

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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Ukrainian military officials reported that some Russian troops withdrawn from the Kharkiv City axis have redeployed to western Donetsk Oblast on May 19. The Ukrainian General Staff said that 260 servicemen withdrawn from the Kharkiv City axis arrived to replace the significant combat losses that the 107th Motorized Rifle Battalion has taken approximately 20 km southwest of Donetsk City.¹ The Ukrainian Military Directorate (GUR) intercepted a Russian serviceman's call suggesting that some of the 400 servicemen from the Kharkiv City axis who had arrived elsewhere in Donbas were shocked by the intensity of the fighting there compared with what they had experienced in Kharkiv Oblast.²

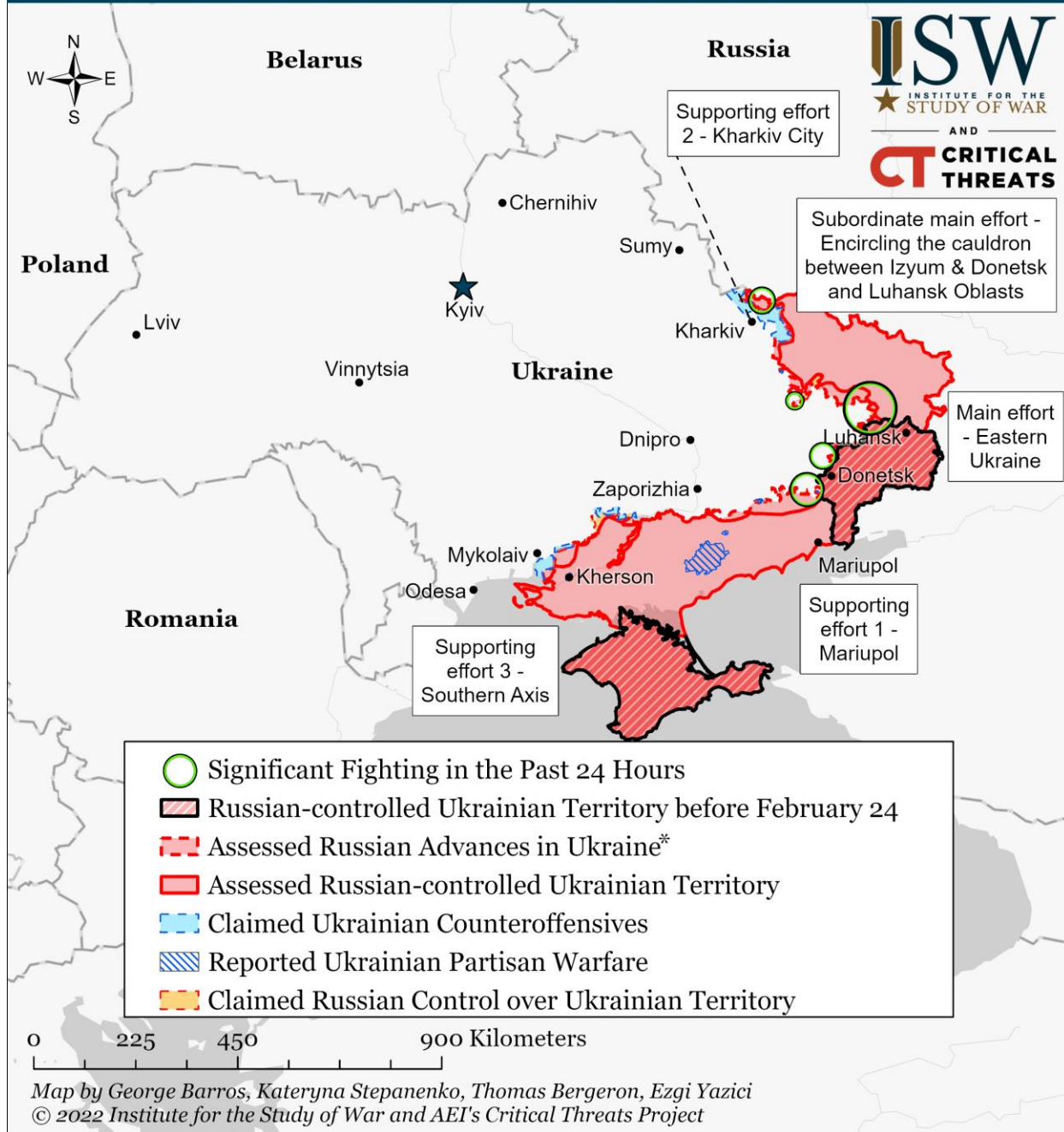
Russian forces are continuing to suffer shortages of reserve manpower, causing the Russian military command to consolidate depleted battalion tactical groups (BTGs). An unnamed US defense official reported that Russian forces still have 106 BTGs operating in Ukraine but had to disband and combine some to compensate for losses.³ Ukrainian General Staff Main Operations Deputy Chief Oleksiy Gromov reported that Russian forces are combining units of the Pacific and Northern Fleets at the permanent locations of the 40th Separate Marine Brigade and the 200th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade, respectively.⁴ Gromov added that Russian forces are training servicemen in Krasnodar Krai to replenish units of the 49th Combined Arms Army and are trying to restore combat power of Russian units withdrawn from the battlefield in occupied Crimea.

