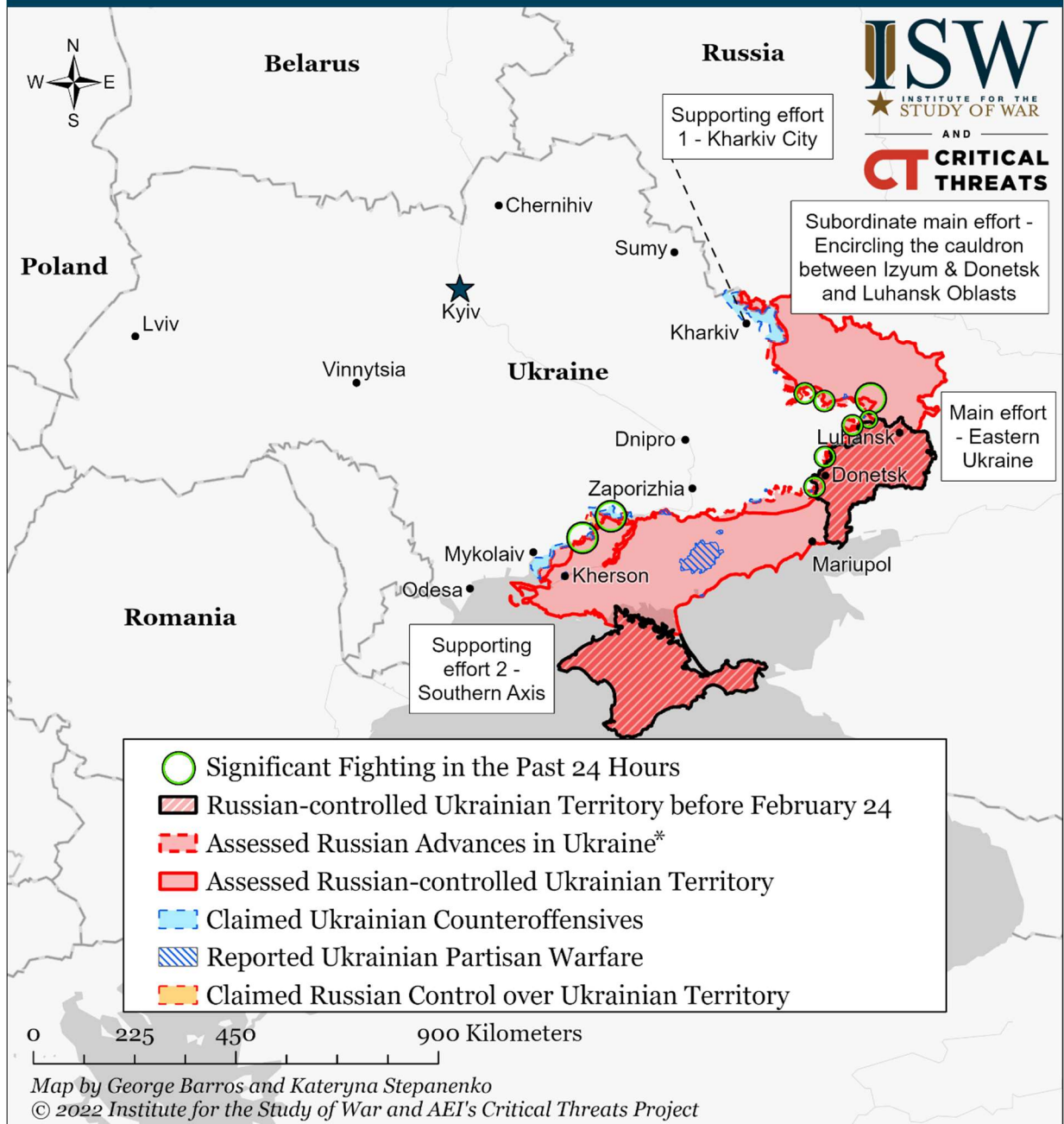
Girkin's dissent is emblematic of continued shifts within circles of Russian military enthusiasts and ex-servicemen. As ISW has previously reported, the Kremlin has repeatedly revised its objectives for the war in Ukraine downwards due to battlefield failures. The Kremlin is increasingly facing discontent not from Russians opposed to the war as a whole, but military and nationalist figures angry at Russian losses and frustrated with shifting Kremlin framing of the war. Russian officials are increasingly unable to employ the same ideological justifications for the invasion in the face of clear setbacks, and a lack of concrete military gains within Ukraine will continue to foment domestic dissatisfaction with the war.

