

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Karolina Hird, Mason Clark, and George Barros

May 10, 7:15pm ET

**The Ukrainian counteroffensive north of Kharkiv City continued to successfully push Russian forces toward the Russia-Ukraine border on May 10.** Ukrainian forces liberated several towns north of Kharkiv City and continued pushing north of the recently liberated Stryi Saltiv to capture several towns northeast of Kharkiv: a Russian source claimed that Ukrainian troops advanced to within 10km of the Russian border, though ISW cannot independently confirm these specific claims.<sup>1</sup> Russian forces from the Izyum area are reportedly redeploying northwards to attempt to alleviate the pressure of this counteroffensive and stymie further northward advances toward the Russian border.<sup>2</sup> The Ukrainian counteroffensive will likely continue to divert Russian troops and resources from deployment to other axes of advance where fighting has been similarly stalled out by the successful Ukrainian defense. The counteroffensive will impede the ability of Russian artillery to target the northeastern suburbs of Kharkiv City, will potentially enable Ukrainian forces to threaten Russian rear areas with their own shelling and further attacks, and—if Ukrainian forces are able to further advance the counteroffensive or Russian forces collapse along the Kharkiv axis and withdraw further—unhinge Russian offensive operations around Izyum.

**The Belarusian Ministry of Defense escalated its false claims of US and NATO preparations to attack Belarus while announcing the start of a second stage of ongoing military exercises on May 10. However, Belarus remains unlikely to join the war in Ukraine.** Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin announced the second stage of ongoing rapid response forces exercises on May 10 in response to what he falsely claimed were NATO escalations.