Unknown Russian perpetrators conducted a series of Molotov cocktail attacks on Russian military commissariats throughout the country in May, likely in protest of covert mobilization. Russian media and local Telegram channels reported deliberate acts of arson against military commissariats in three Moscow Oblast settlements—Omsk, Volgograd, Ryazan Oblast, and Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District—between May 4 and May 18.⁵ Ukrainian General Staff Main Operations Deputy Chief Oleksiy Gromov said that there were at least 12 cases of deliberate arson against military commissariats in total and five last week.⁶ Russian officials caught two 16-year-olds in the act in one Moscow Oblast settlement, which suggests that Russian citizens are likely responsible for the attacks on military commissariats.⁷

Key Takeaways

- **Russian forces are intensifying operations to advance north and west of Popasna in preparation for an offensive toward Severodonetsk.**
- **Russian and proxy authorities in Mariupol are struggling to establish coherent administrative control of the city.**
- **Russian forces reportedly attempted to regain control of the settlements they lost during the Ukrainian counteroffensive north of Kharkiv City.**
- **Russian forces are bolstering their naval presence around Snake Island to fortify their grouping on the island.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 19, 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 supporting effort 4, “Sumy and northeastern Ukraine,” because it is no longer an active effort.

- 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—Mariupol;
- Supporting effort 2—Kharkiv City;
- Supporting effort 3—Southern axis.

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)

