

**Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment**  
**Kateryna Stepanenko and Mason Clark**  
**May 27, 7:30pm ET**

**Russian forces began direct assaults on Severodonetsk on May 27 despite not yet having fully encircled the town.** Russian forces have performed poorly in operations in built-up urban terrain throughout the war to date and are unlikely to be able to advance rapidly in Severodonetsk itself. Russian forces continue to make steady and incremental gains around the city but have not yet encircled the Ukrainian defenders. Ukrainian forces continue to maintain defenses across eastern Ukraine and have slowed most Russian lines of advance. Russian forces will likely continue to make incremental advances and may succeed in encircling Severodonetsk in the coming days, but Russian operations around Izyum remain stalled and Russian forces will likely be unable to increase the pace of their advances.

**Key Takeaways**

- **Russian forces began direct assaults on built-up areas of Severodonetsk without having fully encircled the city and will likely struggle to take ground in the city itself.**
- **Russian forces in Lyman appear to be dividing their efforts—attacking both southwest to support stalled forces in Izyum and southeast to advance on Siversk; they will likely struggle to accomplish either objective in the coming days.**
- **Russian forces in Popasna seek to advance north to support the encirclement of Severodonetsk rather than advancing west toward Bakhmut.**
- **Positions northeast of Kharkiv City remain largely static, with no major attacks by either Russian or Ukrainian forces.**
- **Russian forces continue to fortify their defensive positions along the southern axis and advance efforts to integrate the Kherson region into Russian economic and political structures.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 27, 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:**