<sup>3</sup> Belarusian First Deputy Minister of Defense Victor Gulevich accused the US and its allies of building up a military presence around Belarusian borders and claimed that Poland and the Baltic states are threatening Belarusian territory through reconnaissance, sabotage, and special operations.<sup>4</sup> Gulevich announced that Belarusian battalion tactical groups (BTGs) will subsequently advance to the Western and Northwestern operational zones as part of a “whole range of measures aimed at countering possible threats” in these areas.<sup>5</sup> Gulevich additionally stated that the presence of 20,000 Ukrainian troops in Belarus’ Southern Operational District have necessitated a deployment of unspecified Belarusian troops to three tactical directions near the Ukrainian border, which is consistent with Ukrainian General Staff reporting that certain Belarusian units have deployed to the Ukraine-Belarus border area for a combat readiness check.<sup>6</sup>

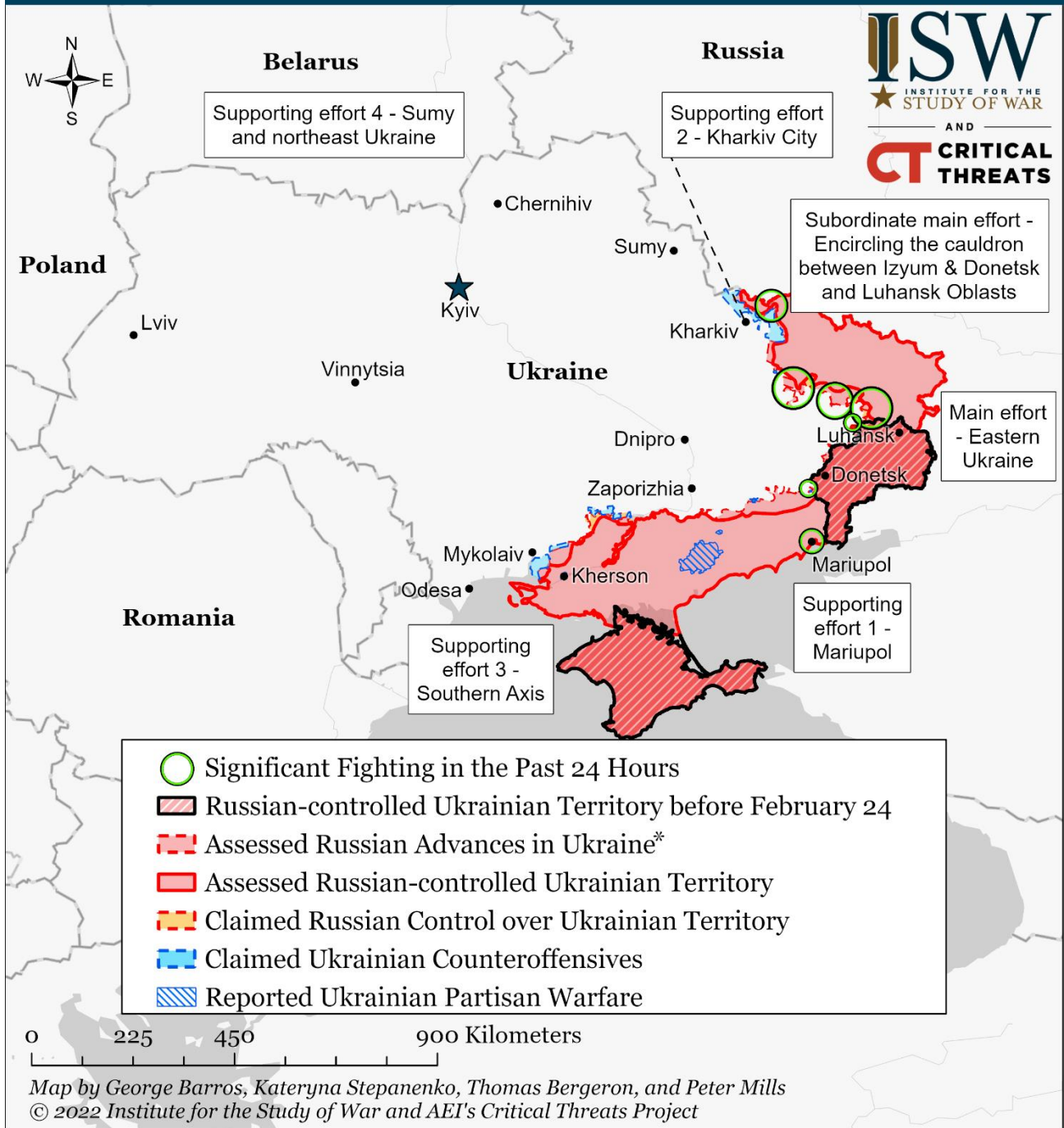
The rhetoric of threats to Belarus’ borders is not new and was frequently employed by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko in the early stages of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.<sup>7</sup> The Belarusian exercises, which are concentrated on Belarus’ borders with Poland and the Baltic States rather than Ukraine, are likely primarily demonstrative and signal Belarus’ continued political support for Russia’s war in Ukraine. The exercises are likely additionally intended to draw NATO attention and possibly disrupt NATO aid to Ukraine, rather than threatening an actual military operation—similar to Russian efforts to destabilize Moldova that are likely intended to distract Romania and NATO rather than directly threaten Odesa. Belarus remains unlikely to join the war in Ukraine. Lukashenko successfully repressed domestic opposition in 2020 and 2021 but remains vulnerable to further domestic unrest if his security apparatus weakens; he is likely unwilling to risk losing his military in a stalled and deteriorating Russian war in Ukraine.