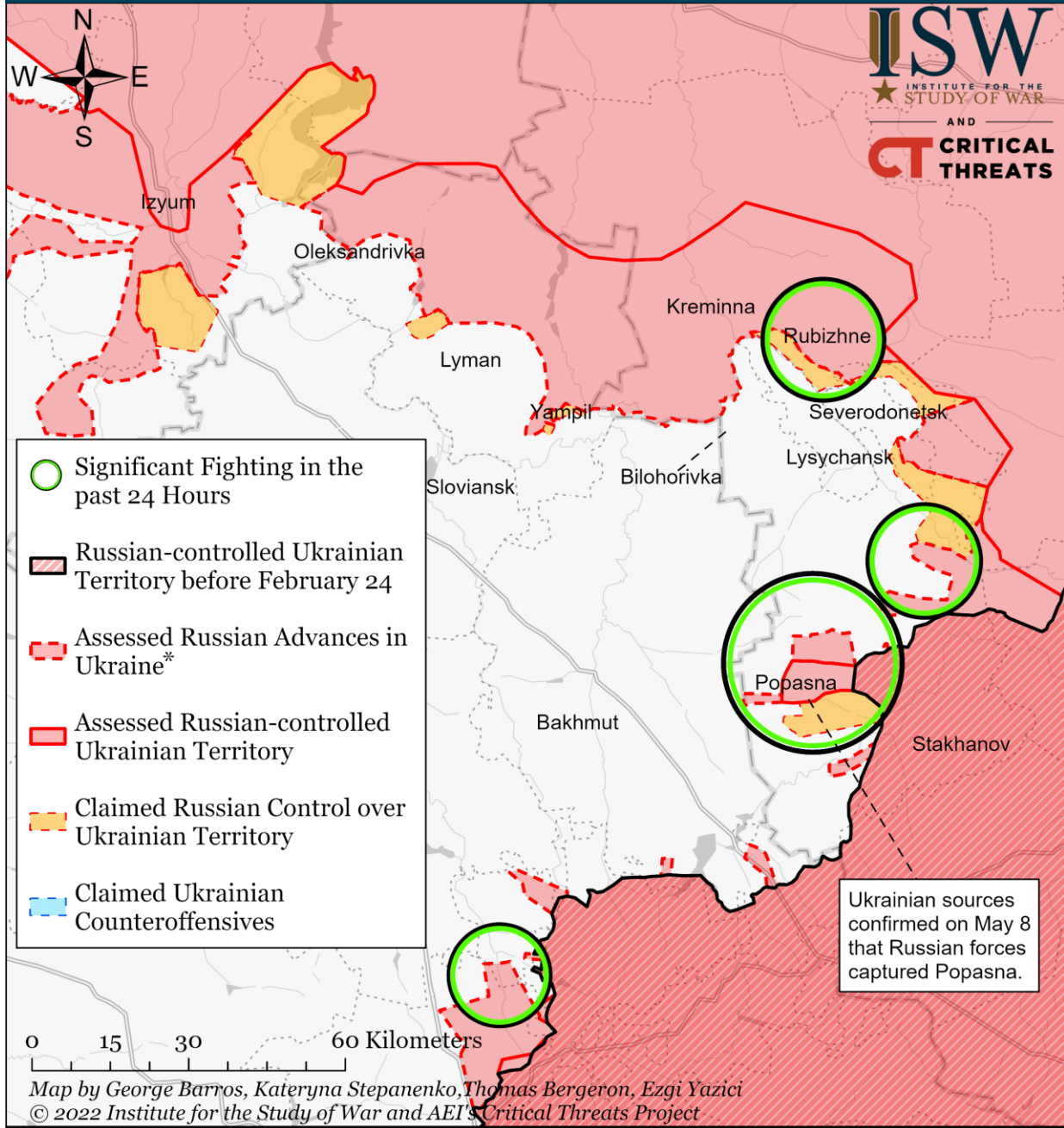
Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to resume offensive operations southwest of Izyum and did not advance in the Slovyansk or Lyman directions on May 19.⁸ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces suffered significant losses and retreated after a failed assault on Velyka Komyshuvakha approximately 23 km southwest of Izyum.⁹ Ukrainian General Staff Main Operations Deputy Chief Oleksiy Gromov said that Russian forces are resuming the Slovyansk offensive despite the loss of offensive capabilities.¹⁰ Ukrainian artillery struck Russian electronic warfare (EW) equipment 7 km from Izyum on May 18.¹¹

Russian forces intensified efforts to advance north and west of Popasna in preparation for the Battle of Severodonetsk. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces conducted several unsuccessful assaults in settlements leading to the Lysychansk and Bahmut highways near Popasna.¹² The Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) claimed to have encircled Ukrainian troops in Zolote and Hirske, approximately 12 and 14 km northeast of Popasna, respectively.¹³ ISW cannot independently confirm this LNR claim. Russian forces also attempted to break Ukrainian defenses west and east of Avdiivka without any success and maintained heavy shelling in the area.¹⁴

Russian troops have begun operating at a company scale rather than at the level of a BTG to focus on seizing specific villages in Donbas, according to US officials.¹⁵ An unnamed US defense official also noted that Russian forces are still facing challenges in coordinating communication between commanders and synchronizing artillery fire in supporting ground assaults.¹⁶ ISW previously reported that some Russian military bloggers criticized the Russian reconnaissance-strike complex due to its excessively centralized approval system for artillery fire.¹⁷ A pro-Russian military Telegram channel

criticized the current Russian strategy, claiming that Russian forces are hitting a “strategic dead end” and are suffering significant losses trying to slowly capture small villages in different directions.¹⁸

