



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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May 28, 2024, 7:45pm ET

Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Click [here](#) to see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:00pm ET on May 28. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 29 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian President Vladimir Putin grossly misrepresented the Ukrainian Constitution and Ukrainian domestic law on May 28 in order to further promote the Kremlin information operation claiming that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is no longer the legitimate president of Ukraine. Putin claimed on May 28 during a press conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan that the Ukrainian Constitution provides for the extension of the powers of the Verkhovna Rada but "does not say anything about the extension of the powers of the president."^[1] Putin claimed that although the Ukrainian law on martial law prohibits presidential elections during martial law, which Ukraine was under for one month in 2018 and has been under since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, "this does not mean that [the Ukrainian president's powers] are prolonged." Putin cited Article 111 of the Ukrainian Constitution, which he alleged provides that "in this case...presidential powers are transferred to the speaker of the parliament." Putin claimed that "the only legitimate authority" remaining in Ukraine is the Verkhovna Rada and the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada. Putin claimed that "if [the Verkhovna Rada] wanted to hold presidential elections, then the law on martial law would have been abolished...and elections would be held."

The Ukrainian Constitution states that "if the term of office of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine expires during the period of martial law or a state of emergency, its powers shall be extended until the day of the first meeting of the first session of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine elected after the abolition of the state of martial law or emergency."^[2] The Ukrainian law "On the Legal Regime of Martial Law" prohibits "conducting elections for the President of Ukraine" while martial law is in effect.^[3] Putin inaccurately cited Article 111 of the Ukrainian Constitution, however, which actually states: "The President of Ukraine may be removed from office by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine by impeachment if he commits treason or another crime."^[4] Article 112 describes how "the performance of the duties of

the President of Ukraine for the period before the election and entry into office of the new President of Ukraine is entrusted to the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine." Article 112, however, specifies that this transfer of power from the President to the Speaker only applies "in the case of **early termination** [emphasis added] of the powers of the President of Ukraine in accordance with Articles 108, 109, 110, 111 of this Constitution," which describe how "the powers of the President of Ukraine are prematurely terminated in the event of their resignation, inability fulfill their powers due to their health, removal from office by impeachment, and death." Putin's baseless claim that the Verkhovna Rada could abolish martial law and hold presidential elections "if [it] wanted to" is also incorrect, as the law "On the Legal Regime of Martial Law" states that "before the end of the period for which martial law was imposed, and on the condition that the threat of attack or danger to the state independence of Ukraine and its territorial integrity is eliminated, the President of Ukraine may issue a decree on the abolition of martial law on the entire territory of Ukraine or in some of its localities, which must be immediately announced through the media." [5] **Not only is the Verkhovna Rada not responsible for lifting martial law, but the Ukrainian President is also legally unable to lift martial law while Russia continues to attack Ukraine and pose a danger to Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity, as it clearly does.**

Ukrainian Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada Ruslan Stefanchuk directly responded to Putin's deliberate misinterpretation of Ukrainian law and explicitly stated that the Ukrainian Constitution and laws stipulate that Zelensky remain in office until the end of martial law in Ukraine. [6] Stefanchuk specifically drew attention to Part 1 of Article 108, which reads: "The President of Ukraine shall exercise their powers until the newly elected President takes office." [7] Stefanchuk advised "curious readers" of the Ukrainian Constitution to not read "selectively." [8] Putin observed correctly, for the first time on this issue, during his remarks in Tashkent that "this is a preliminary analysis" and "we need to take a closer look." [9]

Russian allegations about Zelensky's lack of legitimacy are a known Kremlin information operation that Kremlin officials have been promoting extensively in recent weeks, in part targeted at foreign audiences. Putin made similar claims rejecting Zelensky as the president of Ukraine during a press conference in Minsk, Belarus on May 24. [10] Russian Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov also denied Zelensky's legitimacy in an interview with *Newsweek* on May 25. [11] Putin's May 28 allegations contain specific legal jargon and references - largely incorrect or taken out of their legal context - to the text of the Ukrainian Constitution and laws. Putin is likely purposely inflating his statements with such nuanced legalese language to make it seem that he is highly educated in Ukrainian legal matters and is a definitive voice on the matter. The use of such language is likely also meant to cause listeners to believe Putin's false narratives without fact-checking, as legal jargon is inherently dense and opaque. The Ukrainian Constitution and the law relating to martial law, however, are not so opaque that a normal reader cannot understand them. The fact that Kremlin officials have recently promoted these narratives in detail at events in foreign countries and major Western publications suggests that this Kremlin information operation is largely aimed at foreign – predominantly Western – audiences.

Reuters paraphrased Putin's statements under a headline that misrepresented even the thrust of Putin's comments on May 28 but did not note the obvious errors in Putin's claims. [12] Reuters wrote that "Zelensky has not faced an election despite the expiry of his term, something he and Kyiv's allies deem the right decision in wartime" without offering the actual legal context that Putin's comments misrepresented the Ukrainian legal framework that specifically stipulates that martial law remains in

force, that presidential elections not be held during Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine's independent and sovereign territory and people and that Zelensky remains the legitimate president of Ukraine until his successor takes office.

Russian forces recently conducted four reduced-company-sized or smaller mechanized assaults on multiple operational axes in Donetsk Oblast without making significant advances, likely to test Ukrainian reactions following the first wave of the Russian offensive effort in northern Kharkiv Oblast. Footage published on May 27 and 28 shows Russian forces conducting reinforced platoon-sized mechanized attacks east of Chasiv Yar and east of Novopokrovske (northwest of Avdiivka) and roughly-company sized mechanized attacks near Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City) and in Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka).[13] Russian forces only marginally advanced in the attacks east of Novopokrovske and in Staromayorske and did not make confirmed advances near Chasiv Yar or Novomykhailivka. Russian forces have reduced their tempo of attacks and advances in northern Kharkiv Oblast and increased their tempo of attacks in the Pokrovsk (Avdiivka) direction in recent days.[14] These Russian mechanized attacks – one across each of Russia's current four operational axes – are limited in comparison to prior Russian mechanized attacks at the start of or during a dedicated offensive effort. The May 27 and 28 attacks were likely intended to gauge Ukrainian forces' reactions and defensive abilities in the Donetsk direction. The recent Russian offensive effort in northern Kharkiv Oblast likely aimed to take advantage of Ukrainian manpower and materiel shortages before anticipated Western military assistance arrives at the frontline and create opportunities for Russian forces elsewhere, and Russian forces likely aimed to test whether and where any of these opportunities for exploitation may exist on the Donetsk Oblast frontline.[15]

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)'s Committee on Culture supported a resolution that recognizes Russia's deliberate erasure of Ukrainian culture as an element of Russia's genocidal campaign in occupied Ukraine, consistent with ISW's longstanding assessment that Russia is pursuing a broad occupation strategy premised on eradicating Ukraine's national identity and independence. PACE Committee on Culture Chairperson and Ukrainian Servant of the People Representative Yevheniia Kravchuk stated on May 28 that the PACE Culture Committee unanimously supported her resolution on "Countering the Destruction of Cultural Identity in War and Peace," which the Committee will vote on in June 2024 and notably recognizes that Russia uses "cultural purges" as a tool of war in Ukraine that indicate "specific genocidal intent to destroy the Ukrainian nation by destroying Ukrainian identity and culture." [16] Kravchuk emphasized that the resolution affirms that Russia's cultural genocide in Ukraine is part of the wider genocidal campaign that Russia is pursuing against the Ukrainian people. If PACE's Culture Committee adopts the resolution in June 2024, it would represent an important international recognition of cultural genocide as a constituent element of a wider genocidal policy.[17] International legal procedure has not yet created an official legal definition for cultural genocide, and it is not formally defined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.[18] The Genocide Convention, however, defines genocidal acts as those that intend to destroy "in whole or in part" a specific group, and Russia's pursuit of cultural genocide in Ukraine is explicitly intended to destroy the Ukrainian nation and people "in whole or in part." [19] ISW has reported at length on Russian efforts to destroy Ukrainian cultural, linguistic, and historic heritage in occupied Ukraine and completely supplant it with Russian cultural conceptions.[20] Russia's cultural genocide in Ukraine cannot be viewed in isolation from its wider genocidal policy in Ukraine, as it is a

fundamental component of Russia's efforts to completely subsume and subjugate Ukraine and its people.