## Key Takeaways

- **The Ukrainian counteroffensive in northern Kharkiv took further ground and have possibly closed to within 10km of the Russian border.**

- **Belarusian authorities are escalating rhetoric accusing NATO and the US of threatening Belarusian borders, but Belarus remains unlikely to join the war.**
- **Russian operations around Izyum remain stalled.**
- **DNR and Russian forces are advancing efforts to consolidate their control of the ruins of Mariupol, including reportedly attempting to reopen steel plants to produce military equipment.**
- **Russian forces in eastern Ukraine continued attempts to encircle the Severodonetsk area and reportedly reached the Donetsk-Luhansk administrative border from Popasna.**
- **Russian and Ukrainian forces did not conduct any significant attacks on the southern axis.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 10, 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 five primary efforts Russian forces are engaged in at this time:**

- Main effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and four supporting efforts);
- Subordinate main effort- Encirclement of Ukrainian troops in the cauldron between Izyum and Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts
- Supporting effort 1 — Mariupol;
- Supporting effort 2—Kharkiv City;
- Supporting effort 3—Southern axis;
- Supporting effort 4—Sumy and northeastern Ukraine.

**Main effort—Eastern Ukraine**

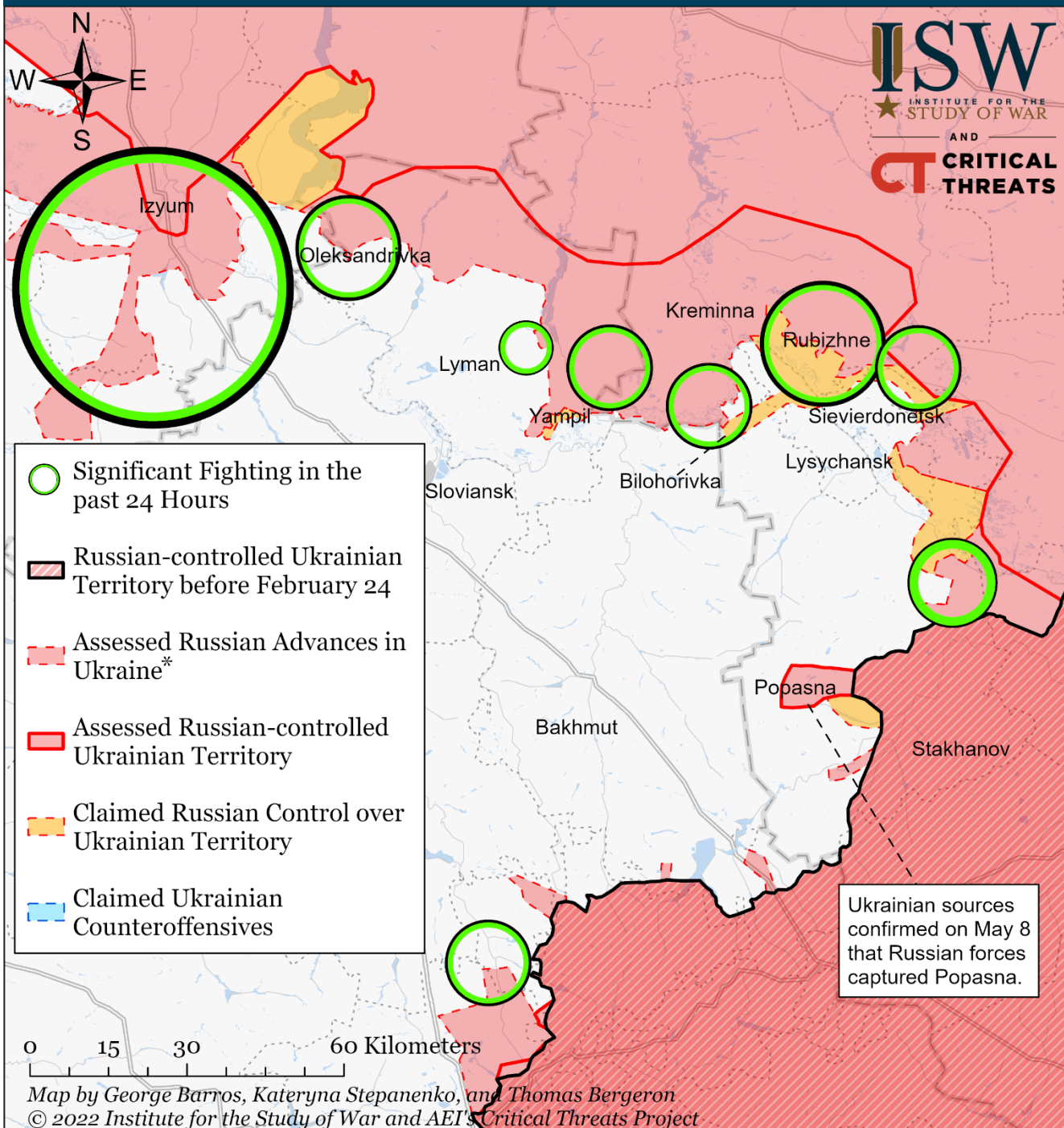
**Subordinate Main Effort—Southern Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk Oblasts (Russian objective: Encircle Ukrainian forces in Eastern Ukraine and capture the entirety of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Russian forces did not make any confirmed advances in any direction from Izyum on May 10. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces around Izyum are focusing on regrouping, replenishing equipment, and conducting reconnaissance to create conditions for renewed offensives east towards Lyman and Slovyansk.<sup>8</sup>

Russian forces continued ground attacks and shelling along the line of contact in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts and made marginal westward advances on May 10. The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that Russian forces moved west from Popasna and reached the administrative border of Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts, though ISW cannot independently confirm this claim.<sup>9</sup> Ukrainian sources reported intense fighting to the north, west, and south of Severodonetsk in Vojevodivka, Toshkivke, Rubizhne, Lysychansk, Orikhove, Hirske, and Bilohorivka as Russian forces attempt to encircle the town.<sup>10</sup> Ukrainian forces notably destroyed a Russian pontoon bridge across the Siverskyi Donets River in the vicinity of Bilohorivka, which may allow Ukrainian forces to develop a line west of Severodonetsk and disrupt the intended Russian encirclement of the Rubizhne-Severodonetsk-Lysychansk area.<sup>11</sup>

Russian troops continued attacks in Donetsk Oblast around Oleksandrivka and Shandryholove in order to move west to the Donetsk-Kharkiv administrative border.<sup>12</sup> Russian forces additionally continued unsuccessful frontal assaults around Donetsk City but did not make any confirmed advances on May 10.<sup>13</sup> Pro-Russian reporter Aleksandr Sladkov, who is operating around Donetsk City, complained that Russian forces are fighting Ukrainians at a 1:1 assault force ratio and have not been able to push Ukrainian forces from their positions in Donetsk.<sup>14</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of May 10, 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.