Key Takeaways

- Russian forces continued to incrementally capture areas of Severodonetsk but have not yet fully encircled the city.
- Russian forces focused on regrouping near Izyum to renew offensives towards Slovyansk and Barvinkove and conducted only minor, unsuccessful, attacks. Russian forces are making incremental advances towards Slovyansk and seek to assault the city itself in the coming weeks, but are unlikely to achieve decisive gains.

- Russian forces in Kharkiv continue to focus efforts on preventing a Ukrainian counteroffensive from reaching the international border between Kharkiv and Belgorod, and Ukrainian forces have not conducted any significant operations in the area in recent days.
- The limited Ukrainian counterattack in northern Kherson Oblast did not take any further ground in the last 48 hours but has disrupted Russian operations. Russian forces launched several unsuccessful attacks against the Ukrainian bridgehead on the east bank of the Inhulets River.
- Mounting casualties among Russian junior officers will further degrade Russian morale and command and control capabilities.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 30, 2022, 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 those 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 population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

ISW has updated its assessment of the four primary efforts Russian forces are engaged in at this time. We have stopped coverage of Mariupol as a separate effort since the city's fall. We had added a new section on activities in Russian-occupied areas:

- Main effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and three supporting efforts);
- Subordinate main effort- Encirclement of Ukrainian troops in the cauldron between Izyum and Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts
- Supporting effort 1—Kharkiv City;
- Supporting effort 2—Southern axis;
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas

Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine

Subordinate Main Effort—Southern Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk Oblasts (Russian objective: Encircle Ukrainian forces in Eastern Ukraine and capture the entirety of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces focused on regrouping near Izyum to renew offensives towards Slovyansk and Barvinkove on May 30 and conducted only minor, unsuccessful, attacks.⁴ Russian troops reportedly conducted an unsuccessful assault on Kurulka, about 30 kilometers south of Izyum.⁵ The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Russian forces deployed a squadron of Ka-52 helicopters to the area to provide air defense, and reported Russian troops have moved over 250 units of (unspecified) weaponry and equipment to the area to replenish their force grouping around Izyum.⁶ The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Russian forces have rebuilt a railway bridge near Kupyansk to facilitate the movement of troops and equipment in the area.⁷