Russian authorities are preparing to intensify the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia throughout Summer 2024, further consolidating another component of Russia's genocidal campaign in Ukraine. Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Head Leonid Pasechnik announced on May 27 that Russian federal subjects (regions that are constituent entities of the Russian Federation) will "host" over 12,000 children from occupied Luhansk Oblast over the course of 2024 and that the Russian "Useful Vacations" program will sponsor 40,000 children from occupied Ukraine to "visit" Russia for summer camps and educational activities.[21] Pasechnik also reported that summer camps for children in occupied Crimea and within Russia are preparing to "host" over 600 children from occupied Ukraine throughout the summer, including the "Okean" summer camp in Vladivostok, Primorsky Krai (which is closer to Alaska than it is to Ukraine).[22] The Kherson Oblast occupation Ministry of Labor also announced that an unspecified number of children from occupied Kherson Oblast will travel to the "Okean" camp for an "educational, sport, and cultural program." [23] Kherson Oblast occupation senator Andrey Alekseenko reported on May 27 that 575 children from occupied Kherson Oblast will attend three-week summer camps in occupied Crimea and in Russia's Adygea Republic on Russian federal subject funds.[24] The LNR's Ministry of Education and Science reported that an unspecified number of adolescents from occupied Luhansk Oblast will attend a military-patriotic sports camp at the "Avangard" camp in Russia's Volgograd Oblast and train in military engineering, tactics, fires, parachuting, communications, national security fundamentals, drone operation, and tactical medicine.[25]

Despite Russian efforts to frame summer camps for Ukrainian children as temporary recreational and educational affairs, they are a fundamental component of Russia's campaign to deport Ukrainians, including children, to Russia.[26] The forcible transfer of children from one group to another is a recognized act constituting genocide, and Russia's multifaceted schemes deporting Ukrainian children to Russia may therefore be classed as genocidal acts.[27] Ukrainian children who have been deported to Russia for such "vacations" or "summer camps" face Russification programs premised on isolating them from their Ukrainian families, language, culture, and history.[28] Russian authorities will likely escalate deportation efforts throughout the summer under the guise of summer vacations, but these programs represent genocidal acts against the Ukrainian people despite Russian efforts to cloak them as temporary and positive educational opportunities.

Iran's continued support for Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) and provision of lethal aid to Russia is bolstering Russia's technological output and military capabilities on the battlefield in Ukraine. The *Wall Street Journal* (*WSJ*) published a report on May 28 detailing Russian efforts to produce Shahed-136/131 drones at the Alabuga Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in the Republic of Tatarstan using Iranian-provided technologies and a labor force recruited largely from eastern Africa.[29] *WSJ* cited the international hacking group Prana Network, which reportedly hacked an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) email server in February 2024 and revealed that Russia intends to produce 6,000 Shahed drones at the Alabuga SEZ in 2024 alone. The Institute for Science and International Security (IISS) assessed that the Alabuga SEZ has already produced 4,500 Shaheds as of the end of April 2024, ahead of schedule, and could produce all 6,000 by mid-August 2024.[30] *WSJ* found that Russia is currently producing more advanced models of Iranian Shaheds domestically and intensively using them to strike Ukraine.[31] *WSJ* also noted that Russian authorities are recruiting from African countries, particularly Uganda, and especially enticing

young women to participate in work-study programs at Alabuga to produce Shahed drones. Russia would not be able to operate the Alabuga SEZ without Iran's consistent support for the Russian war effort—Iranian production models for Shahed drones and Iranian drone technologies are at the center of the entire Alabuga enterprise.[32] German outlet *BILD* similarly reported on May 27 that Iran has also likely supplied Russia with Qaem-5 television-guided air-to-ground bombs, which Iran started producing as recently as 2019.[33] *BILD* noted that an Iranian-provided Mohajer-6 drone carrying the Qaem-5 bombs crashed in Kursk Oblast for an unknown reason but that Russian forces may have intended to strike Sumy Oblast. ISW has not yet observed confirmation that Russia has used these projectiles in Ukraine, but their use would be consistent with the pattern of continued and intensified Iranian military support to Russia.[34]

The Georgian Parliament overrode Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili's veto of Georgia's Russian-style "foreign agents" law in an 84-to-4 vote on May 28. Sixty-six Georgian parliament members spoke against the presidential veto.[35] The Georgian Constitution requires Zurbishvili to sign and publish the law within three days of the vote, but if she refuses, Georgian Parliament Chairperson Shalva Papuashvili can sign and publish the law within five days of the vote.[36] Papuashvili is a member of the ruling Georgian Dream party, which initiated the foreign agents bill, and will therefore likely sign the bill into law, as Zurbishvili will likely refuse to sign the bill into law given her initial veto of the bill. Zurbishvili addressed protestors against the foreign agents bill outside the Georgian parliament on May 28 and called on Georgian protestors to gather signatures to allow her to call for a referendum on the foreign agents bill.[37] *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's* Georgian service noted that the Georgian Constitution allows the president to call for a referendum at the request of the parliament, the government, or at least 200,000 citizens, but that holding a referendum requires signatures from both the president and prime minister in cases when the parliament or citizens call for a referendum.[38] Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze would likely oppose such a referendum against the foreign agents bill. Kobakhidze claimed that the passage of the foreign agents law will strengthen Georgia's sovereignty and improve its chances to achieve European Union (EU) membership.[39] The EU has repeatedly emphasized that the Georgian foreign agents law "goes against EU core principles and values," that the law's enactment "leads to a backsliding on at least three out of the nine steps" that the EU Commission recommended for Georgia's EU candidacy status, and that the law negatively impacts Georgia's path to EU membership.[40] ISW continues to assess that Georgian Dream actors likely intend to purposefully derail long-term Georgian efforts for Euro-Atlantic integration, which plays into continued Russian hybrid operations to divide, destabilize, and weaken Georgia.[41]

A limited segment of the Russian ultranationalist information space has resumed its standard public criticisms of the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and warned that new Defense Minister Andrei Belousov may not solve certain systemic issues within the Russian MoD and military. A Russian milblogger and former Storm-Z instructor warned that any "emerging progress" from Belousov's appointment and the dismissals of several senior defense officials may "not be allowed" to go far enough to address systemic issues currently hindering the Russian war in Ukraine.[42] The former Storm-Z instructor particularly highlighted the poor, incomplete, and short training of new personnel as having a compounding effect on other systemic issues, including "excessive and unjustifiably" high casualties, no troop rotations, poor tactical and operational decision-making, degradation of combat-experienced units, inability to preserve combat knowledge, and lack of command-staff accountability.[43] The Storm-Z instructor claimed that these issues are all interconnected and cyclical and that Russia has accumulated significant reserves that are not

undergoing training due to these systemic issues.[44] Other Russian milbloggers, many of whom frequently complained about the Russian MoD prior to the mass MoD dismissals in late April-May 2024, agreed with the Storm-Z instructor and claimed that Russian "middle management" has been operating under the assumption that the current war in Ukraine is not actually a war, which is consistent with prior milblogger complaints that the Kremlin has failed to mobilize Russian society into a wartime mindset.[45] The Storm-Z instructor claimed that the fact that certain high-ranking officials, such as Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov, have retained their positions further supports this complaint and that the appointments of new deputy defense ministers will indicate whether or not Belousov may be able to solve some of these systemic issues.[46]

The Russian ultranationalist information space has largely praised Belousov and the dismissals and arrests of senior Russian defense officials thus far. The milbloggers' praise of Belousov and the dismissals comes with harsh criticisms of the corruption and ineptitude under former Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, representing a significant break with the self-censorship largely enforced by the MoD following the Wagner Group rebellion in June 2023.[47] The condemnation of the MoD's ineptitude prior to the dismissals and the resulting praise for Belousov's appointment has largely benefited the MoD thus far as it helps rehabilitate the MoD's image to Putin's core ultranationalist constituency, secure their loyalty, and message to MoD officials that no one is safe from the consequences of falling from Putin's favor.[48] The former Storm-Z instructor's warning and resulting skepticism among like-minded milbloggers may represent the start of a return to prior complaints that undermined the MoD. The former Storm-Z instructor highlighted in his complaint that he was censoring himself throughout the conversation, suggesting that the MoD may not intend to lift censorship and self-censorship requirements on Russian milbloggers even if the bounds on what is acceptable criticism have shifted in the short term.[49]

Portugal and Belgium both signed long-term bilateral security agreements with Ukraine on May 28. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Portuguese Prime Minister Luís Montenegro signed a bilateral security agreement during Zelensky's visit to Lisbon on May 28.[50] The bilateral security agreement provides for at least €126 million (\$138 million) in Portuguese military support for Ukraine in 2024 and reaffirms Portugal's commitment to Ukraine through various international cooperation platforms. Zelensky also met with Belgian Prime Minister Alexander de Croo in Brussels on May 28 and signed a long-term bilateral security agreement with Belgium that provides for at least €977 million (\$1 billion) in Belgian military aid to Ukraine in 2024, as well as continued military support for the next 10 years.[51] Zelensky noted that the bilateral Ukraine-Belgium agreement also specifies that Belgium will provide 30 F-16 jets to Ukraine by 2028, including an unspecified number sometime in 2024.[52] Belgium and Portugal are the eleventh and twelfth countries, respectively, to sign long-term bilateral security agreements with Ukraine.[53]