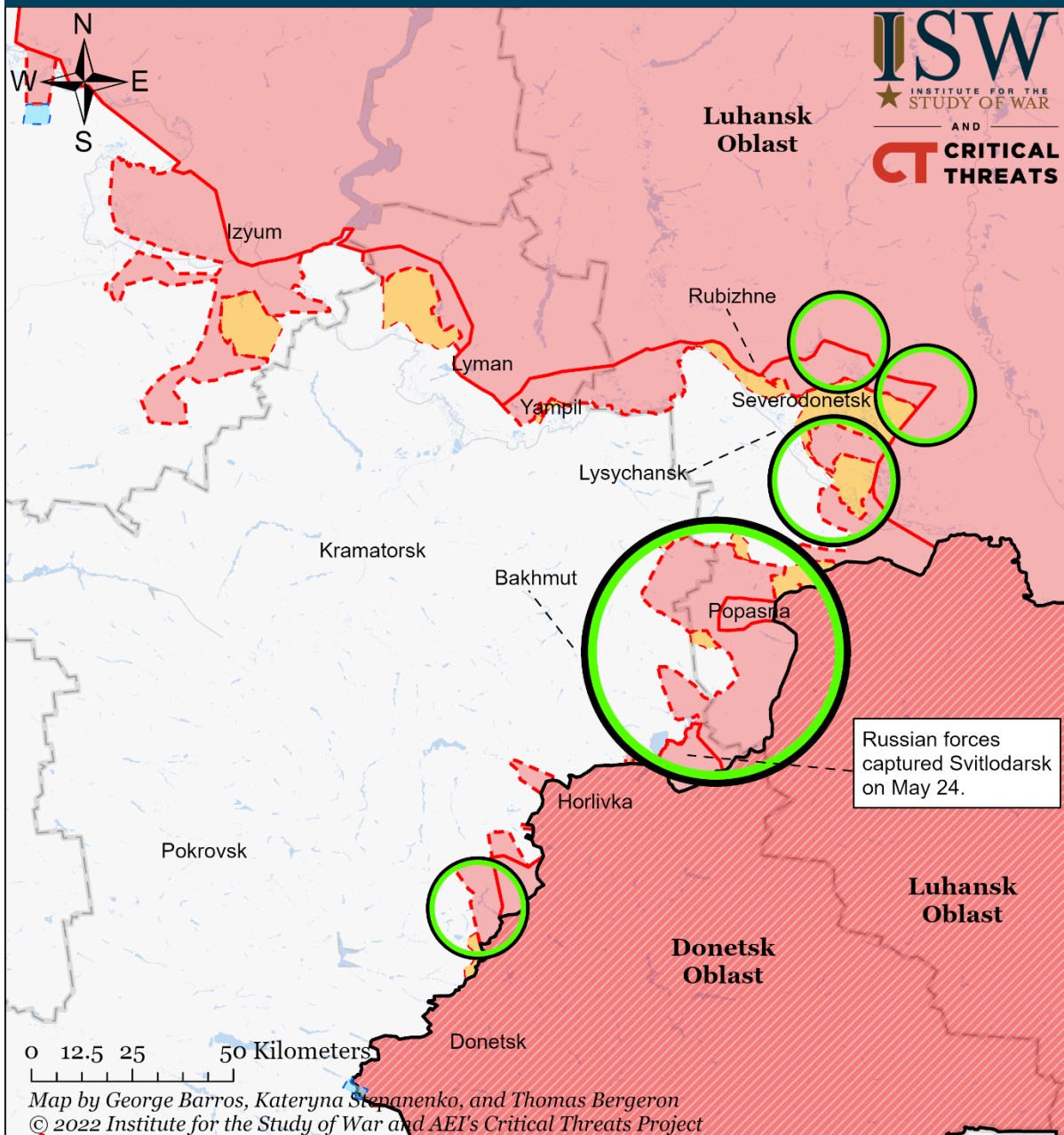
- Main effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and three supporting efforts);
- Subordinate Main Effort—Encirclement of Ukrainian troops in the cauldron between Izyum and Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts
- Supporting effort 1—Kharkiv City;
- Supporting effort 2—Southern Axis;
- Activities in 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 began direct assaults on built-up areas of Severodonetsk on May 27 without having fully encircled the city and cut off the Ukrainian defenders. Geolocated videos confirmed that Chechen units seized a hotel located in the northern part of Severodonetsk on May 27. Severodonetsk Military-Civil Administration Head Oleksiy Stryuk reported that Ukrainian forces previously repelled Russian attacks on the hotel on May 26, but Russian forces captured the position sometime on May 27.<sup>1</sup> Luhansk Oblast Head Serhiy Haidai said that Russian forces also conducted offensive operations just southeast of Rubizhne toward Severodonetsk.<sup>2</sup> Russian forces also continued to push on Severodonetsk via Ustynka and Borisvske just 9km and 14km southeast of the city, respectively.<sup>3</sup> The Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) falsely claimed that Russian forces cut off all routes and surrounded Severodonetsk, trapping Ukrainian units in the Severodonetsk cauldron, though this is untrue and Russian forces have not yet fully encircled Ukrainian defenders.<sup>4</sup> Ukrainian sources differed on the extent of Russian advances, with Stryuk estimating that Russian forces have encircled approximately two-thirds of Severodonetsk's perimeter and Haidai stating Russian forces have only reached the city's outskirts.<sup>5</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of May 27, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

\* 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.