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of May 19, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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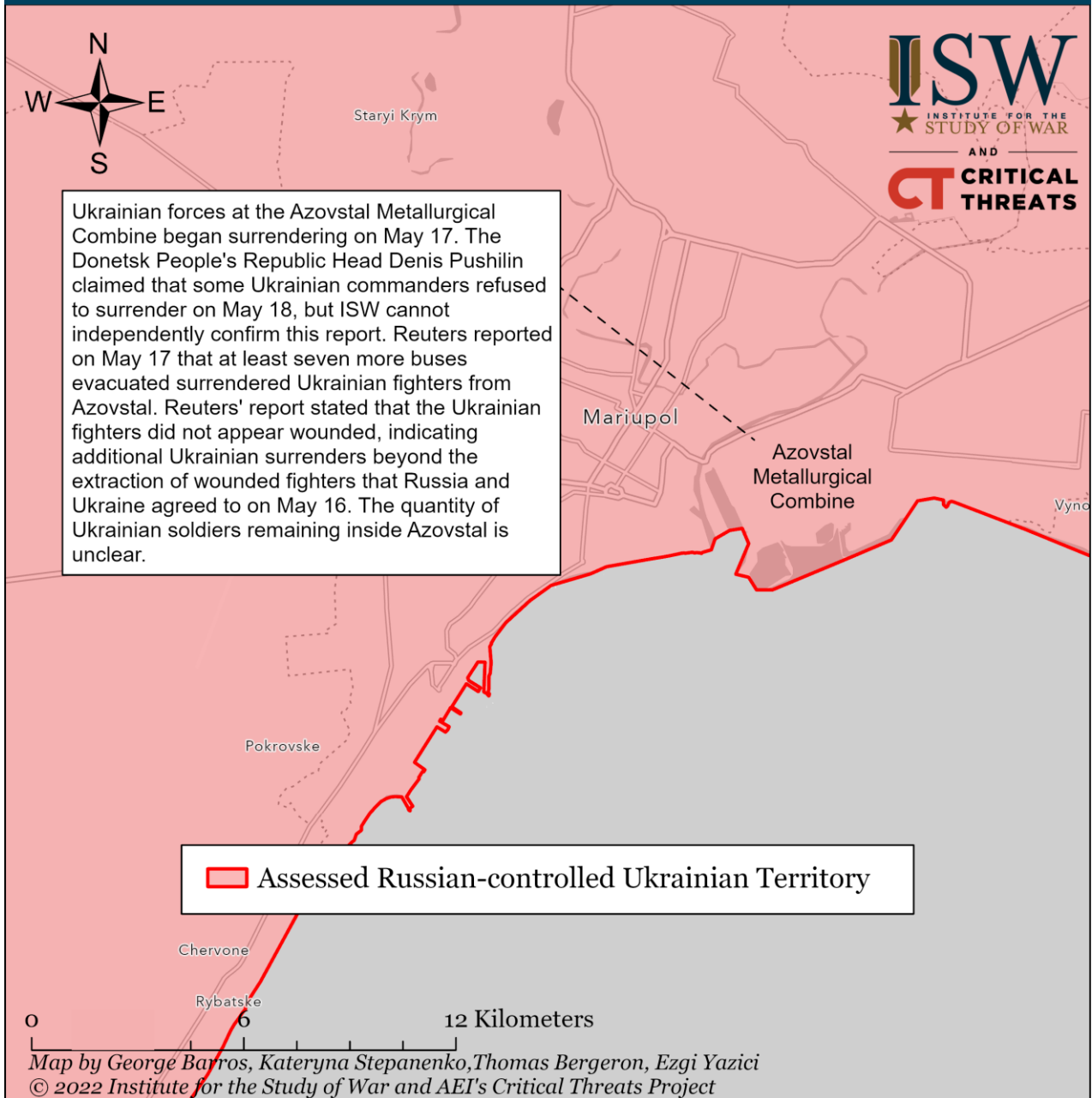
Note: We have expanded Russian assessed advances to Rubizhne and Voevodivka based on Ukrainian local administration reports that Russian forces seized the settlements on May 12. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) officials claimed that DNR and Russian forces captured Dobrysheve on May 16.