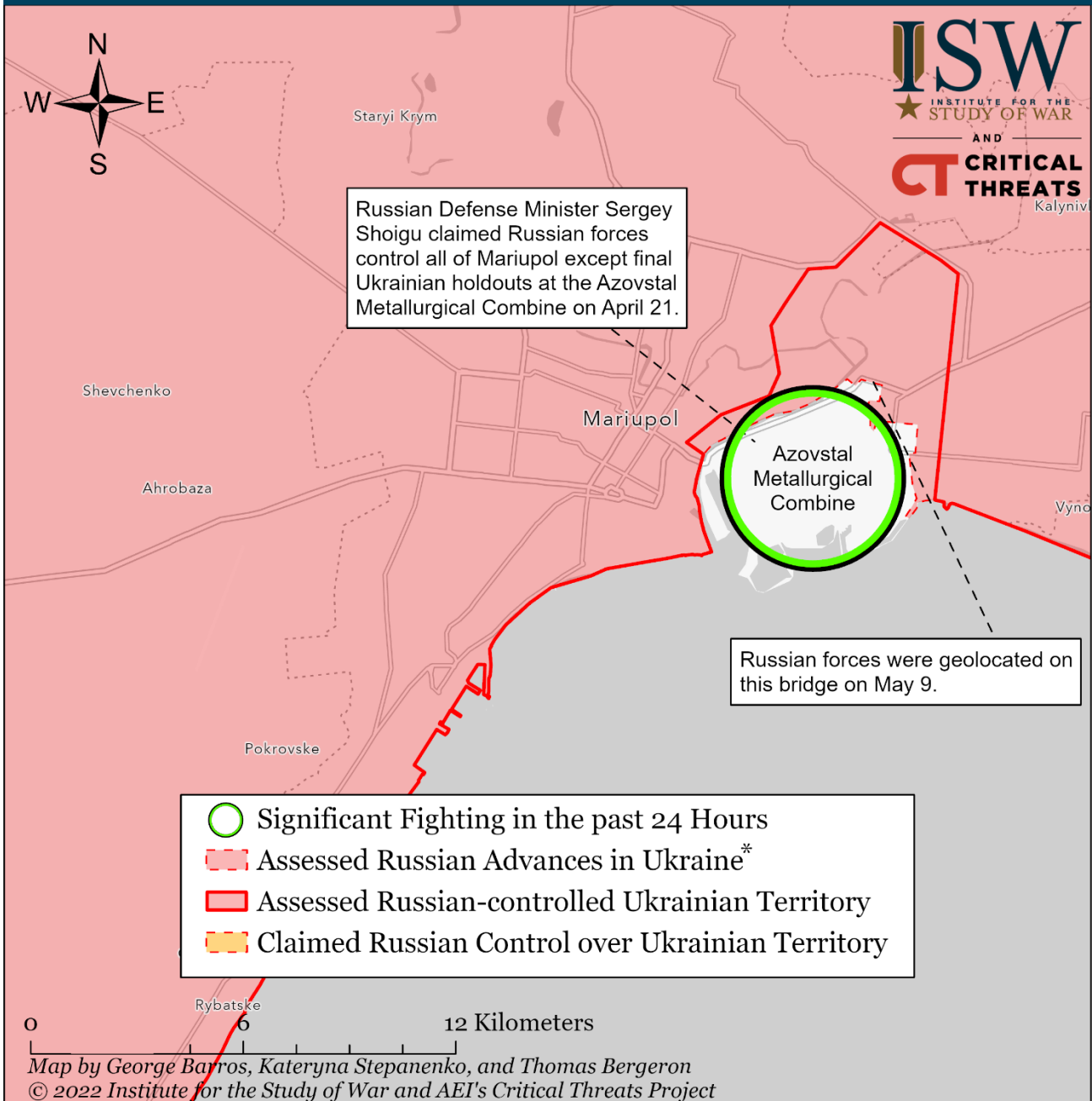
Note: We have expanded Russian assessed advances from Kreminna to the outskirts of Bilohorivka after Ukrainian and Russian sources confirmed that Russian forces crossed Seversky Donets River via pontoon bridge to Bilohorivka on May 9. Ukrainian forces reportedly destroyed this pontoon bridge and are clearing Russian forces near Bilohorivka as of May 10.

**Supporting Effort #1—Mariupol (Russian objective: Capture Mariupol and reduce the Ukrainian defenders)**

Russian forces continued to conduct air and artillery strikes and ground assaults against Ukrainian positions in the Azovstal Steel Plant on May 10.<sup>15</sup> Deputy Ukrainian Prime Minister Iryna Vershchuk reported that there are 1,000 Ukrainian soldiers in the plant and that hundreds are wounded.<sup>16</sup> A senior US defense official noted that Russian forces are increasingly relying on “dumb bombs” to assault Mariupol because they have expended precision-guided munition supplies.<sup>17</sup> Russian authorities are continuing to prepare Mariupol for economic integration. Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko claimed that occupation authorities of the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) are trying to call workers back to the captured Ilyich Iron and Steel Work Plant to launch production of military equipment to supply Russian and proxy forces.<sup>18</sup>



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Mariupol as of May 10, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



The Kremlin declared victory in Mariupol on April 21 after capturing the city besides Ukrainian holdouts in the encircled Azovstal Metallurgical Combine. Russian forces reportedly conducted an assault on the remaining Ukrainian defenders at Azovstal on May 4. The Kremlin will spin the (still incomplete) capture of Mariupol into a major victory in Ukraine to compensate for stalled or failed Russian offensives elsewhere. ISW recoded Russian claimed control over northwestern outskirts of Azovstal to Russian assessed advance based on geolocated videos of Russian forces operating in the area on May 9.