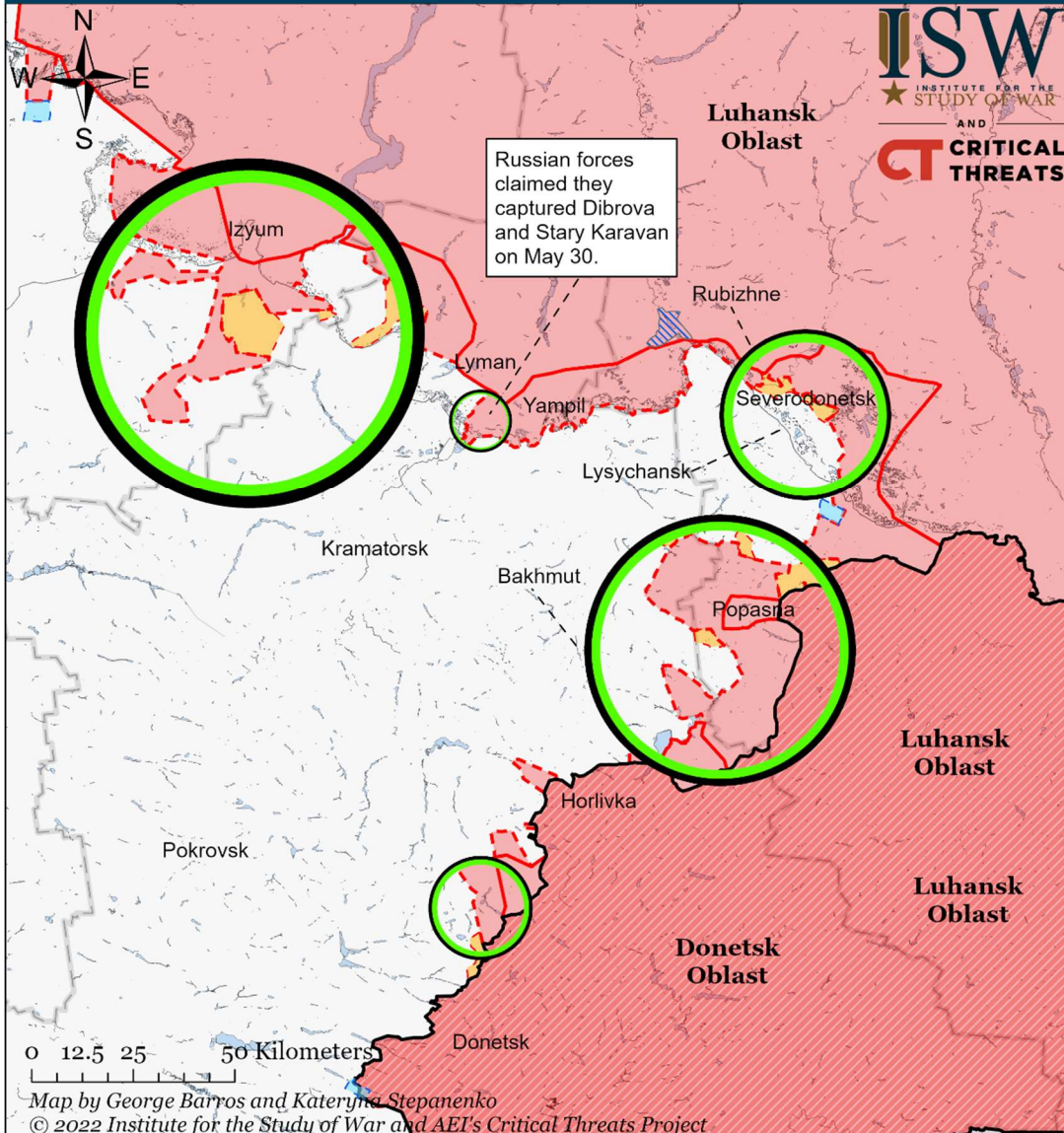
The ongoing replenishment of troops in the Izyum area and persistent attempts to advance to the southeast indicates Russian forces are likely reprioritizing attempts to advance towards Slovyansk, though they are increasingly attempting to simultaneously advance from two directions - southeast from Izyum and west from Lyman. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) troops claimed to capture Staryi Karavan and Dibrova, both between Lyman and Slovyansk, on May 30.⁸ Russian Telegram channels additionally reported fighting in Raihorodok, 6 kilometers northeast of Slovyansk.⁹ Russian forces are making incremental advances towards Slovyansk and seek to assault the city itself in the coming weeks. However, Russian advances remain limited and are unlikely to increase in pace in the near term, particularly as Russian forces continue to prioritize assaults on Severodonetsk at the cost of other lines of effort.

Russian forces continued ground assaults in and around Severodonetsk on May 30.¹⁰ Russian forces reportedly control the northeast and southeast outskirts of the city and are continuing to gain ground within the city.¹¹ Ukrainian and Russian sources reported ongoing fighting to the south of

Severodonetsk in Toshkivka, Ustynivka, Voronove, Borivske, and Metolkine, as Russian forces continue efforts to complete the encirclement of Severodonetsk from the south.¹² Russian forces are reportedly transferring large quantities of personnel and equipment to the area to strengthen operations against Severodonetsk.¹³ A Russian Telegram channel claimed that Russian forces control the entire southern bank of the Siverskyi Donets River, except for the part of the river that runs through Severodonetsk.¹⁴ ISW cannot independently confirm this claim, though it is consistent with previous reporting on persistent, incremental Russian advances in and around the Severodonetsk-Lysychansk area.