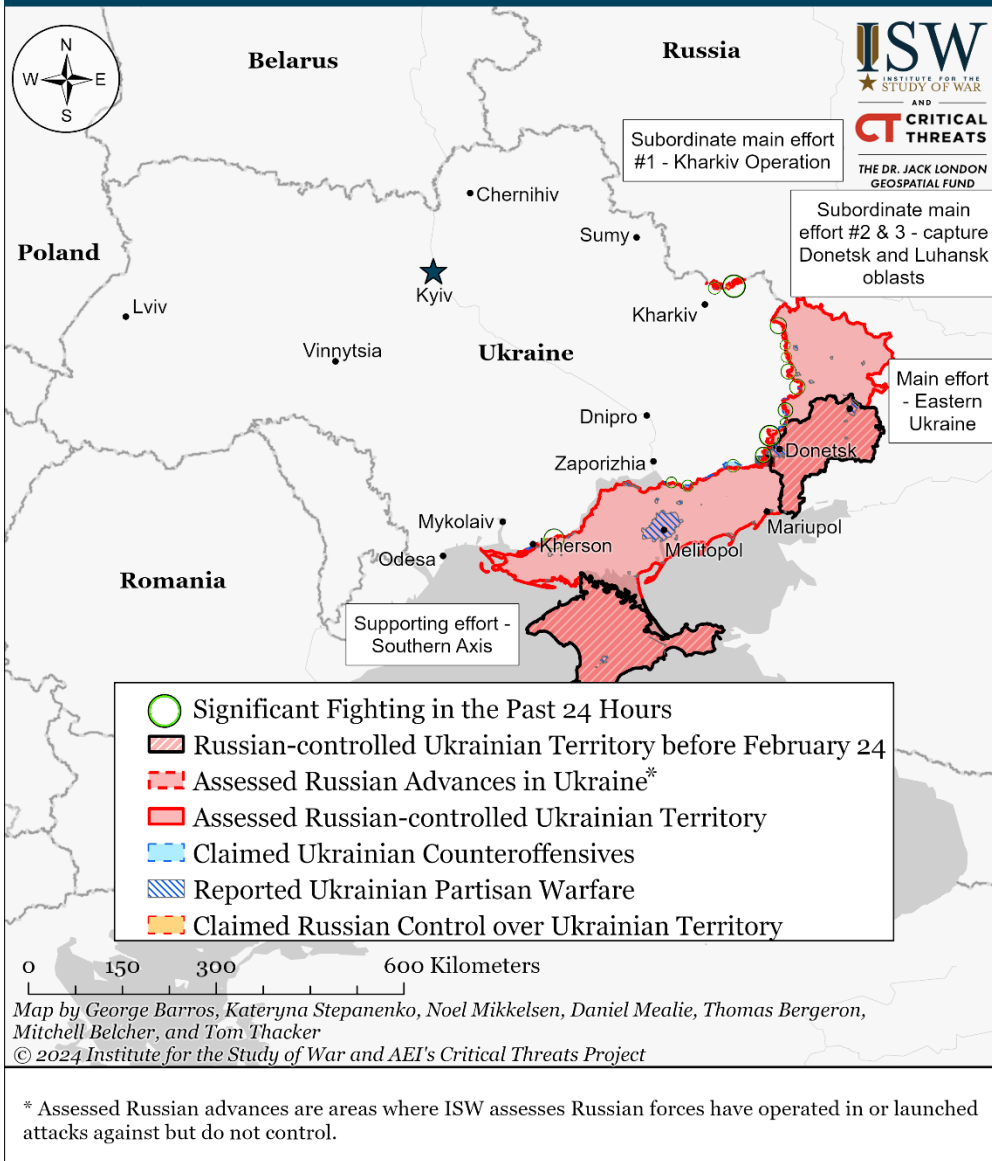
Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed support on May 28 for delisting the Taliban as a prohibited organization in Russia, indicating that Russia will likely do so soon. Putin stated that it is necessary for Russia to build relations with the Taliban because the Taliban controls Afghanistan.[54] Putin claimed that Russia is considering the opinion of each country in the region surrounding Afghanistan and will work with them when Russia considers whether to recognize the Taliban. Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev stated on May 28 that Russia is close to establishing "fully-fledged" relations with the Taliban.[55] Russia has maintained contacts with the Taliban since the Taliban deposed the Afghan government in August 2021, and ISW recently assessed that Russia may be hoping to leverage its relationship with the Taliban to degrade the Taliban's

adversary, Afghan-based Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP), which conducted the March 22 Crocus City Hall attack in Moscow.[56] Putin's statement that Russia is working with the countries of the region when considering whether to recognize the Taliban indicates that Russia likely is following Central Asian states in normalizing relations with the Taliban.

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian President Vladimir Putin grossly misrepresented the Ukrainian Constitution and Ukrainian domestic law on May 28 in order to further promote the Kremlin information operation claiming that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is no longer the legitimate president of Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada Ruslan Stefanchuk directly responded to Putin's deliberate misinterpretation of Ukrainian law and explicitly stated that the Ukrainian Constitution and laws stipulate that Zelensky remain in office until the end of martial law in Ukraine.**
- **Russian allegations about Zelensky's lack of legitimacy are a known Kremlin information operation that Kremlin officials have been promoting extensively in recent weeks, in part targeted at foreign audiences.**
- **The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)'s Committee on Culture supported a resolution that recognizes Russia's deliberate erasure of Ukrainian culture as an element of Russia's genocidal campaign in occupied Ukraine, consistent with ISW's longstanding assessment that Russia is pursuing a broad occupation strategy premised on eradicating Ukraine's national identity and independence.**
- **Russian authorities are preparing to intensify the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia throughout Summer 2024, further consolidating another component of Russia's genocidal campaign in Ukraine.**
- **Iran's continued support for Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) and provision of lethal aid to Russia is bolstering Russia's technological output and military capabilities on the battlefield in Ukraine.**
- **The Georgian Parliament overrode Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili's veto of Georgia's Russian-style "foreign agents" law in an 84-to-4 vote on May 28.**
- **A limited segment of the Russian ultranationalist information space has resumed its standard public criticisms of the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and warned that new Defense Minister Andrei Belousov may not solve certain systemic issues within the Russian MoD and military.**
- **Portugal and Belgium both signed long-term bilateral security agreements with Ukraine on May 28.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed support on May 28 for delisting the Taliban as a prohibited organization in Russia, indicating that Russia will likely do so soon.**
- **Ukrainian forces recently made confirmed advances near Lyptsi, and Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Avdiivka and the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.**
- **The Russian military is reportedly intensifying efforts to recruit citizens from Central African countries to fight in Ukraine.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 28, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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.

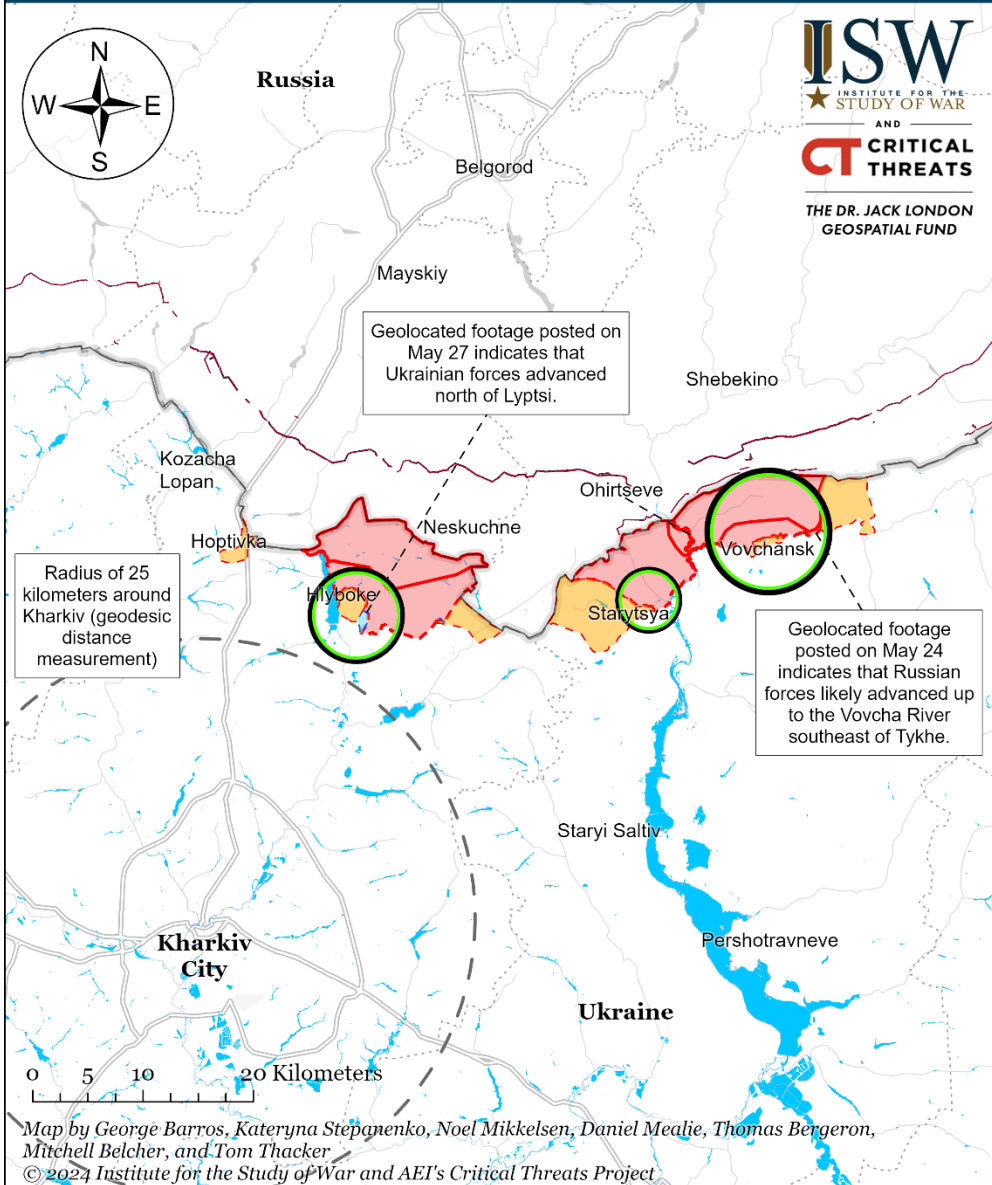
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – 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)