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

Russian and proxy occupation authorities in Mariupol reportedly struggled to establish coherent administrative control of the city on May 19. Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko claimed that authorities in Mariupol who are collaborating with Russian occupiers do not report to the leadership of the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) and instead are being guided by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB).¹⁹ Andryushchenko additionally stated that the Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) will become the only “independent” political organ of Russia due to the way DNR officials are imposing their occupational agendas on Mariupol.²⁰ Andryushchenko noted that Head of the DNR Denis Pushilin has commanded elements of the police corps currently stationed in Mariupol to move to other areas in Donetsk to respond to riots caused by “an internal struggle of political clans.”²¹ While ISW cannot independently confirm Andryushchenko’s claims, they are consistent with the overall lack of coherency in the implementation of occupation agendas by Russian and DNR authorities alike.

Factional infighting between proxy authorities in Mariupol is likely being exacerbated by the ongoing evacuation of Ukrainian defenders from the Azovstal Steel Plant. Pro-Russian Telegram channels complained that Russian forces are removing wounded Russian servicemen from hospitals in the DNR to treat wounded Ukrainian soldiers who were recently evacuated from Azovstal.²² If confirmed, these reports indicate a continued lack of consistency in the way Russian and proxy authorities are handling the evacuation of Ukrainian forces from Azovstal and the overall capture of Mariupol.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Mariupol as of May 19, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



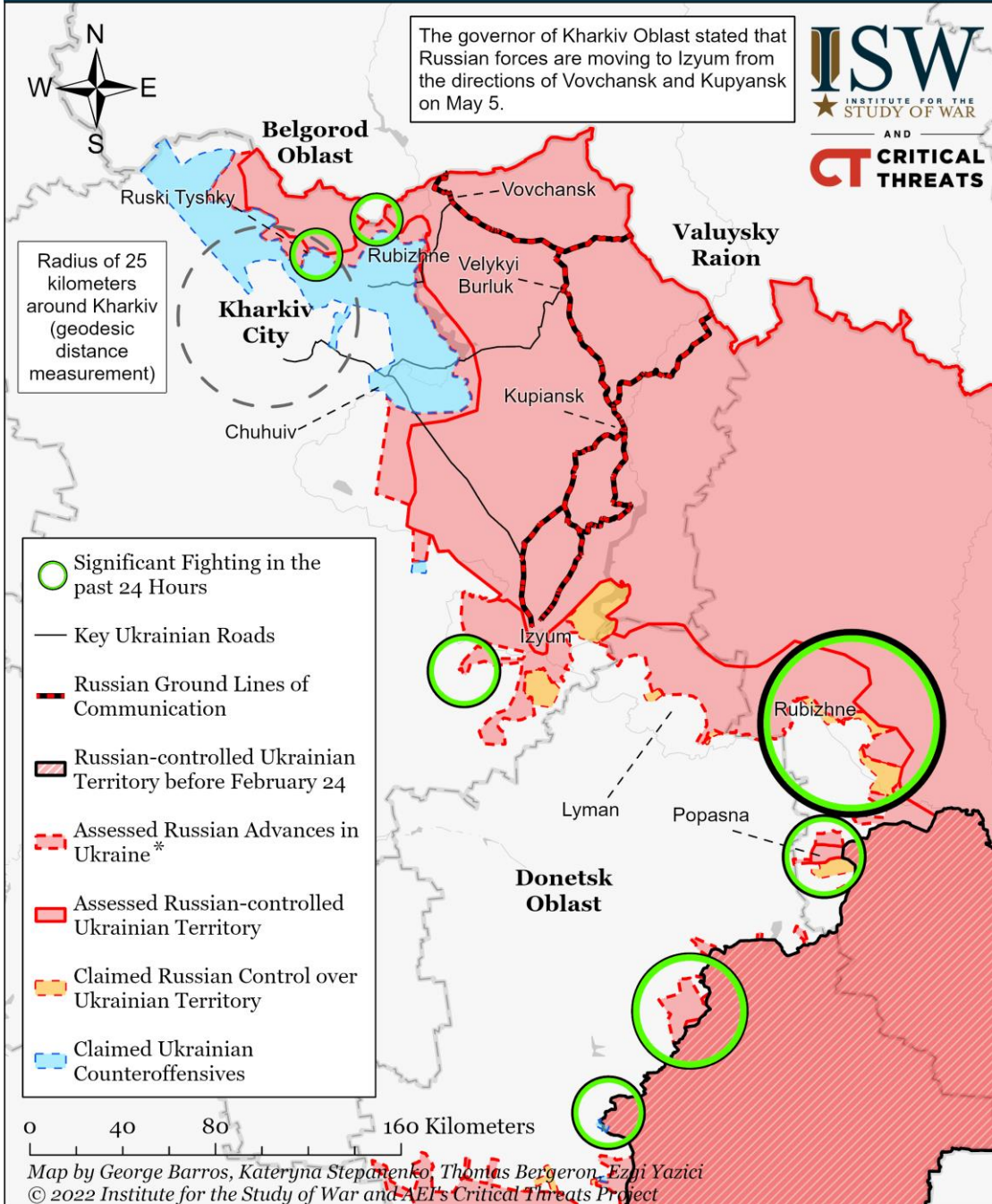
Deputy Ukrainian Defense Minister Hanna Malyar emphasized on May 17 that the Ukrainian authorities have no other way to save Ukrainian troops in Azovstal in other than surrendering them to Russian forces and then exchanging them in a prisoner exchange. ISW will scale down Russian controlled territory over Azovstal if independent sources confirm that some Ukrainian forces refused to surrender.