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

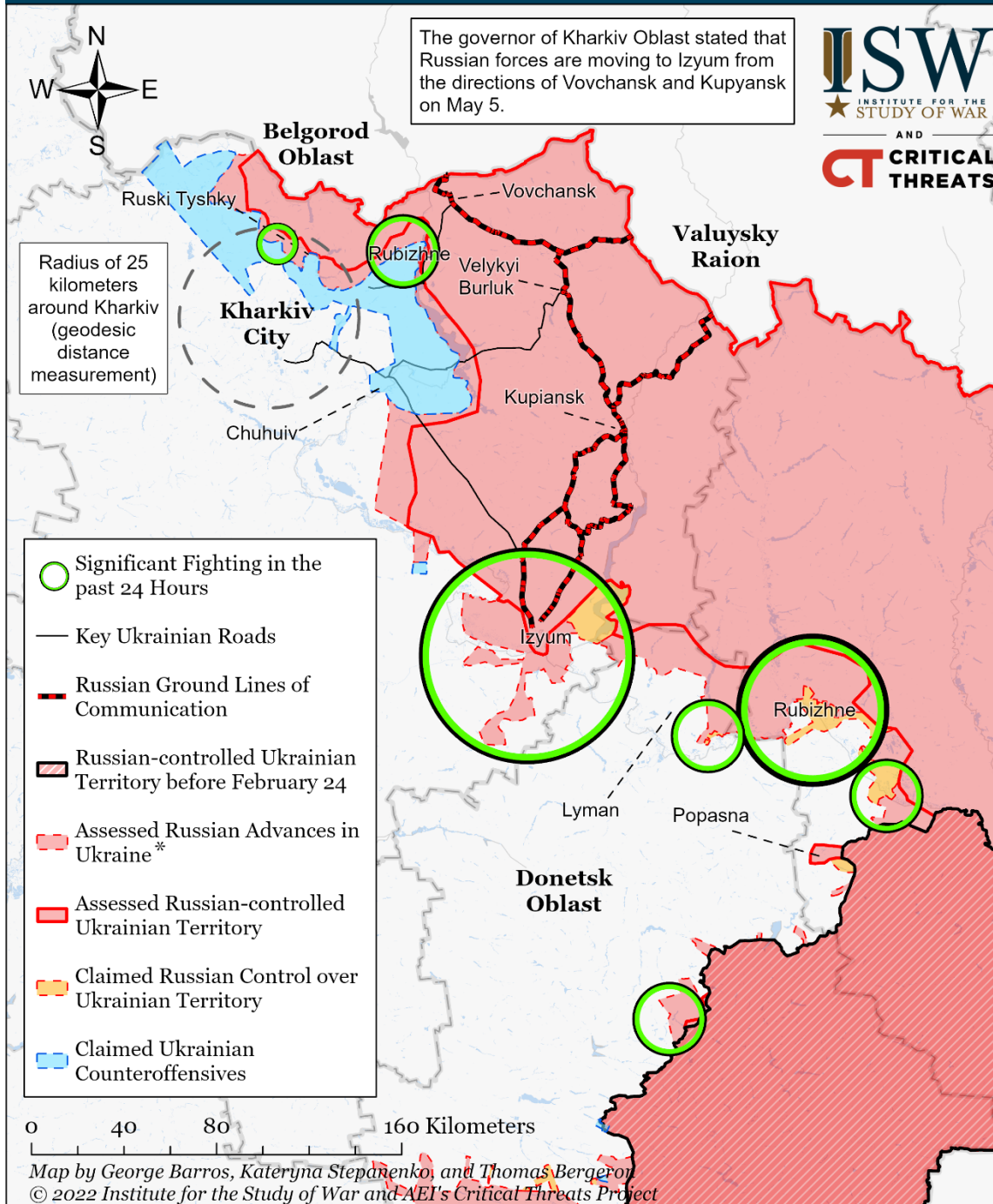
**Supporting Effort #2—Kharkiv City (Russian objective: Retain positions on the outskirts of Kharkiv within artillery range of the city and prevent further Ukrainian counterattacks)**

Ukrainian forces reportedly pushed Russian troops further north from Kharkiv City toward the international border on May 10. The Ukrainian General Staff confirmed on May 10 that Ukrainian forces recaptured Cherkasy Tyshky and Ruski Tyshky, both within 10 kilometers of the northeast boundary of Kharkiv City, after unverified reports on May 7 and 9 that Russian forces withdrew from the two towns.<sup>19</sup> Ukrainian units reportedly also took control of Pytomnyk, 10 kilometers directly north of Kharkiv City.<sup>20</sup> The Ukrainian 227<sup>th</sup> Kharkiv Territorial Defense Battalion claimed that they successfully advanced north of Staryi Saltiv (about 40 kilometers east of Kharkiv City) and liberated Bairak, Zamulivka, Verkhni Saltiv, and Rubizhne (a different Rubizhne than the town of the same name in Kharkiv Oblast) on May 10.<sup>21</sup> A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian troops are as far north as Vovchansk, which is less than 10 kilometers south of the Russian border.<sup>22</sup> ISW cannot independently confirm this claim, but it is consistent with the overall Ukrainian push toward the Russian border over the last few days.

The Borivka Village Council reported that Russian forces are withdrawing en masse from Borova and Bohuslavka, southeast Kharkiv Oblast, and moving north in the direction of Kupyansk.<sup>23</sup> Russian forces are likely prioritizing reinforcing their grouping northeast of Kharkiv to prevent further Ukrainian counteroffensives in the direction of the international border at the expense of offensive operations to the southeast.<sup>24</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that elements of the 138<sup>th</sup> Separate Mechanized Brigade of the 6<sup>th</sup> Combined Arms Army withdrew to Belgorod due to losses sustained in Kharkiv Oblast.<sup>25</sup>



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 10, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