Ukrainian forces recently regained limited positions north of Kharkiv City amid continued Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast on May 28. Geolocated footage published on May 28 shows that Ukrainian forces retook positions along a windbreak southeast of Lukyantsi (northeast of Lyptsi and north of Kharkiv City).[57] Russian and Ukrainian forces also reported continued Russian offensive operations in the Lyptsi and Vovchansk (northeast of Kharkiv City) directions throughout the day on May 28, and one Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 200 meters in the Lyptsi direction.[58] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are pushing Ukrainian forces out of positions in high-rise buildings near the stadium and Vovchansk Aggregate Plant in northern Vovchansk, although ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation of Russian forces operating in these two areas.[59] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 600 meters in unspecified areas near Vovchansk.[60] The Ukrainian General Staff reported continued fighting southwest of Vovchansk near Starystya and northeast of Vovchansk near Tykhe.[61] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Voloshyn noted that Russian forces are heavily striking Vovchansk with TOS-2 thermobaric artillery systems, and Russian and Ukrainian sources also noted that Russian forces are conducting constant glide bomb strikes on infrastructure in Vovchansk.[62] Elements of the Russian 44th Army Corps (Leningrad Military District) and 6th Combined Arms Army (Moscow Military District) reportedly continue operating in the Kharkiv direction.[63]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 28, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Tom Thacker
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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
- Russian Field Fortifications
- 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.

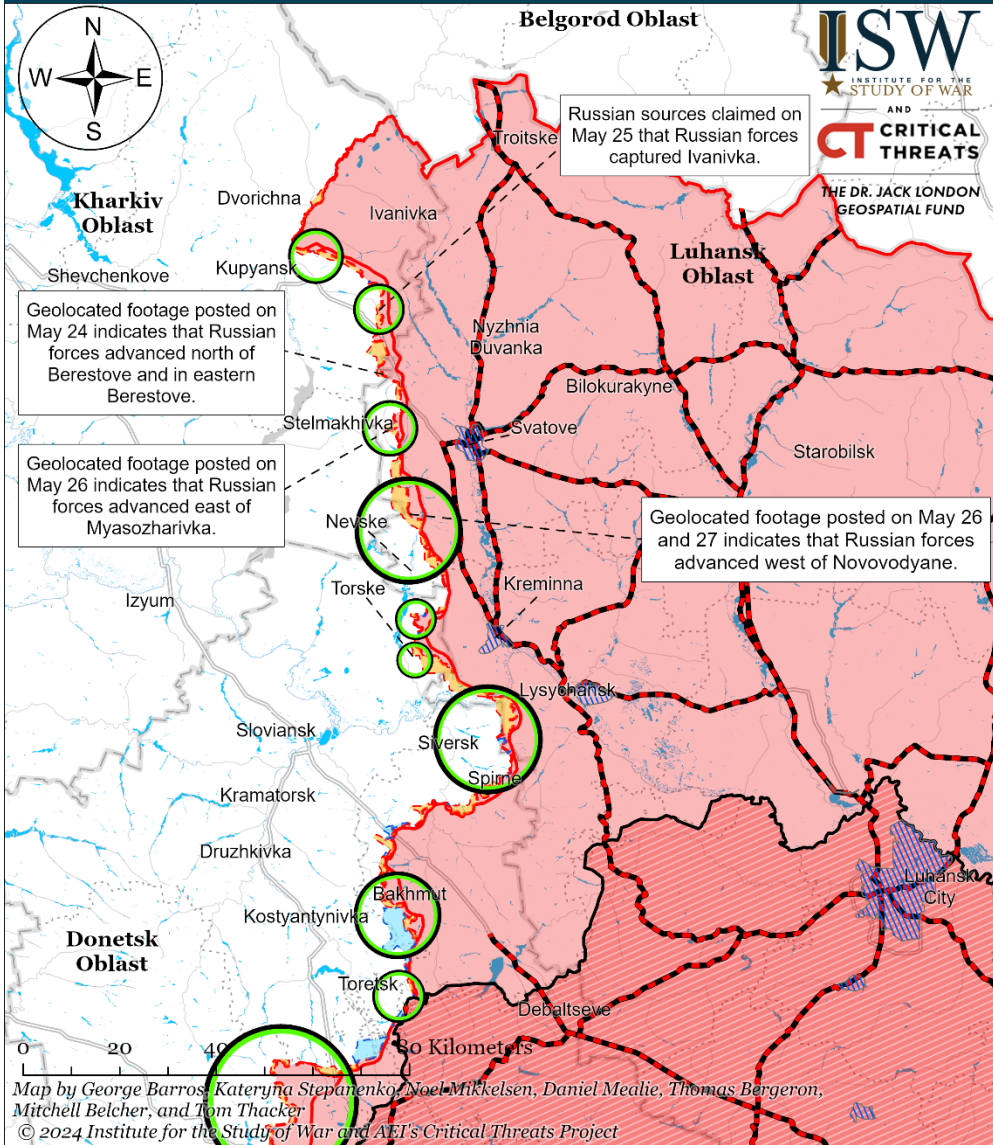
Note: A Russian source claimed on May 28 that Russian forces advanced up to 600 meters near Vovchansk. A Russian source claimed on May 28 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters near Lyptsi.

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 continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on May 28, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced 400 meters south of Berestove (southeast of Kupyansk) and one kilometer in the direction of Myasozharivka (west of Svatove), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of these claims.[64] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 47th Tank Division (1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) are advancing in the direction of Stepova Novoselivka (southeast of Kupyansk).[65] Russian milbloggers shared footage purportedly showing Russian forces planting a Russian flag in Bilohorivka (south of Kreminna) but claimed that there is no confirmation of Russian forces completely seizing the settlement.[66] ISW also has not observed confirmation of Russian control over Bilohorivka. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces operating in the Kupyansk direction suffer a 1-to-20 first-person view (FPV) drone disadvantage compared to Ukrainian forces and blamed international sanctions for limiting Russia's access to drones.[67] Fighting also continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka; northwest of Svatove near Novoselivka, Ivanivka, and Kyslivka; southwest of Svatove near Tverdokhlibove, Druzhelyubivka, Hrekivka, and Novoyehorivka; northwest of Kreminna near Nevske; west of Kreminna near Terny and Torske; and southwest of Kreminna near the Serebryanske forest area and Dibrova.[68] Elements of the Russian 2nd Artillery Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC]) are reportedly operating near Berestove.[69]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted a strike against the former Luhansk Military Aviation School of Navigators in Luhansk City using cluster munition-armed ATACMS missiles on May 27.[70] Geolocated footage published on May 27 indicates that an explosion occurred near an airfield in Luhansk City.[71]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of May 28, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

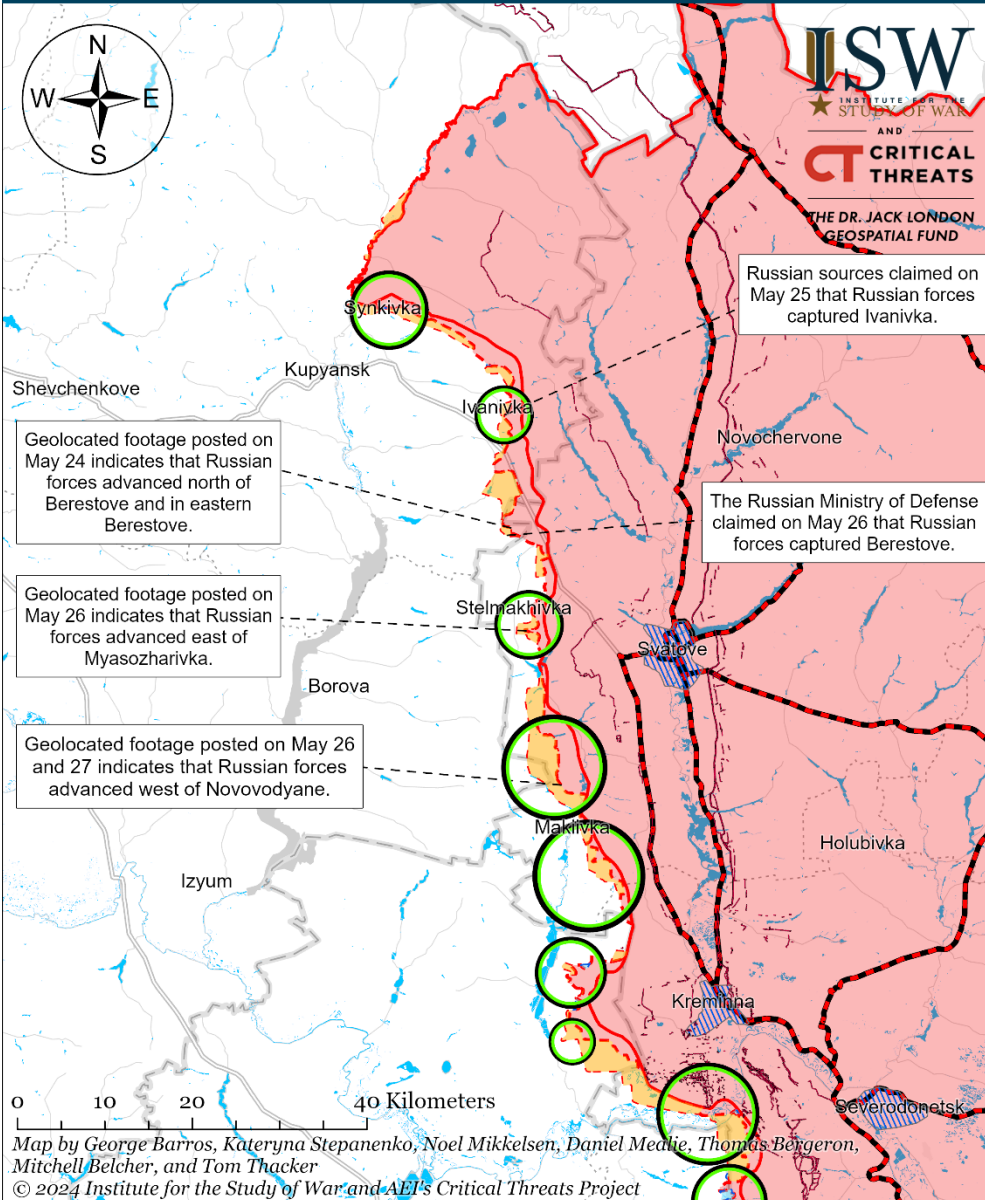


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- - - Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian 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.