Russian forces continued assault operations to the east of Bakhmut with the intention of severing Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) northeast of Bakhmut.¹⁵ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces are fighting in Komyshuvakha, Novoluhanske, and Berestov, all settlements ranging from the northeast to southeast of Bakhmut.¹⁶ Russian forces will likely continue to focus on pushing towards GLOCs northeast of Bakhmut and are unlikely to attempt to capture the city itself.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of May 30, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

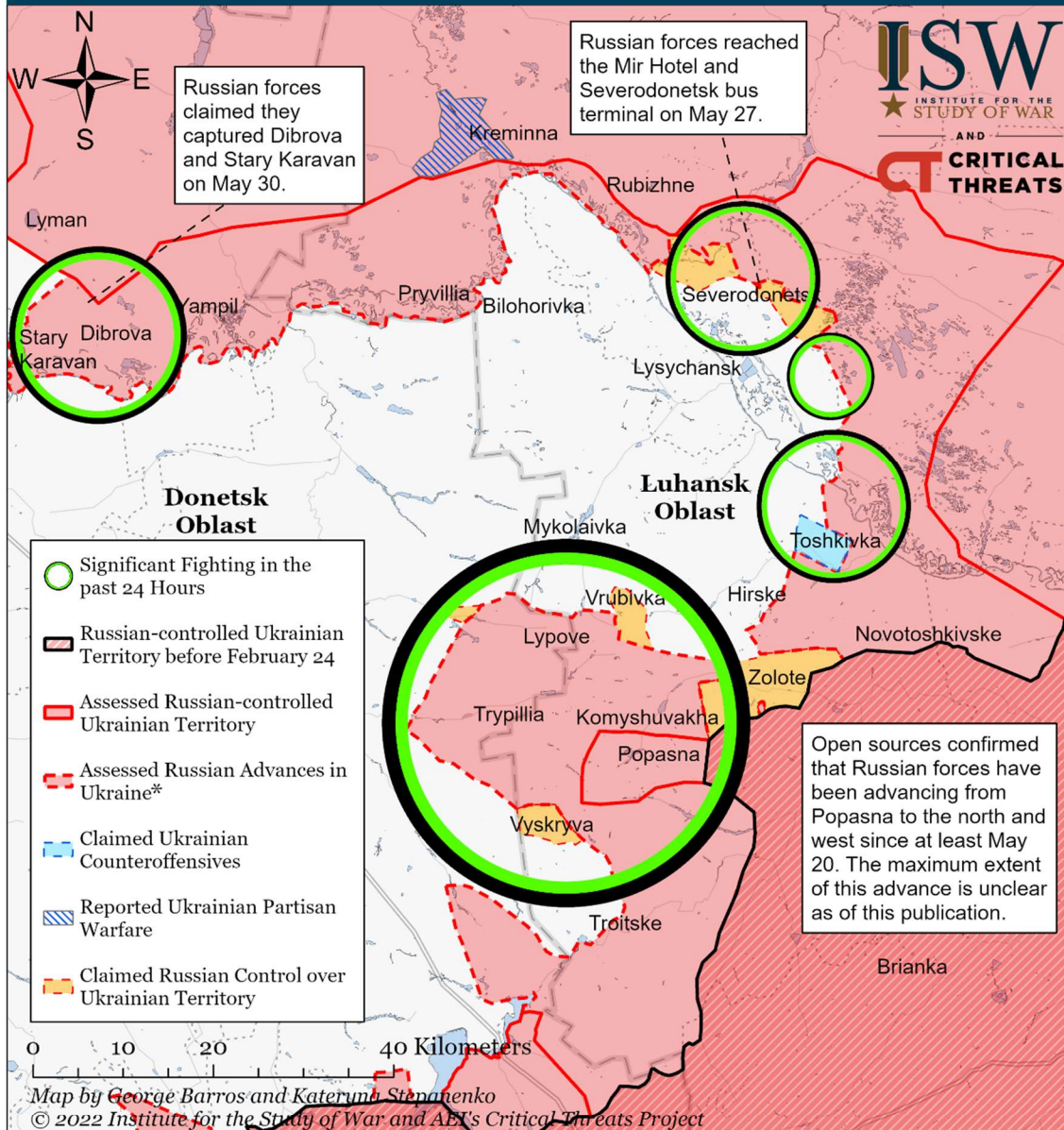


	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours		Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory		Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
	Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24		Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory		Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
	Assessed Russian Advances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

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