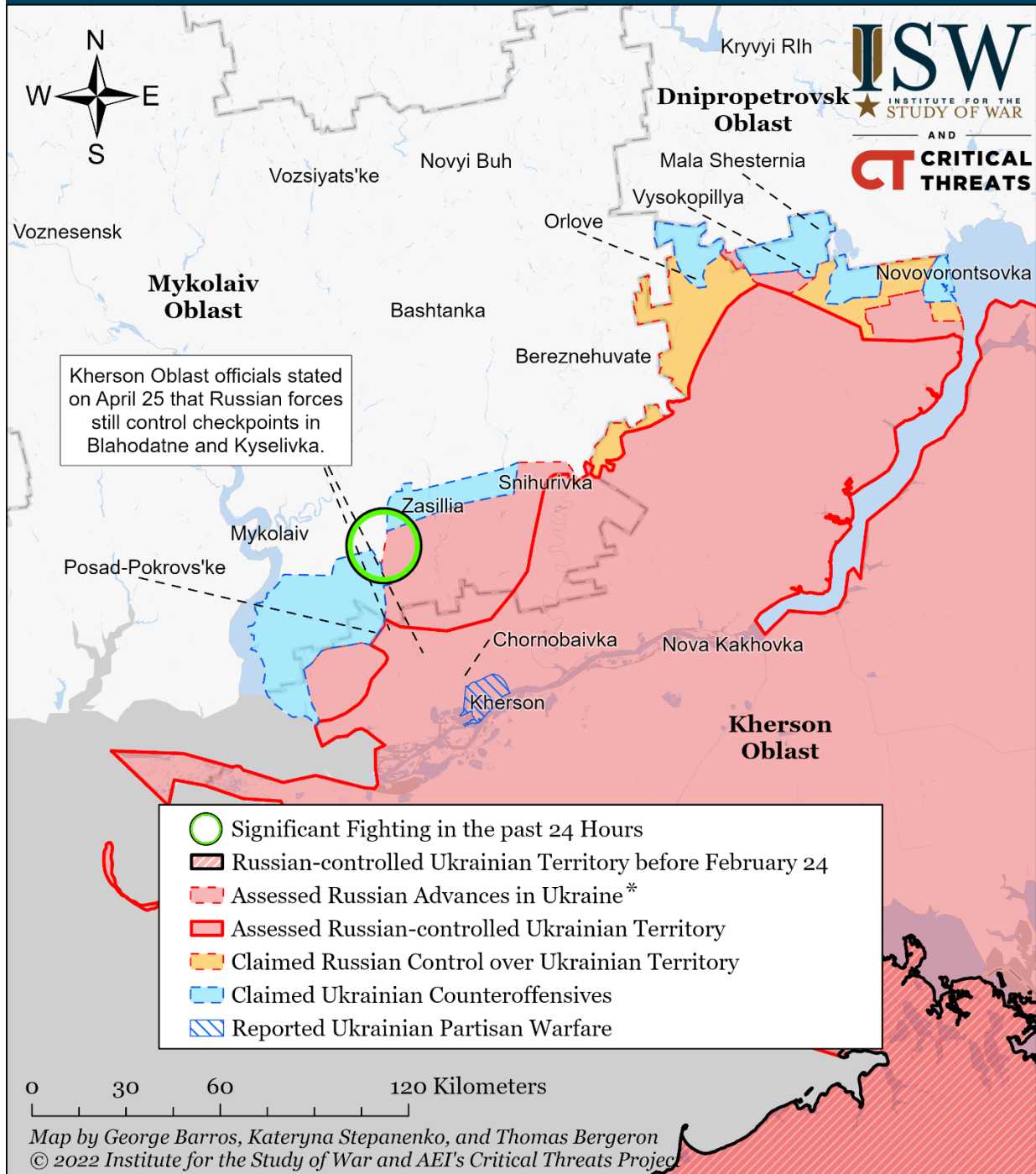
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

An unconfirmed Russian social media report claimed that Russian forces retreated past Liptsy on May 7, but ISW did not map this report due to the lack of evidence of any withdrawals from villages southwest of Liptsy. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces destroyed three bridges near Tsirkuny and Ruski Tyshky on May 7 to slow further Ukrainian counteroffensives. ISW extended are of the Ukrainian counteroffensives to Ruski Tyshky based on Russian shelling of the settlement on May 9. Ukrainian forces recaptured Rubizhne (Kharkiv), Pytomnyk, and Bairak on May 10.

**Supporting Effort #3—Southern Axis (Objective: Defend Kherson against Ukrainian counterattacks)**

Russian and Ukrainian troops clashed on the line of contact between Kherson and Mykolaiv Oblasts but neither side made any confirmed advances on May 10.<sup>26</sup> Russian forces continued to shell Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and Mykolaiv oblasts.<sup>27</sup> Russian forces additionally intensified airstrikes against Odesa.<sup>28</sup> Transnistrian authorities announced that they will extend the “red level” terrorist threat until May 25.<sup>29</sup>