Note: Russian sources claimed on May 28 that Russian forces advanced between one and 1.43 kilometers near Myasozharivka. A Russian source claimed on May 28 that Russian forces advanced 400 meters near Berestove. A Russian source claimed on May 25 that Russian forces captured 70 percent of Berestove.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kupyansk as of May 28, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



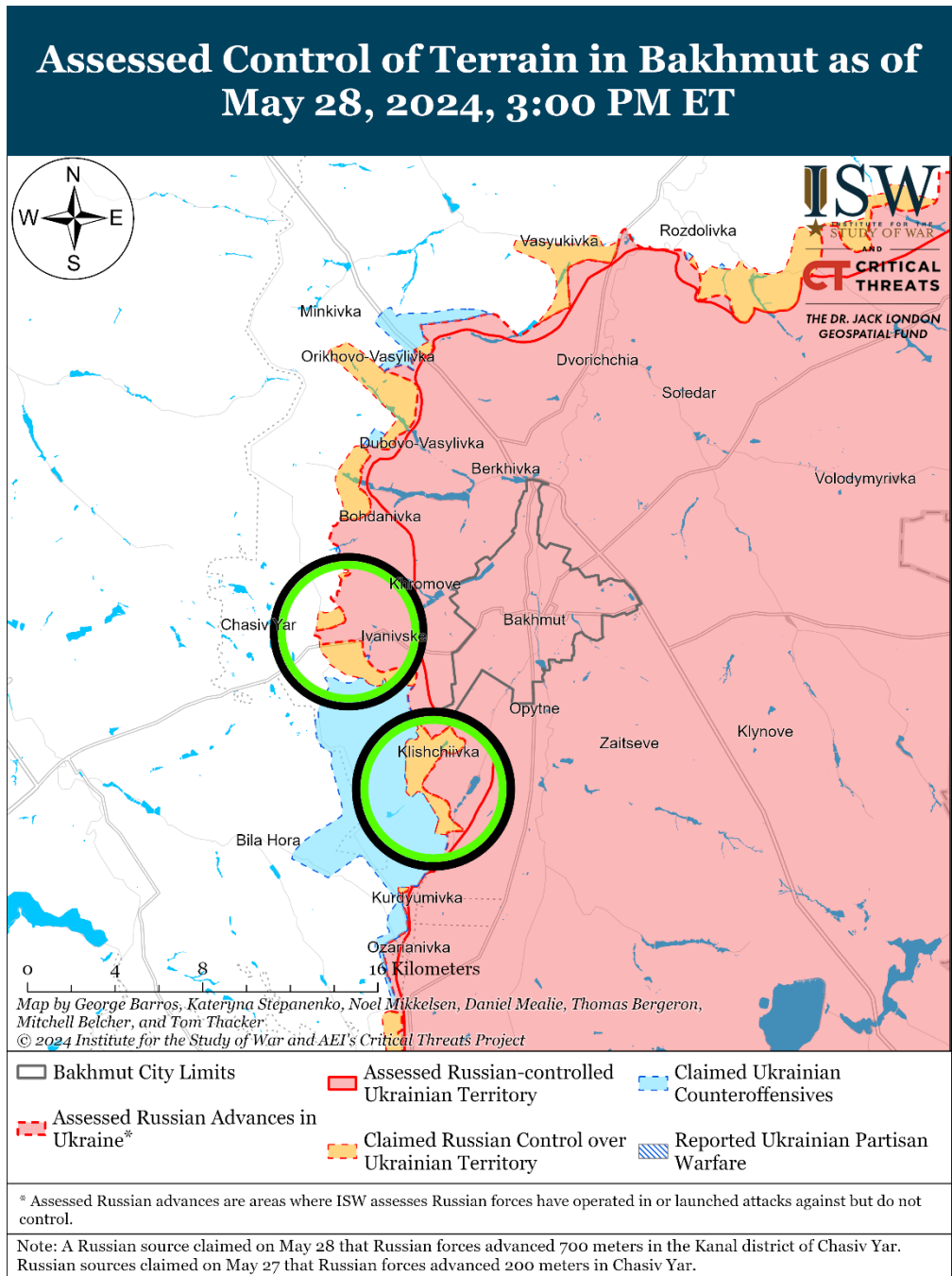
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Note: Russian sources claimed on May 28 that Russian forces advanced between one and 1.43 kilometers near Myasozharivka. A Russian source claimed on May 28 that Russian forces advanced 400 meters near Berestove. A Russian source claimed on May 27 that Russian forces advanced 300 meters deep south of Berestove.

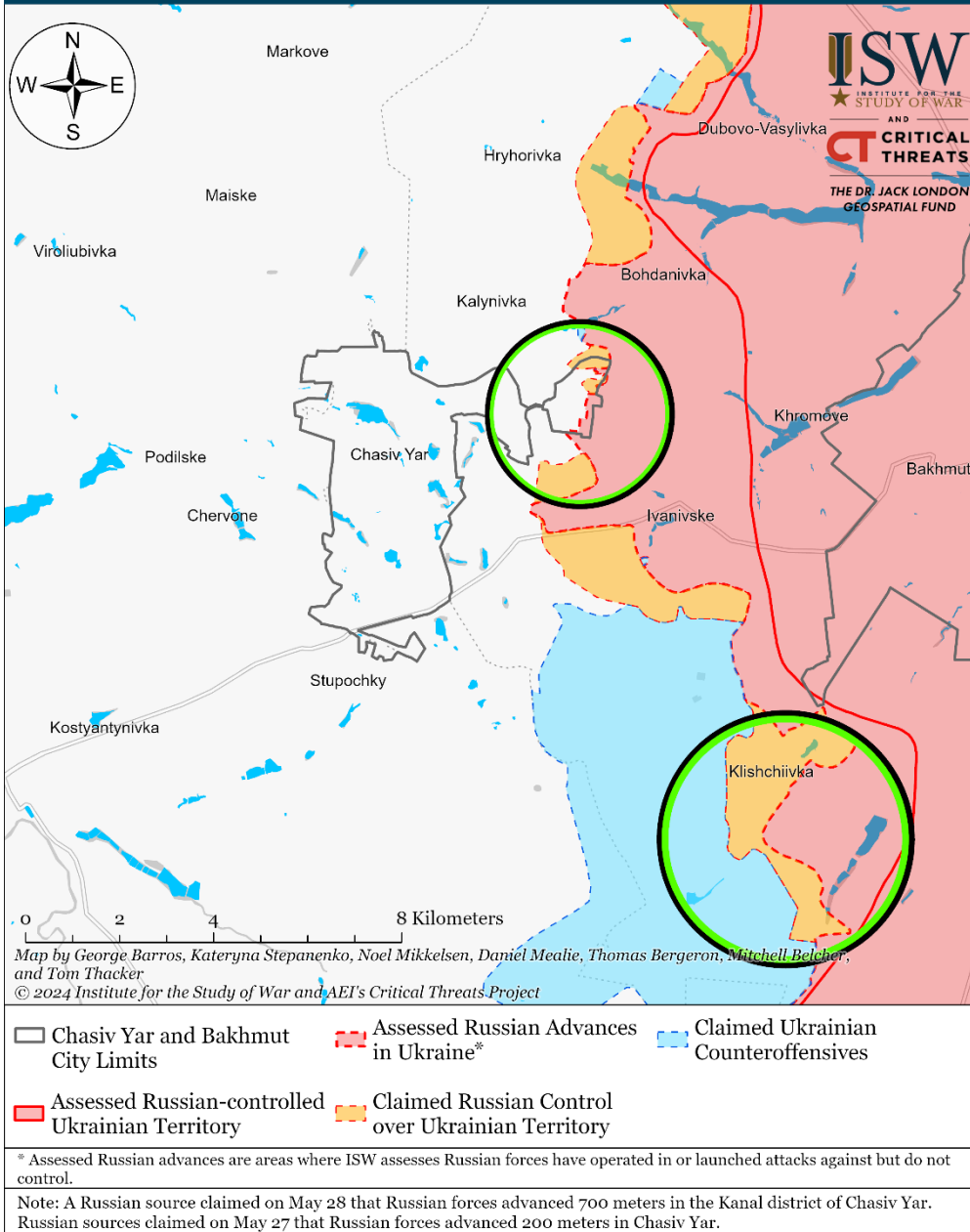
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued ground attacks in the Siversk direction (northeast of Bakhmut) near Verkhokamyanske (east of Siversk) and Spirne and Vyimka (both southeast of Siversk) on May 28.[72] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced one kilometer deep in the Siversk direction, but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[73]