Note: ISW expanded Russian assessed advances over the northern outskirts of Severodonetsk based on geolocated videos of Russian forces conducting ground assaults in the area on May 27.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Severodonetsk as of May 30, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



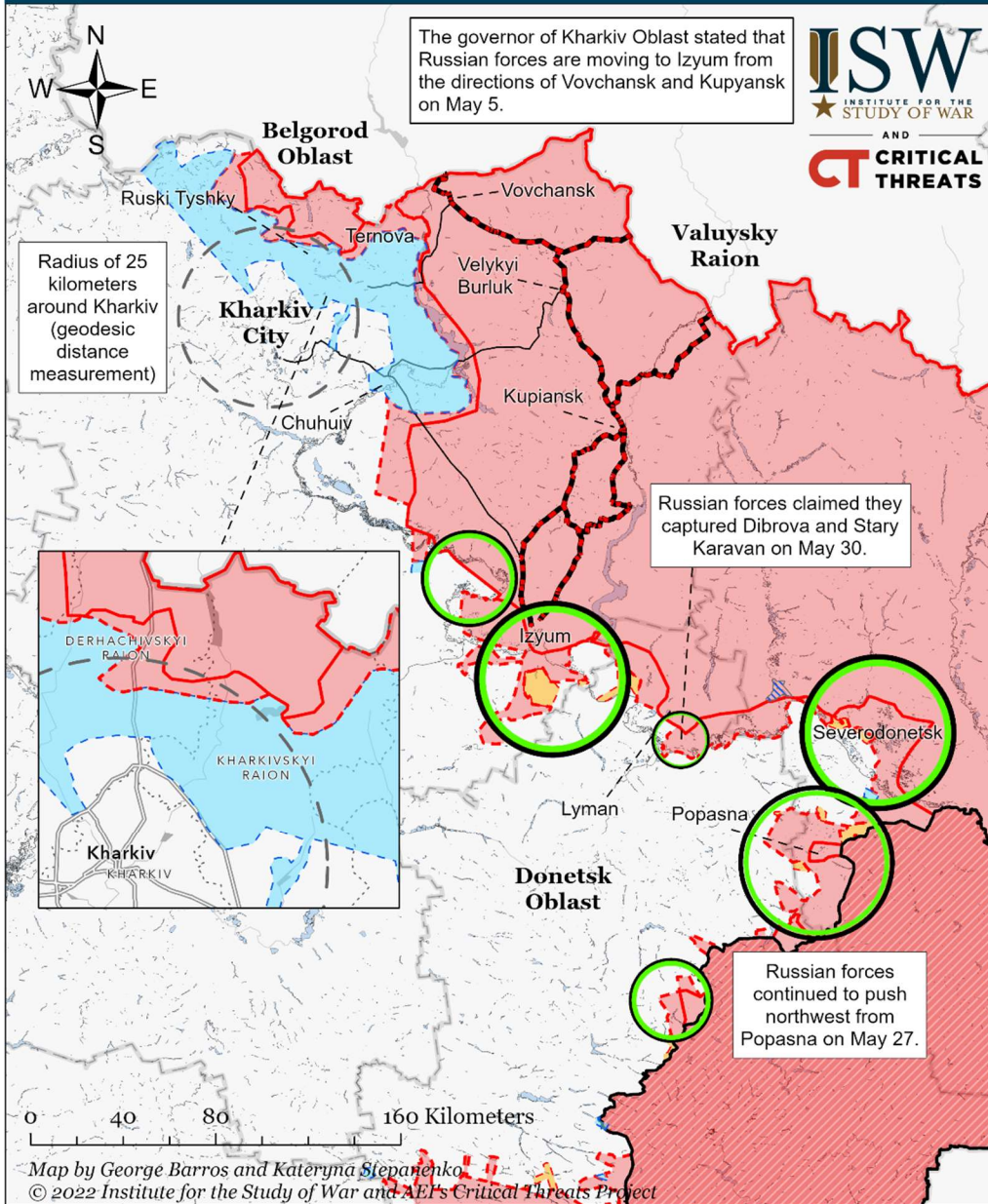
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: We expanded Russian advances to the bank of the Siverskyi Donets River between Severodonetsk and Ozerne given Russian telegram channel Voenkor Kotenok Z claimed on May 30 that Russian forces have taken control of the southern bank of the Siverskyi Donets river, minus the section in Severodonetsk. The Ukrainian Genera Staff report of 1800 May 30 states that Russian forces in the Lyman direction are regrouping and preparing for an offensive and that Russian forces tried to reconnoiter routes of advance through water obstacles. This unspecified water obstacle is likely the Siverskyi Donetsk River. This change encompasses the towns of Dibrova and Stary Karavan, which Russian forces claimed to have captured on May 30. We have not observed direct evidence of Russian forces taking Dibrova and Stary Karavan but have no reason to doubt these claims at this time. We will adjust our assessment if new evidence clarifies the situation on the ground.