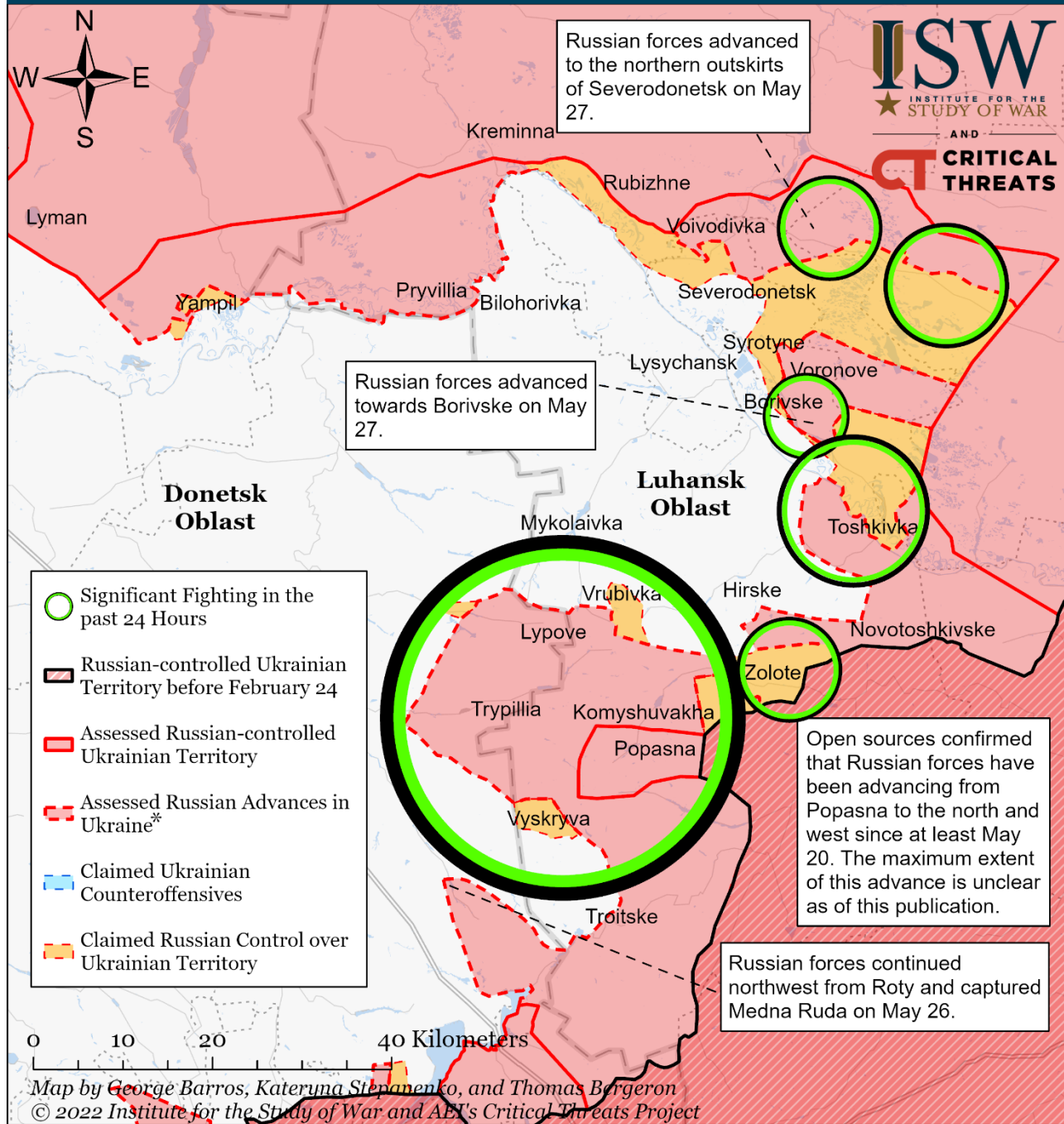
Russian forces likely seek to advance toward Slovyansk from Lyman to the north due to stalled operations south of Izyum.<sup>6</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces shelled two settlements approximately 30km and 35km southeast of Izyum and conducted limited attacks south from Lyman.<sup>7</sup> Russian forces have been unable to advance south from Izyum on the E40 highway due to Ukrainian resistance along the road and may now be changing their approach to attack toward Slovyansk from the northeast. The Ukrainian General Staff also noted that Russian forces in Kharkiv Oblast are training personnel to replenish infantry, tank, and artillery units, and deployed the 29th Separate Railway Brigade from Smolensk to Kharkiv Oblast, likely to generate new forces and restore logistics to attempt to resume stalled offensive operations southeast of Izyum.<sup>8</sup>

Russian forces in Lyman are additionally attacking southeast toward Siversk as part of ongoing efforts to encircle Ukrainian defenders in the town.<sup>9</sup> Russian forces will likely attempt to seize the roads leading to Severodonetsk from the northwest to sever Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) in Luhansk Oblast.<sup>10</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces fired mortars and rocket-propelled grenades on settlements within a 20km range of northwestern Siversk and launched an airstrike on Siversk on May 27.<sup>11</sup> Russian forces in Lyman appear to be dividing their efforts—attacking both southwest to support stalled forces in Izyum and southeast to advance on Siversk; they will likely struggle to accomplish either objective in the coming days based on past Russian performance.