Russian forces continued ground attacks east of Chasiv Yar on May 28 but have not made any recent confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces captured eastern Kalynivka (north of Chasiv Yar), advanced 720 meters deep in the Kanal Microraion (easternmost Chasiv Yar), and advanced another 200 meters deep in an unspecified part of Chasiv Yar.[74] Footage published on May 27 shows Ukrainian forces repelling a roughly platoon-sized Russian mechanized attack in the Chasiv Yar direction.[75] Russian forces also attacked northeast of Chasiv Yar near Hryhorivka and southeast of Chasiv Yar near Klishchiivka and Andriivka on May 28.[76] Geolocated footage published on May 20 shows that Russian forces advanced north of Kalynivka (northeast of Chasiv Yar), though this advance did not occur within the last week.[77]

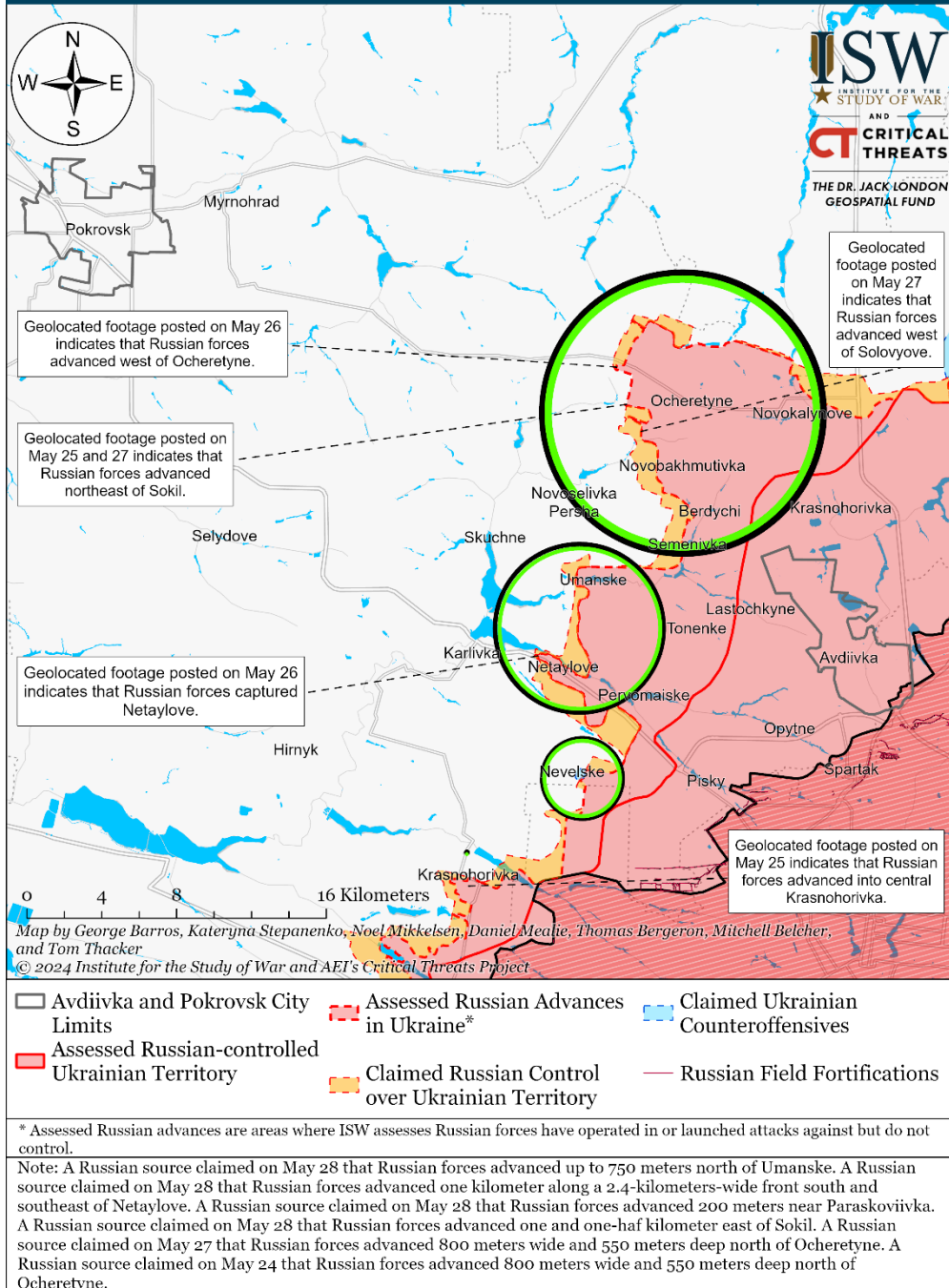
Assessed Control of Terrain near Chasiv Yar as of May 28, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces recently marginally advanced during a platoon-sized mechanized attack northwest of Avdiivka. Geolocated footage published on May 28 shows that Russian forces marginally advanced in fields east of Novopokrovske (northwest of Avdiivka) during a roughly platoon-sized mechanized attack before Ukrainian forces repelled the attack.[78] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced 750 meters north of Umanske (west of Avdiivka), 2.4 kilometers in width and one kilometer deep south and southeast of Netaylove (south of Umanske and southwest of Avdiivka), and approached the Karlivske Reservoir (west of Umanske) and Karlivka (west of Netaylove) from this flank.[79] Some

Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have begun fighting for Karlivka itself, while others claimed that the informational fog of war makes it too early to tell.[80] ISW has not yet observed visual evidence of Russian advances near Umanske or Netaylove. Russian forces also continued ground assaults northwest of Avdiivka near Novooleksandrivka, Prohres, Novoselivka Persha, Kalynove, Ocheretyne, and Sokil; west of Avdiivka near Yasnobrodivka; and southwest of Avdiivka near Nevelske.[81]

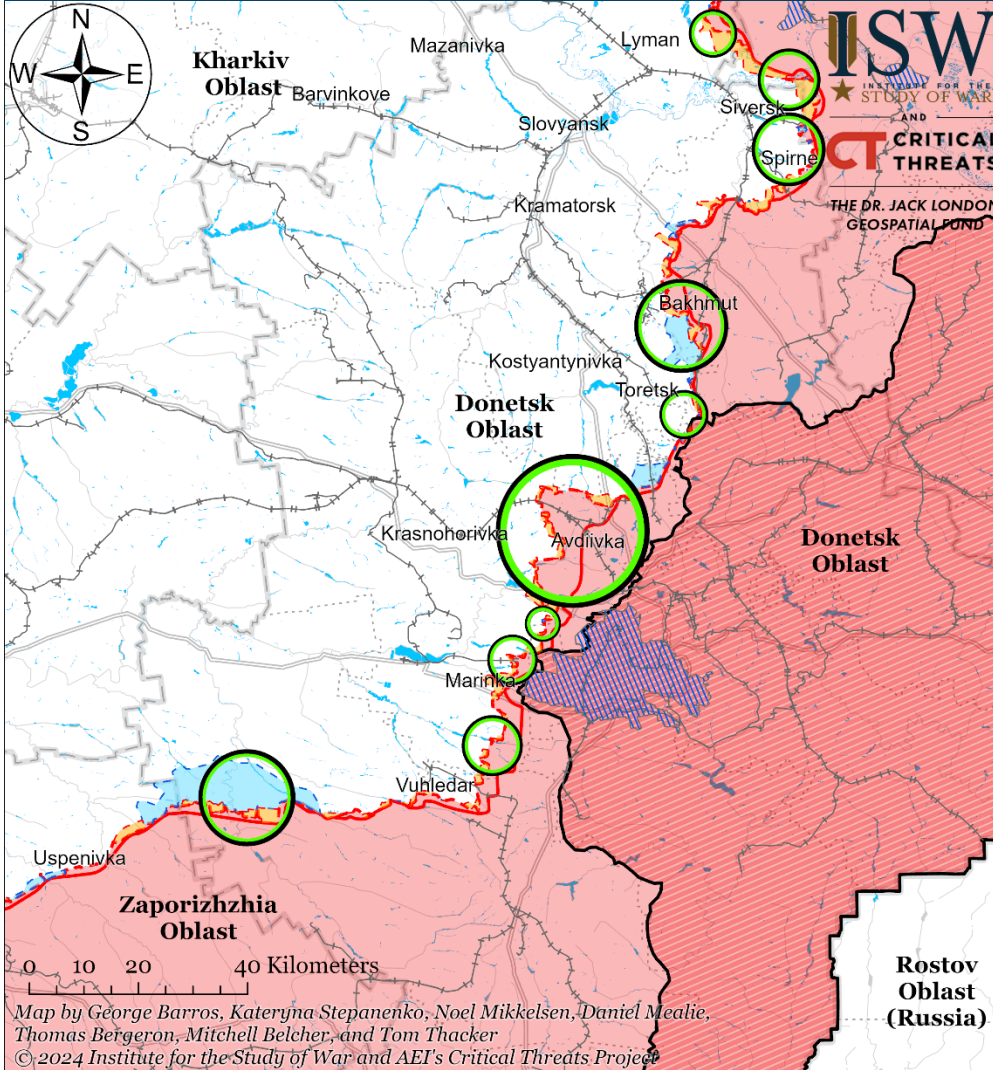
Assessed Control of Terrain Northwest of Avdiivka as of May 28, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces recently conducted a roughly reduced company-sized mechanized attack southwest of Donetsk City but did not make any confirmed advances on the frontline on May 28. Footage published on May 28 shows Ukrainian forces repelling a roughly reduced company-sized Russian mechanized attack near Novomykhailivka.[82] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced south of Novomykhailivka and roughly 200 meters deep within Paraskoviivka (west of Novomykhailivka), but

ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[83] Russian forces also continued ground attacks west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Kostyantynivka and Vodyane.[84]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of May 28, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



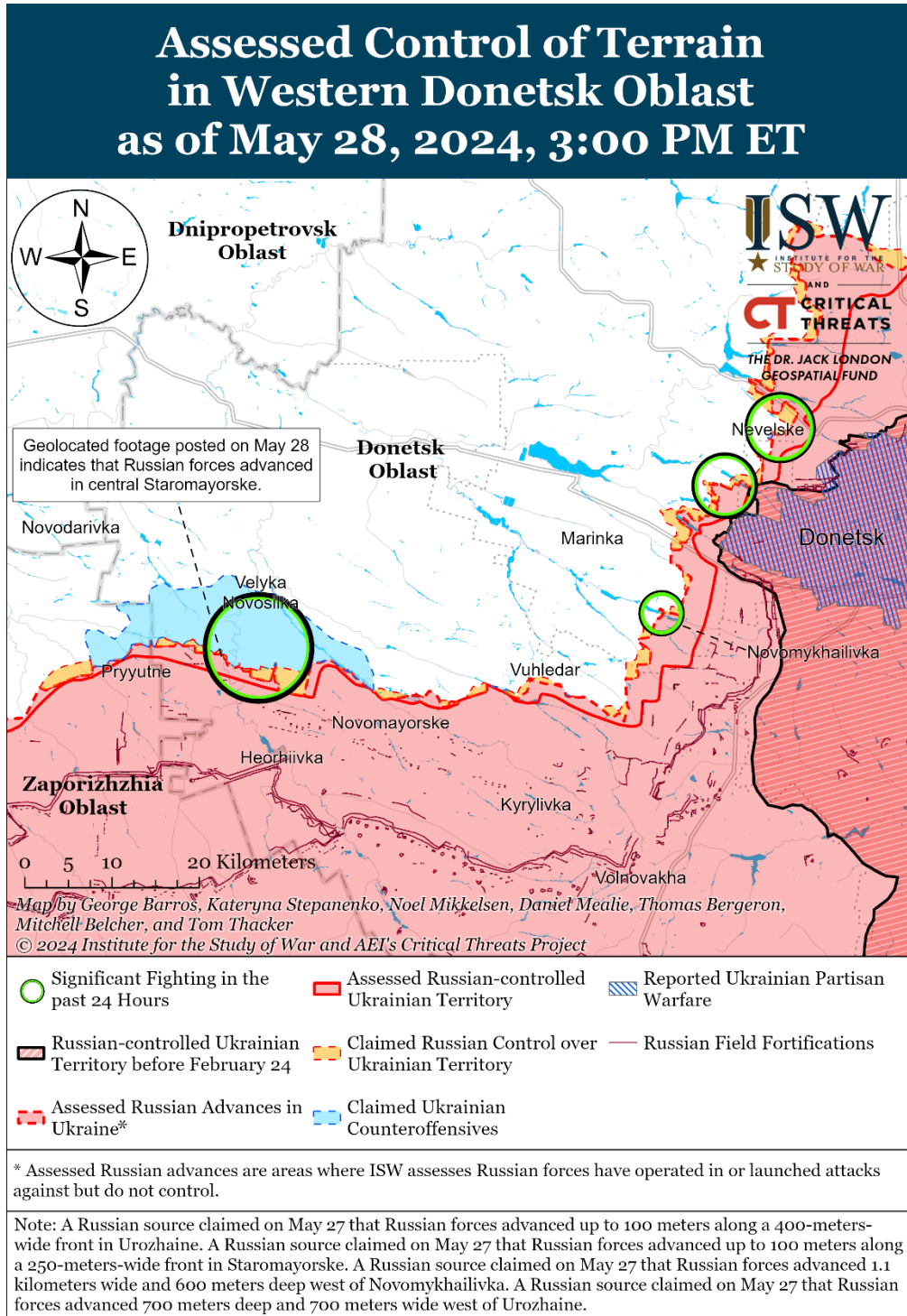
| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | Major Railroads |
| Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |
| Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine* | 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: A Russian source claimed on May 28 that Russian forces advanced one kilometer in the Siversk direction.

Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance during a roughly reduced-company-sized mechanized attack south of Velyka Novosilka in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area. Geolocated

footage published on May 28 shows that Russian forces advanced within central Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka) during a roughly reduced-company-sized mechanized attack.[85] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced 100 meters deep and 250 meters wide in Staromayorske and on the settlement's eastern outskirts.[86] Russian forces also continued ground attacks in Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka).[87]

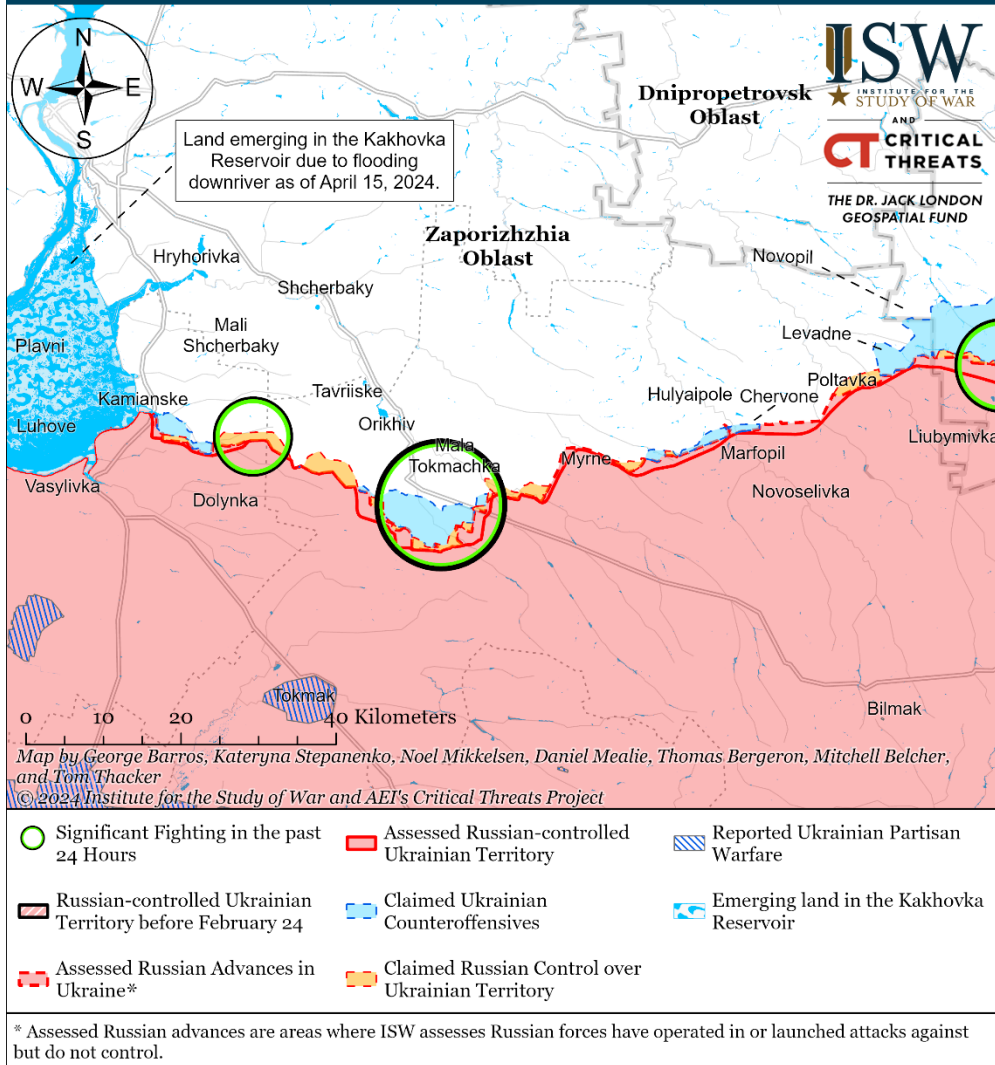


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on May 28, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional engagements continued near Robotyne, Mala Tokmachka (northeast of Robotyne), and Mali Shcherbaky (northwest of Robotyne).[88] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are conducting fewer assault operations on the Robotyne-Verbove direction due to the lack of cover and concealment and because Russian forces lack sufficient quantities of electronic warfare (EW) systems.[89] Elements of the Russian 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) reportedly continue to operate in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[90]