Supporting Effort #1—Kharkiv City (Russian objective: Withdraw forces to the north and defend ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to Izyum)

Russian forces fired on Ukrainian positions north of Kharkiv City and did not make any confirmed advances on May 30.¹⁷ Russian forces conducted MLRS and artillery strikes against Odnorobivka, Udy, Ruski Tyshky, Cherkasy Tyshky, Ruska Lozova, Pitomnyk, Borshchova, Peremoha, Tsyркunь, Shestakove, and the Kyivskyi District of Kharkiv City.¹⁸ The Ukrainian General Staff stated that the goal of these artillery attacks is to deter further Ukrainian advances towards the international border.¹⁹

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 30, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

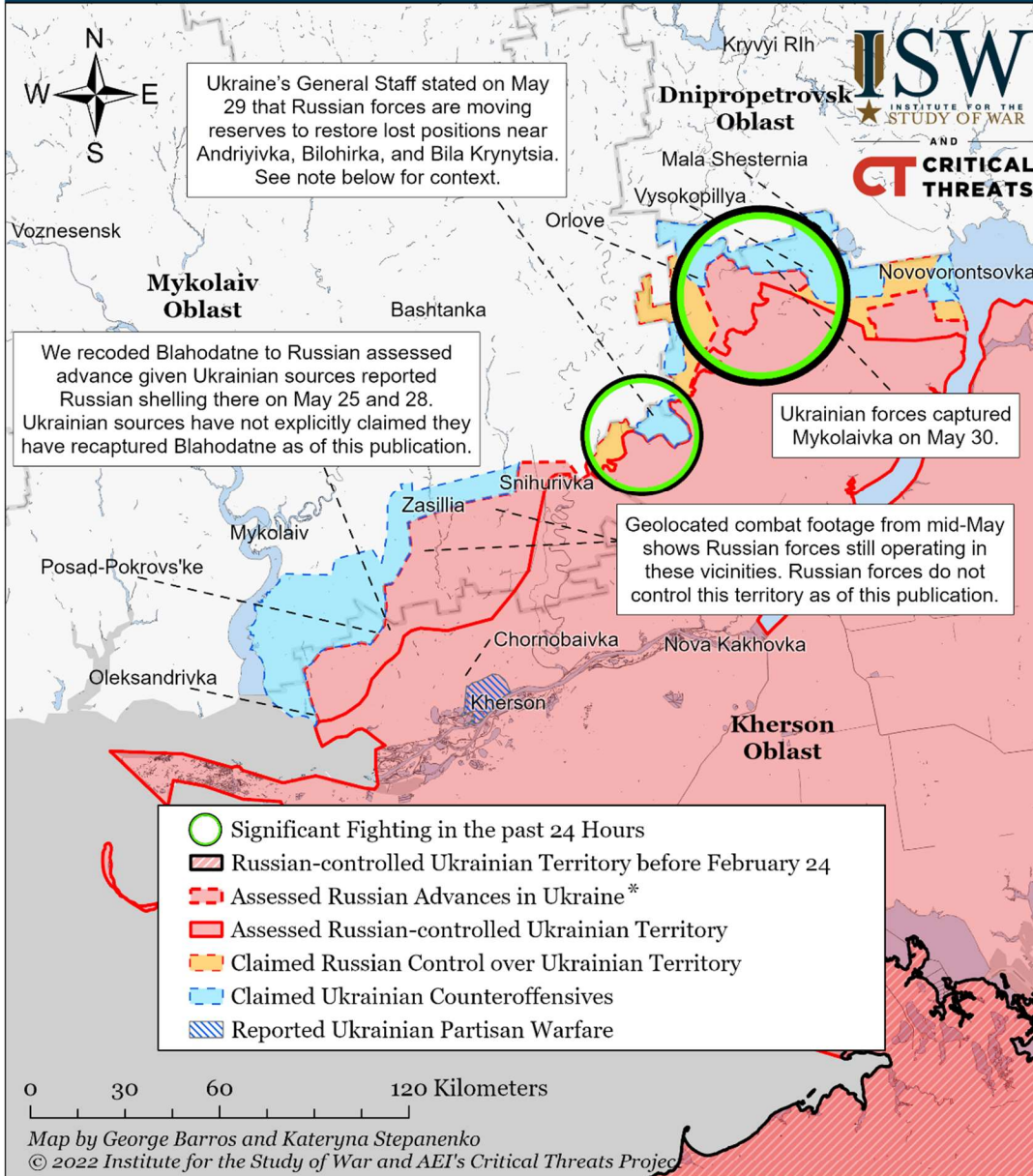
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Supporting Effort #2—Southern Axis (Objective: Defend Kherson and Zaporozhia Oblasts against Ukrainian counterattacks)

Russian forces focused on recapturing positions taken by previous Ukrainian counterattacks and shelling forward targets to prevent further Ukrainian counteroffensive actions on May 30.²⁰ The Ukrainian General Staff and Southern Operational Command both reported that Russian troops are replenishing equipment and regrouping forces in Kherson Oblast to strengthen their existing defensive lines against Ukrainian gains made during limited Ukrainian counteroffensives on May 28.²¹ Russian Telegram channels provided further confirmation of limited and localized Ukrainian gains in Kherson and stated that Russian forces are fighting to dislodge a Ukrainian bridgehead on the left bank (east side) of the Inhulets River, as ISW assessed on May 29.²² Ukrainian forces have not made any confirmed advances since May 28, and the Ukrainian counteroffensive in northern Kherson Oblast is likely a localized operation to disrupt Russian frontline positions, rather than a wider counteroffensive to recapture large areas of terrain.