Russian forces attempted to seize access to two highways east and northeast of Popasna on May 27 in a continued effort to partially disrupt Ukrainian GLOCs to Severodonetsk. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continued assaults against villages adjacent to the T1302 highway from Bakhmut to Lysychansk, just northeast of Popasna.<sup>12</sup> Russian forces also attacked east of Popasna to secure access to the T1303 highway to Lysychansk.<sup>13</sup> Russian forces are likely prioritizing the Lysychansk direction, rather than advancing toward Bakhmut, to support Russia's main effort operations in Severodonetsk.



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Severodonetsk as of May 27, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



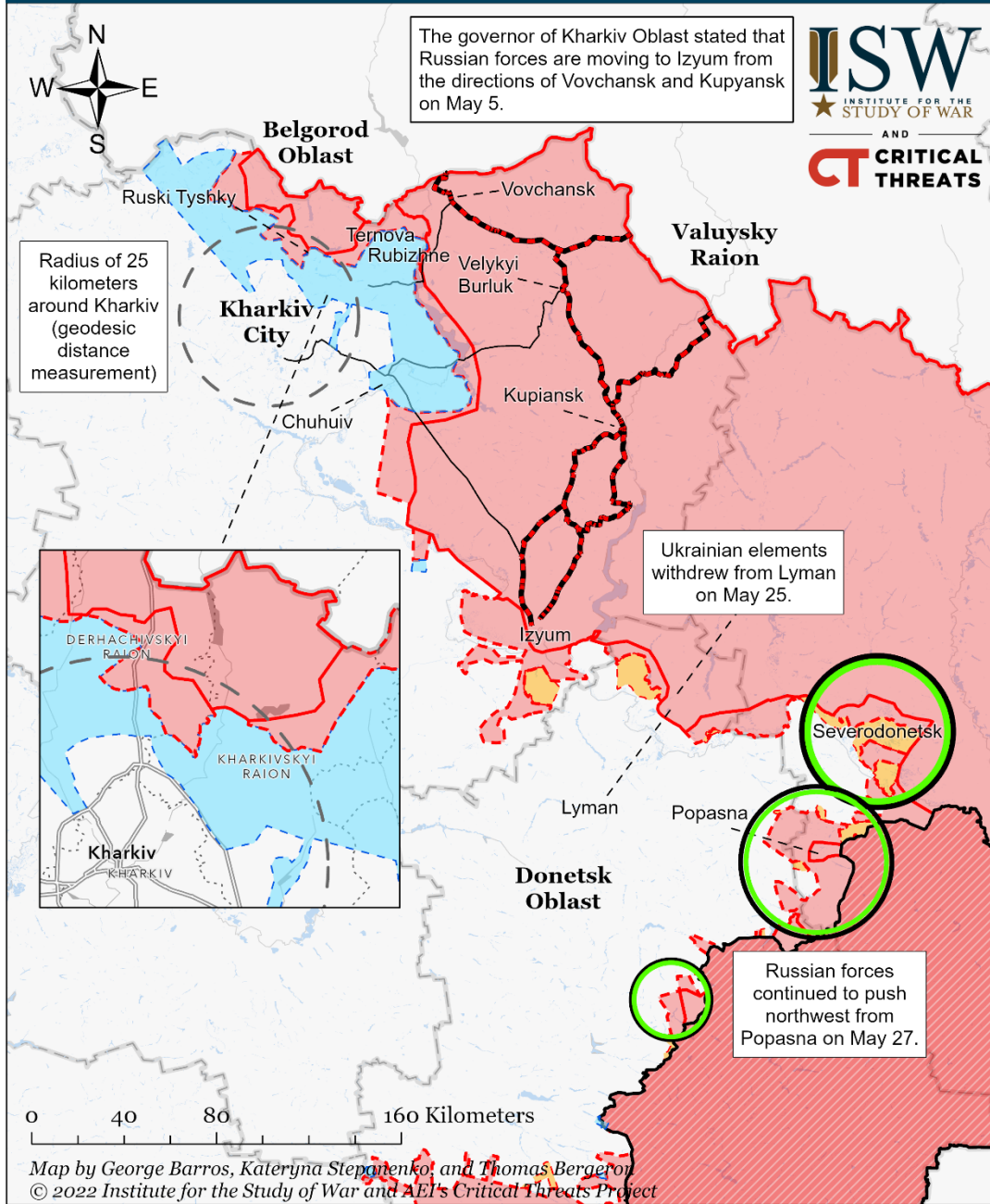
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: 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.