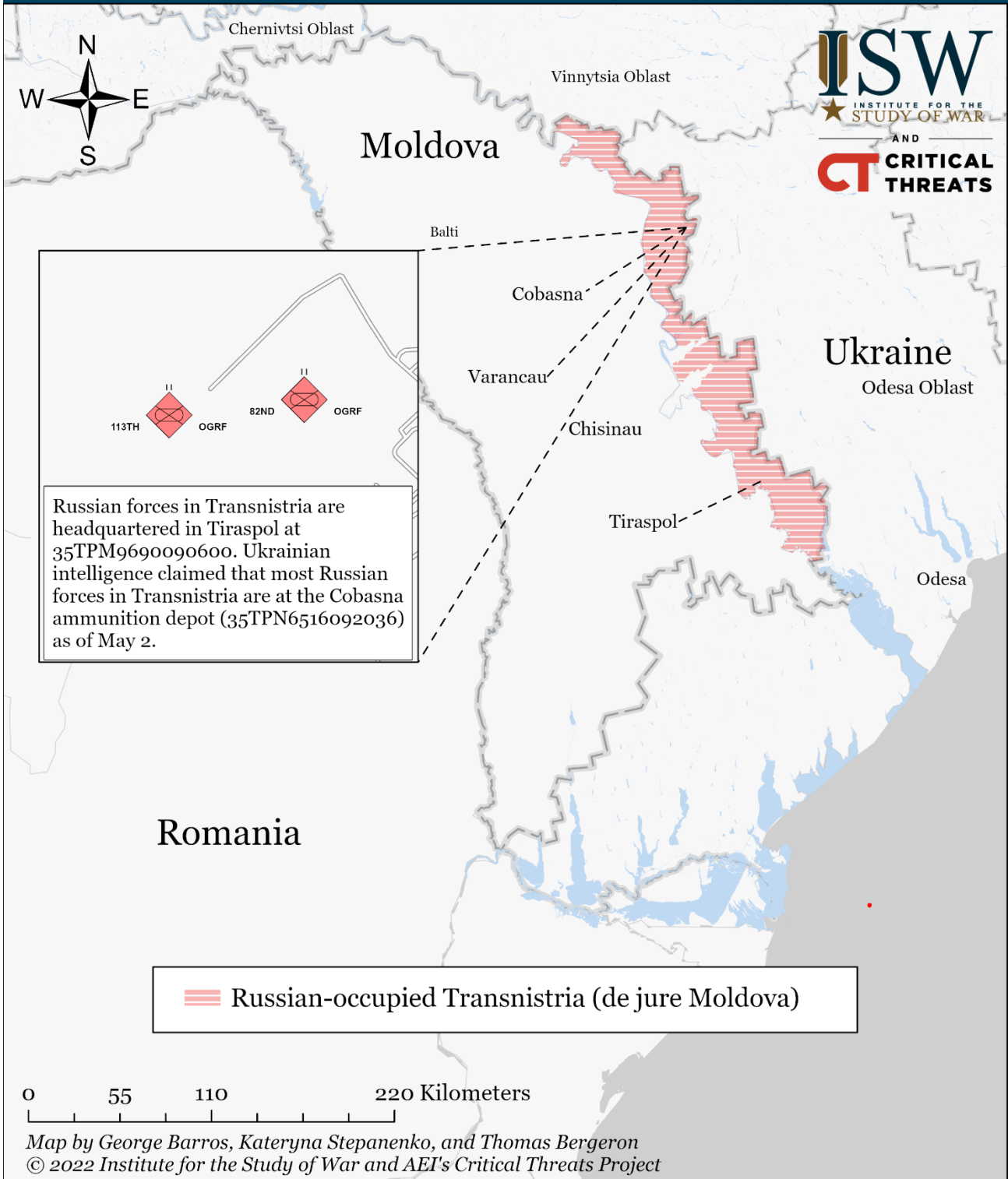
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 10, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

Note: Ukraine's General Staff reported on May 5 that Ukrainian forces regained control over several unspecified settlements on the border of Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts. Ukrainian forces also announced regaining control over four unspecified villages along the Kherson-Mykolaiv border on May 3. This was insufficient evidence and information to update our maps. The locations of these settlements is still unknown as of this publication. ISW will update our map once open sources name the liberated settlements.

# Moldova Situational Map as of May 10, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Note: Russia maintains two motorized rifle battalions (subordinate to the Russian Western Military District) and a command battalion in Transnistria in Tiraspol. Ukrainian intelligence claimed these forces are mostly in Cobasna guarding the ammunition depot there as of May 3.

## **Supporting Effort #4—Sumy and Northeastern Ukraine: (Russian objective: Withdraw combat power in good order for redeployment to eastern Ukraine)**

There were no significant events on this axis in the past 24 hours.

### **Immediate items to watch**

- The Belarusian Defense Ministry announced the second stage of rapid response force exercises, but Belarus remains unlikely to join the war in Ukraine.
- Russian forces will likely continue to merge offensive efforts southward of Izyum with westward advances from Donetsk in order to encircle Ukrainian troops in southern Kharkiv Oblast and western Donetsk.
- Russia is likely setting conditions to integrate occupied Ukrainian territories directly into Russia, as opposed to creating proxy “People’s Republics.” Russian forces have apparently decided to seize the Azovstal plant through ground assault and will likely continue operations accordingly.
- Ukrainian counteroffensives around Kharkiv City are pushing back Russian positions northeast of the city towards the international border and will likely continue to force the Russians to reinforce those positions at the cost of reinforcing Russian offensive operations elsewhere.
- Russian forces may be preparing to conduct renewed offensive operations to capture the entirety of Kherson Oblast in the coming days.