* 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: Withdraw forces to the north and defend ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to Izyum)

Russian forces focused on maintaining their positions north of Kharkiv City to prevent further Ukrainian advances on May 19.²³ The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Russian troops conducted unspecified and unsuccessful counterattacks in an attempt to restore lost positions around Kharkiv City.²⁴ Deputy Chief of the Main Operations Department of the Ukrainian General Staff Brigadier General Oleksiy Gromov reported that the Ukrainian counteroffensive in northern Kharkiv Oblast has liberated 23 settlements since May 5, but did not name the settlements.²⁵ Russian troops continued to conduct artillery attacks on Ukrainian positions and suburban settlements around Kharkiv City.²⁶

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 19, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



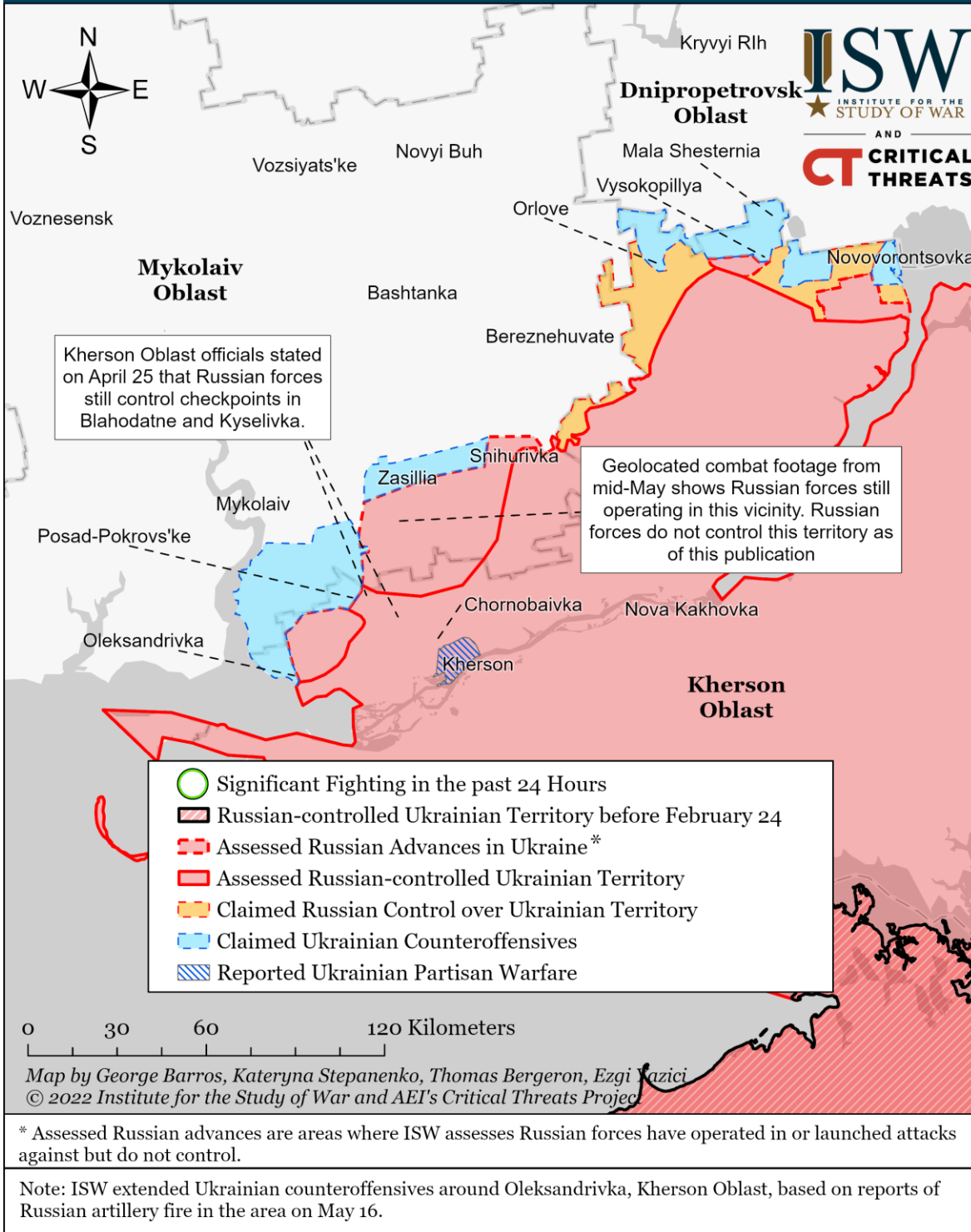
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Ukrainian military officials reported that Ukrainian forces liberated 23 unnamed villages in northern Kharkiv Oblast since May 5. Ukrainian forces claimed they reached an unspecified location on the international border in Kharkiv Oblast on May 15. ISW will change our maps once open sources name these settlements. We extended Ukrainian counteroffensives to outskirts of Borshchova in northern Kharkiv Oblast given that the Ukrainian General Staff reported that fighting is ongoing in the settlement as of May 19.

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

Russian forces did not make any confirmed advances on the southern axis and shelled along the frontline on May 19.²⁷ Russian forces conducted artillery attacks against Kherson, Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and Mykolaiv Oblasts.²⁸ Unidentified partisans reportedly blew up a Russian armored train in Melitopol and damaged two railway tracks and a locomotive with ten fuel tanks.²⁹ Russian forces are continuing to fortify their grouping on Snake Island with two warship detachments and cruise missiles.³⁰ The situation in Transnistria remains unchanged.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 19, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Immediate items to watch

- Russian forces will likely complete their withdrawal from the vicinity of Kharkiv City but attempt to hold a line west of Vovchansk to defend their GLOCs from Belgorod to Izyum. It is unclear if they will succeed.
- The Russians will continue efforts to encircle Severodonetsk and Lysychansk at least from the south, possibly by focusing on cutting off the last highway connecting Severodonetsk-Lysychansk with the rest of Ukraine.