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

Russian forces did not launch any ground assaults against Ukrainian defenders north of Kharkiv City on May 27. Russian forces continued systematic shelling of Ukrainian-liberated villages to preserve their defensive positions near the Ukrainian-Russian state border.<sup>14</sup> Ukraine's Security Service reported that entire Russian units rioted and refused to conduct an offensive operation on Kharkiv City, though ISW cannot independently confirm this claim.<sup>15</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 27, 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

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

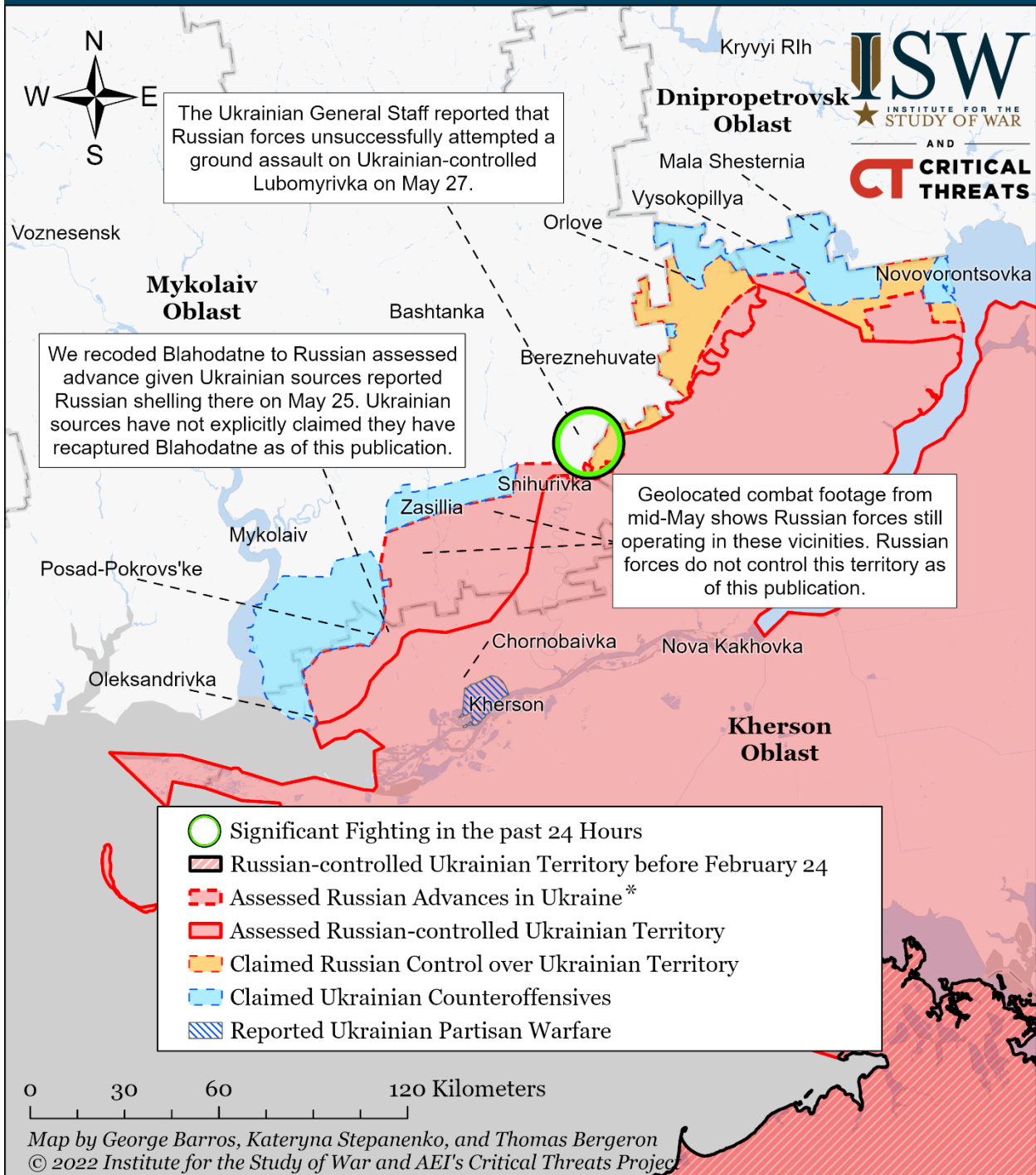


## **Supporting Effort #2—Southern Axis (Objective: Defend Kherson against Ukrainian counterattacks)**

Russian forces continued to fortify their positions along the southern axis.<sup>16</sup> Ukrainian Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Representative Vadym Skibitsky reported that Russian forces are currently building a third line of defense in Kherson Oblast and are consolidating their control over railroads, airfields, and ports.<sup>17</sup> The Zaporizhia Oblast Military Administration also said that Russian forces transferred land, air, and sea military equipment from Crimea on May 26, including 24 "Grad" MLRS systems.<sup>18</sup> The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces also continued to deploy reservists from Crimea.<sup>19</sup> The UK Defense Ministry noted that Russian forces deployed 50-year-old T-62 tanks from storage to the southern axis.<sup>20</sup>

Russian forces launched an unsuccessful ground attack near the Kherson-Mykolaiv Oblast border and continued artillery and airstrikes throughout southern Ukraine, the first attack near Kherson for several weeks.<sup>21</sup> This attack is unlikely to be part of a wider offensive operation. Russian forces also launched a missile strike on the Motor Sich Plant in Zaporizhia City on May 26 but missed the target and damaged residential infrastructure nearby.