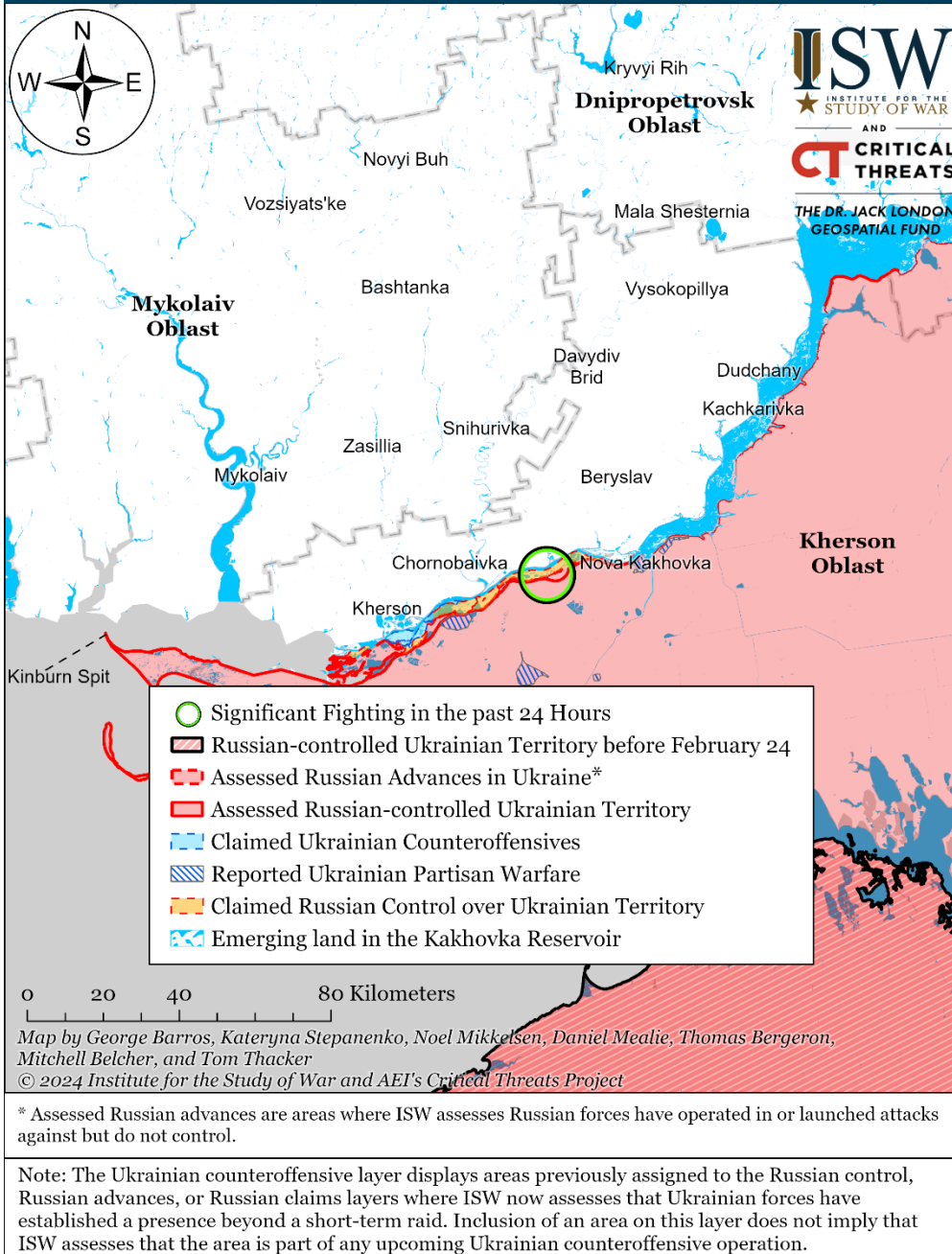


Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of May 28, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional engagements continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast, including near Krynky, on May 28.[91] Some Russian milbloggers continued to claim that Russian forces completely seized Krynky, whereas others claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain a presence in the settlement.[92] A Russian source claimed that elements of the Russian 76th Airborne (VDV) Division recently redeployed near Krynky and are operating in the area.[93] Elements of the Russian 80th Arctic Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps, Leningrad Military District) are reportedly operating in the Kherson direction.[94]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 28, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk reported that Russian forces launched three Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai against Ukraine on

the night of May 27 to 28 and that Ukrainian forces shot down all three drones over Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and Cherkasy oblasts.[95]

Kharkiv City Mayor Ihor Terekhov stated that Russian forces conducted a KAB glide bomb strike against Kyivskiy Raion, Kharkiv City during the day on May 28.[96]

Ukrainian state electricity transmission operator Ukrenergo's supervisory board member Yuriy Boyko stated on May 28 that Ukrenergo may continue scheduled power outages across Ukraine during the summer due to the damage that Russian strikes have caused to Ukrainian power plants.[97] Boyko also stated that Russian strikes have damaged or destroyed all Ukrenergo thermal power plants (TPPs) and that their share in electricity production has decreased from 30 percent to five percent after Russian missile strikes against energy infrastructure in Spring 2024.

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

The Russian military is reportedly intensifying efforts to recruit citizens from Central African countries to fight in Ukraine. Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on May 28 that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has intensified efforts to recruit citizens of Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uganda and has created a specific assault formation for recruits from Africa.[98] The GUR reported that the Russian MoD promises to provide Central Africans who join the Russian military a \$2,000 initial payment, a \$2,200 monthly salary, health insurance, and Russian citizenship to the individual and their family.

Russian opposition media outlets reported that Russian military authorities in Moscow Oblast have recently forcibly detained between 15 to 60 Russian military conscripts who were previously declared unfit for service due to health reasons.[99] Russian opposition news outlet *Vazhnye Istorii* reported that doctors who work at unified recruitment points (military registration and enlistment offices) systematically ignore diseases that constitute grounds for service exemptions.[100] Russian officials continue to assure the Russian public that Russian military conscripts will not deploy to most of occupied Ukraine nor participate in combat operations in Ukraine, although ISW continues to assess that the Russian military is likely attempting to coerce conscripts into signing contracts with the Russian military as part of ongoing crypto-mobilization efforts.[101]

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)

ISW is not publishing coverage of Ukrainian defense industrial efforts today.

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)

See topline text.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened NATO states on May 28 as part of Kremlin efforts to persuade the West to continue restrictions on Ukraine's use of Western weapons to strike military targets in Russia. Putin claimed that unspecified NATO states should remember that they are "small" and "densely populated" when thinking about lifting the restrictions on Ukrainian strikes into Russian territory. Kremlin officials have recently issued similar threats against NATO states considering lifting such restrictions.[102]

Putin continued to claim that Russia is willing to negotiate but not with the current Ukrainian government. Putin claimed on May 28 that Russia is willing to negotiate but does not know with whom to negotiate since the current Ukrainian authorities are allegedly illegitimate.[103] Kremlin officials have repeatedly indicated that Russia is not willing to negotiate with Ukraine and promoted information operations that aim to push the West to make concessions on Ukraine's sovereign territory and its people.[104] Kremlin newswire *TASS* inaccurately claimed that Putin stated that Russia is ready to continue the negotiation process based on the Istanbul negotiation process – referring to the negotiations between Ukraine and Russia at the start of Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion.[105] Putin did speak about the 2022 Istanbul negotiations in his remarks but only to blame the West for prolonging the war.[106] Putin directly stated that "he has no answer" about what future negotiations will look like since Russia does not consider the current Ukrainian government to be legitimate.

Kremlin officials continue to claim that Russia is fighting a global neo-Nazi movement. Deputy Chairperson of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev claimed on May 28 that Russia must create an "alliance to fight against global terrorism" and get rid of the "fascism" that has existed in the world for 80 years.[107] Medvedev claimed that Russia's modern-day efforts against "fascism" are the continuation of the Soviet Union's fight against Nazism in the Second World War.

A Kremlin-awarded Russian milblogger claimed that the US government controls Moldova's Central Election Commission and baselessly implied that the US will manipulate the October 2024 Moldovan presidential election.[108] The milblogger also promoted Kremlin boilerplate narratives about how NATO is allegedly using Moldova to prepare for a future war against Russia. ISW has frequently assessed that the Kremlin and its mouthpieces are attempting to destabilize Moldovan democracy and society, prevent Moldova's accession to the EU, and justify future hybrid or conventional military operations against Moldova.[109]

The Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation stated on May 27 that Russia will likely spread information operations about the opening of another front in the Belarus direction, the alleged legitimacy of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and Ukrainian mobilization in the near future in order to demoralize Ukrainian society.[110]

Russian officials continue to deliberately misrepresent NATO defensive exercises that NATO states are conducting in response to Russian aggression. Head of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Border Service Army General Vladimir Kulishov claimed on May 28 that NATO is increasingly conducting combat training exercises that practice nuclear strike launches against Russia.[111]

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)

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko continued to incorporate Belarus into boilerplate Russian information operations aimed at portraying Russia and Belarus as acting defensively in response to alleged Western aggression.[112] Lukashenko claimed on May 28 that the West is conducting a hybrid war against Belarus and is attempting to drag Belarus into other military conflicts. Belarus is a co-belligerent in Russia's war in Ukraine as Belarus has allowed Russia to use Belarusian territory to stage its full-scale invasion of Ukraine since 2022 and is aiding Russia in forcibly deporting Ukrainian children from occupied Ukraine.[113]

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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