Russian forces conducted artillery strikes against Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts and a missile strike against a previously-destroyed bridge in Odesa.²³ These sporadic strikes are unlikely to significantly disrupt Ukrainian logistics. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that an unidentified partisan detonated an IED in Melitopol near the residence of the Russian-appointed Mayor of Zaporizhia Eugene Balitsky.²⁴ Partisan activity in occupied territories likely continues to disrupt Russian administrative activities in these areas.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 30, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

Note: We coded a new Ukrainian counteroffensive south of Davydiv Brid east of the Inhulets River near Bilohirka, Bila Krynytsia, Lozove, and Andriyivka based off observing new information between May 27 and May 29. Ukrainian Presidential Adviser Oleksiy Arestovich stated on May 28 that Ukrainian forces conducted a successful counteroffensive near the village of Davydiv Brid and stated that if this counteroffensive is successful, then Ukraine will cut off the Russian group operating in northern Kherson closer to Kryvyi Rih. Arestovich said that Ukrainian forces did not cross the Inhulets river at Davydiv Brid directly, but a little down the river, supporting an assessment that a Ukrainian crossing of the Inhulets River likely occurred around the Bilohirka-Lozove area. The Ukrainian General Staff report of 0600 May 29 states that Russian forces in this area suffered losses took up defense on unfavorable borders near the village of Kostromka. The General Staff's report of 1800 May 29 specified additional Russian territorial losses and stated that Russian forces are moving reserves to restore lost positions near Andriyivka, Bilohirka, and Bila Krynytsia.

Activity in Russian-occupied areas (Russian objective: consolidate administrative control of occupied areas; set conditions for potential annexation into the Russian Federation or some other future political arrangement of Moscow's choosing)

Russian occupation forces continued efforts to exert bureaucratic control in occupied areas but did not make any significant changes on May 30.

¹ <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1531143716840284161/photo/1>

² <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>;

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1615106835555672>; <https://gur.gov.ua/content/ia-v-pikhotti-sluzhu-my-prosto-vytratnyi-material-okupant-rozpovidaiie-druzhyni-pro-svoie-bazhannia-povernutysia-dodomu-zhyvym-perekhoplennia.html>;

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_jTJbimwY8&ab_channel=%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%83%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BB%D1%96%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8F%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%B2%D1%96%D0%B4%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%9C%D0%9E%D0%A3%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%97%D0%BD%D0%B8

³ <https://t.me/strelkovii/2625>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>

⁸ <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/14770193>; <https://t.me/epoddubny/10975>;

<https://t.me/sashakots/33196>

⁹ <https://t.me/swodki/106354>; <https://t.me/swodki/106344>; <https://t.me/swodki/106335>

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>

¹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>;

<https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1531015304368869379>;

<https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1531014444012212229>; <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/3029>

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>; <https://readovka.news/news/98825>

¹³ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>; <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/3022>

¹⁴ <https://t.me/voenkorkotenok/36851>

¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>;

<https://www.facebook.com/www.dshv.mil.gov.ua/posts/pfbid06XAAwgxK7Vo1SCDK4maDtyHH37KdgdMKtxe1UEafUfXpT7JwpP6cT7SozTUHddx7l>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>

¹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>

¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>; <https://t.me/synergubov/3327>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>

²⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328769439436141>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>

²¹ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>;

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1064505330809297>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-28>

²² <https://t.me/swodki/106185>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-29>

²³

<https://www.facebook.com/100064555155257/posts/pfbid02W5bRh1fBbuKfFbyQoc6BaQbw1SnEWF91pDNvndLevppaTACXVQ95uKVPiA7TPk7yl/?d=n>; https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/8414; <https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/1046>; https://t.me/mykola_lukashuk/520; https://t.me/Bratchuk_Sergey/12989; <https://t.me/milinfoolive/84249>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/328355376144214>; <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1064505330809297>; https://t.me/mod_russia/16294; https://t.me/rlz_the_kraken/50264; <https://t.me/swodki/106461>

²⁴ https://sprotyv.mod.gov_dot_ua/2022/05/30/u-melitopoli-prolunav-vybuh-u-rajoni-prozhyvannya-miscevogo-gaulyajtera/; https://t.me/Bratchuk_Sergey/12999; https://t.me/rian_ru/165264; https://t.me/rian_ru/165270; <https://t.me/milinfoolive/84254>; <https://t.me/milinfoolive/84253>; <https://t.me/milinfoolive/84252>; <https://t.me/milchronicles/599>