<sup>22</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 27, 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 recoded Novopavlivka in northern Kherson Oblast to Ukrainian counteroffensives given the Ukrainian General Staff stated on May 25 that Russian forces fired upon Novopavlivka, indicating that Russian forces are not present there.

## **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 forces continued to set conditions for the long-term occupation of Ukraine's southern regions. Ukrainian Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Representative Vadym Skibitsky reported that Russian occupation forces are likely preparing for referendums on the occupied territories in September or October.<sup>23</sup> Russian occupation authorities began transitioning Zaporizhia Oblast to the Russian time zone and introducing Russian license plates; they also promised to establish new subsidy and tax systems in the near future.<sup>24</sup> Russian occupation officials are additionally reportedly attempting to create an Internal Ministry subordinate to the Kherson Oblast Civil-Military Administration to support occupation administration and possibly support integration with Russia's own Internal Ministry.<sup>25</sup> The Zaporizhia Oblast Military Administration reported that Russian authorities continued to hand out Russian passports to Melitopol residents, which will allow the Kremlin to mobilize and control the movements of inhabitants of the occupied territories and conscript them for military service. These efforts will also allow the Kremlin to claim it is protecting Russian citizens, as it did in the DNR and LNR prior to February 24.<sup>26</sup>

Russian occupation officials are struggling to subdue Ukrainian partisan activity in the south. The GUR intercepted a call with a Melitopol resident who noted a rise in unspecified partisan activity in Kyrylivka, a coastal town just south of Melitopol.<sup>27</sup> GUR representative Skibitsky also claimed that Russian forces began avoiding bridges and roads, likely to avoid Ukrainian partisan attacks.<sup>28</sup>