### **ISW CELEBRATES 15 YEARS**

Centered on Leadership and Intelligence Analysis  
Focused on Securing America

 [www.UnderstandingWar.org](http://www.UnderstandingWar.org)  [@InstituteForTheStudyOfWar](https://www.facebook.com/InstituteForTheStudyOfWar)  [@TheStudyofWar](https://twitter.com/TheStudyofWar)  [TheStudyofWar](https://www.youtube.com/TheStudyofWar)  [UnderstandingWarOrg](https://www.instagram.com/UnderstandingWarOrg)

1

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWru8W37urxzs8yF9al>; <https://t.me/natsionalKharkiv/5737>;  
<https://twitter.com/Militarylandnet/status/1523918568995401729>;  
<https://twitter.com/donikroman/status/1523880239448866816>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/227TrO/posts/126772019973301>

<sup>2</sup> <https://t.me/stranaua/41184>; [https://t.me/borova\\_gromada/962](https://t.me/borova_gromada/962)

<sup>3</sup> <https://t.me/stranaua/41338>; <https://t.me/modmilby/14146>; <https://t.me/modmilby/14147>; <https://t.me/modmilby/14148>

<sup>4</sup> <https://t.me/modmilby/14150>

<sup>5</sup> <https://t.me/modmilby/14150>

6

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWru8W37urxzs8yF9al>; <https://t.me/modmilby/14150>

<sup>7</sup> <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-update>; <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-update-1-7>; <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-update-3>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWru8W37urxzs8yF9al>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/313588154287603>



---

<sup>9</sup> [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/15591](https://t.me/mod_russia/15591); <https://t.me/epoddubny/10493>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWrU8W37urxzs8yF9al>; <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2470>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/313588154287603>;  
<https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1523975349670924289>;  
<https://twitter.com/abdujalil/status/1523933520585969670>;  
<https://twitter.com/SESU-UA/status/1523951975141937153>; <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2462>;  
<https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2466>

<sup>11</sup> <https://twitter.com/UAWeapons/status/1523752742820343808>;  
<https://twitter.com/InformNapalm/status/1523736045732319232>; <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2470>

<sup>12</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWrU8W37urxzs8yF9al>; <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1523991358356307971>;  
<https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1524052036286824448>

<sup>13</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWrU8W37urxzs8yF9al>; <https://twitter.com/Garik-Youmar/status/1523925811065147394>;  
<https://twitter.com/watchingAnge1/status/1523737863162310656>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/313588154287603>;  
<https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1523991358356307971>;  
<https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1524008774138273792>

<sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/mdmitri91/status/1523769171917430784>

<sup>15</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWrU8W37urxzs8yF9al>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/313588154287603>;  
<https://t.me/andriyshTime/766>; <https://t.me/polkazov/4471>

<sup>16</sup> <https://t.me/stranaua/41342>; <https://t.me/polkazov/4472>

<sup>17</sup> <https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/1524065120426541057>;

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/09/russia-ukraine-war-news-putin-live-updates/#link-MI67HFVG3JBNVGOVCVJYT7KEF6Q>; <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-entertainment-business-global-trade-united-nations-019879d75bee4a2eea323ae378aba3c0>

<sup>18</sup> <https://t.me/andriyshTime/779>; <https://t.me/stranaua/41371>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWrU8W37urxzs8yF9al>

<sup>20</sup> <https://t.me/natsionalKharkiv/5737>

<sup>21</sup> <https://twitter.com/Militarylandnet/status/1523918568995401729>;

<https://twitter.com/donikroman/status/1523880239448866816>;

<https://www.facebook.com/227TrO/posts/126772019973301>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWrU8W37urxzs8yF9al>

<sup>22</sup> <https://t.me/readovkanews/33382>

<sup>23</sup> <https://t.me/stranaua/41184>; [https://t.me/borova\\_gromada/962](https://t.me/borova_gromada/962)



---

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/314011584245260>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWrU8W37urxzs8yF9al>

<sup>26</sup> <https://t.me/readovkanews/33382>; <https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/1524064392026992646>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/313588154287603>; [https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/7591](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/7591); [https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/7594](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/7594); <https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/880>; [https://t.me/mykola\\_lukashuk/445](https://t.me/mykola_lukashuk/445)

<sup>28</sup> <https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1523769093551140865>;  
<https://twitter.com/ChristopherJM/status/1523919281800597504>;  
<https://twitter.com/Liveuamap/status/1523766078794522624>; <https://t.me/stranaua/41252>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/okPivden/videos/2633996746744736/>; [https://t.me/Bratchuk\\_Sergey/11721](https://t.me/Bratchuk_Sergey/11721);  
[https://t.me/Bratchuk\\_Sergey/11725](https://t.me/Bratchuk_Sergey/11725)

<sup>29</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iAPLjshcPf5ci5XyCRRngsBb8rQDgV1UAKWje2mV34VhU8ZWrU8W37urxzs8yF9al>; <https://twitter.com/AlexKokcharov/status/1523994342813278209>;  
<https://t.me/istorijaoruzija/62512>; <https://t.me/tsvtiraspol/25311>; <https://t.me/krepostpmr/34031>;  
<https://t.me/krepostpmr/34032>