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320179376961814>

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- ² <https://www.facebook.com/DefenceIntelligenceofUkraine/videos/573467274113416/>
- ³ <https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/1527300280496562176>; <https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/1527300493168455680>; <https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/1527300755794690049>; <https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/1527301312726958081>
- ⁴ <https://www.dotpravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/19/7347223/>
- ⁵ <https://t.me/bazabazon/11488>; <https://t.me/bazabazon/11499>; <https://t.me/bazabazon/11560>; <https://t.me/bazabazon/11561>; <https://t.me/bazabazon/11661>; <https://t.me/bazabazon/11620>; <https://t.me/bazabazon/11619>; <https://t.me/bazabazon/11601>; <https://zonadotmedia/news/2022/05/12/cherepovets>; <https://zona.media/news/2022/05/13/molotov>; https://v1.ru/text/incidents/2022/05/15/71331752/?from=yaneews&utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop; <https://www.dotrbc.ru/rbcfreenews/628217db9a7947f89b776ab5>; <https://t.me/bazabazon/11619>; <https://t.me/bazabazon/11664>; https://www.dotrbc.ru/rbcfreenews/6284b7ce9a794759628e1b71?utm_source=telegram&utm_medium=messenger
- ⁶ <https://armyinform.com.ua/2022/05/19/u-rosiyi-za-ostannij-tyzhden-stalosya-5-pidpaliv-vijskkomativ/>
- ⁷ <https://zona.media/news/2022/05/12/cherepovets>
- ⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320537073592711>; <https://hromadske.ua/posts/na-donechchini-rosijskogo-udaru-zaginuli-dvoye-ditej-nacpoliciya>
- ⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320179376961814>; <https://t.me/synegubov/3215>
- ¹⁰ <https://armyinform.com.ua/2022/05/19/protyvnyk-ne-zalyshaye-sprob-vidnovlennya-nastupu-v-napryamku-slovyanska-genshtab/>
- ¹¹ <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1526994371542933504>; https://twitter.com/Blue_Sauron/status/1526978990015139840; https://twitter.com/Blue_Sauron/status/1526992526711857152
- ¹² <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2712>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320537073592711>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320179376961814>
- ¹³ https://lenta.ru/news/2022/05/19/lr_severodonetsk/; https://t.me/miroshnik_r/7332
- ¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320537073592711>; <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1526952817625276416>; <https://t.me/RtrDonetsk/5918>; <https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1527194682316541954>; <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1526954080488374272>
- ¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/1527302741420146688>; <https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/152730345688803331>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3036595/senior-defense-official-holds-a-background-briefing/>; <https://twitter.com/Osinttechnical/status/1527147515686035459>; <https://twitter.com/Osinttechnical/status/1527147516948582401>; <https://twitter.com/Osinttechnical/status/1527147668170018816>
- ¹⁷ <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-18>
- ¹⁸ <https://t.me/strelkovii/2570>
- ¹⁹ <https://t.me/andriyshTime/956>
- ²⁰ <https://t.me/andriyshTime/957>
- ²¹ <https://t.me/andriyshTime/950>
- ²² <https://t.me/MoskauTerra/1050>; <https://t.me/MoskauTerra/1056>; <https://t.me/strelkovii/2566>
- ²³ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320537073592711>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320179376961814>
- ²⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320537073592711>
- ²⁵ <https://armyinform.com.ua/2022/05/19/na-harkivskomu-napryamku-z-5-travnja-zvilneno-23-naselenyh-punktiv/>
- ²⁶ <https://t.me/synegubov/3215>; <https://hromadske.ua/posts/na-harkivshini-rosijski-okupanti-zgvaltuvali-nemovlya-na-ochah-u-materi-denisova>; <https://t.me/synegubov/3215>; <https://t.me/synegubov/3215>; <https://hromadske.ua/posts/na-harkivshini-rosijski-okupanti-zgvaltuvali-nemovlya-na-ochah-u-materi-denisova>
- ²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320537073592711>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/320179376961814>; <https://www.facebook.com/okPivden/videos/380099047407243/>; <https://www.facebook.com/okPivden/videos/720258089109619/>

²⁸ <https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/1527298929766764546>;
<https://www.facebook.com/okPivden/videos/380099047407243/>; <https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/975>;
https://t.me/mykola_lukashuk/480; https://t.me/mykola_lukashuk/480; https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/7964;
https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/7964; <https://hromadske dot ua/posts/postijni-obstrili-na-donbasi-ta-kritichna-situaciya-na-hersonshini-situaciya-v-regionah-zranku-19-travnja>; <https://www.facebook.com/okPivden/videos/380099047407243/>

²⁹ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/05/18/u-melitopoli-pidirvaly-rosijskyj-bronepoyizd/>

³⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/okPivden/videos/380099047407243/>