### **Immediate items to watch**

- Russian forces are likely reinforcing their grouping north of Kharkiv City to prevent further advances of the Ukrainian counteroffensive toward the Russian border. Russian forces may commit elements of the 1st Tank Army to northern Kharkiv in the near future.
- Russian forces are unlikely to advance rapidly in direct assaults against Severodonetsk, but supporting operations to fully encircle the town will likely continue to secure incremental gains.
- Occupation forces in Mariupol will continue to strengthen administrative control of the city but are likely unsure of what the ultimate annexation policy will be.
- Russian forces are likely preparing for Ukrainian counteroffensives and settling in for protracted operations in southern Ukraine.



### **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)

<sup>1</sup> <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2934>; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/36765>

<sup>2</sup> <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2935?single>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326425353003883>; <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2935?single>; <https://t.me/swodki/104473>

<sup>4</sup> <https://t.me/epoddubny/10929>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/35125>

- 
- <sup>5</sup> <https://hromadske.ua/posts/gajdaj-syevyerodoneck-ne-otochenij-yak-zayavlyayut-u-rf-okupanti-zajshli-na-okolicyu-mista>; <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2962>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326425353003883>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326063393040079>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326425353003883>
- <sup>8</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326063393040079>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326425353003883>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://t.me/readovkanews/35099>; <https://t.me/swodki/104473>
- <sup>10</sup> <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-25>
- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326425353003883>
- <sup>12</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326425353003883>;  
<https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1530201934623383555>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/butusov.yuriy/posts/pfbid02i59nU6eUsK2S74Xk3F67Bvf1VxdkR5bP5ucwCPJnFGg5jc7gKq5N83gSwsPoww5SI>
- <sup>13</sup> <https://t.me/swodki/104473>
- <sup>14</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326425353003883>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326063393040079>; <https://t.me/syNEGubov/3297>;  
<https://t.me/syNEGubov/3297>; <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1530206502140751874>;  
<https://t.me/syNEGubov/3297>; [https://t.me/Bratchuk\\_Sergey/12851](https://t.me/Bratchuk_Sergey/12851); <https://t.me/syNEGubov/3297>;  
<https://t.me/swodki/104473>
- <sup>15</sup> <https://t.me/SBUkr/4340>
- <sup>16</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326425353003883>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1051716292134026>
- <sup>17</sup> <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/viyna-tryvatyme-do-zymy-khersonshchyna/31870035.html?fbclid=IwAR0jMDeE6jybW08ePv5wGzNrh6HxEDY37Yfj0gpUz-GJWhbtFgb1Dw0ZjhE>
- <sup>18</sup> [https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/8288](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/8288)
- <sup>19</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1051716292134026>
- <sup>20</sup> <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1530056331960385536>;  
<https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1530056431407353856>
- <sup>21</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/326425353003883>; [https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/8288](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/8288);  
[https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/8291](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/8291); <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1529934569591521289>
- <sup>22</sup> <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1529934569591521289>
- <sup>23</sup> <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/viyna-tryvatyme-do-zymy-khersonshchyna/31870035.html?fbclid=IwAR0jMDeE6jybW08ePv5wGzNrh6HxEDY37Yfj0gpUz-GJWhbtFgb1Dw0ZjhE>
- <sup>24</sup> <https://t.me/swodki/104400>; [https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/8291](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/8291)
- <sup>25</sup> <https://t.me/swodki/104400>; [https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/8291](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/8291)
- <sup>26</sup> [https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/8288](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/8288);
- <sup>27</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1044535432826520>
- <sup>28</sup> <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/viyna-tryvatyme-do-zymy-khersonshchyna/31870035.html?fbclid=IwAR0jMDeE6jybW08ePv5wGzNrh6HxEDY37Yfj0gpUz-GJWhbtFgb1Dw0ZjhE>