



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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May 15, 2024, 7:35pm 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.

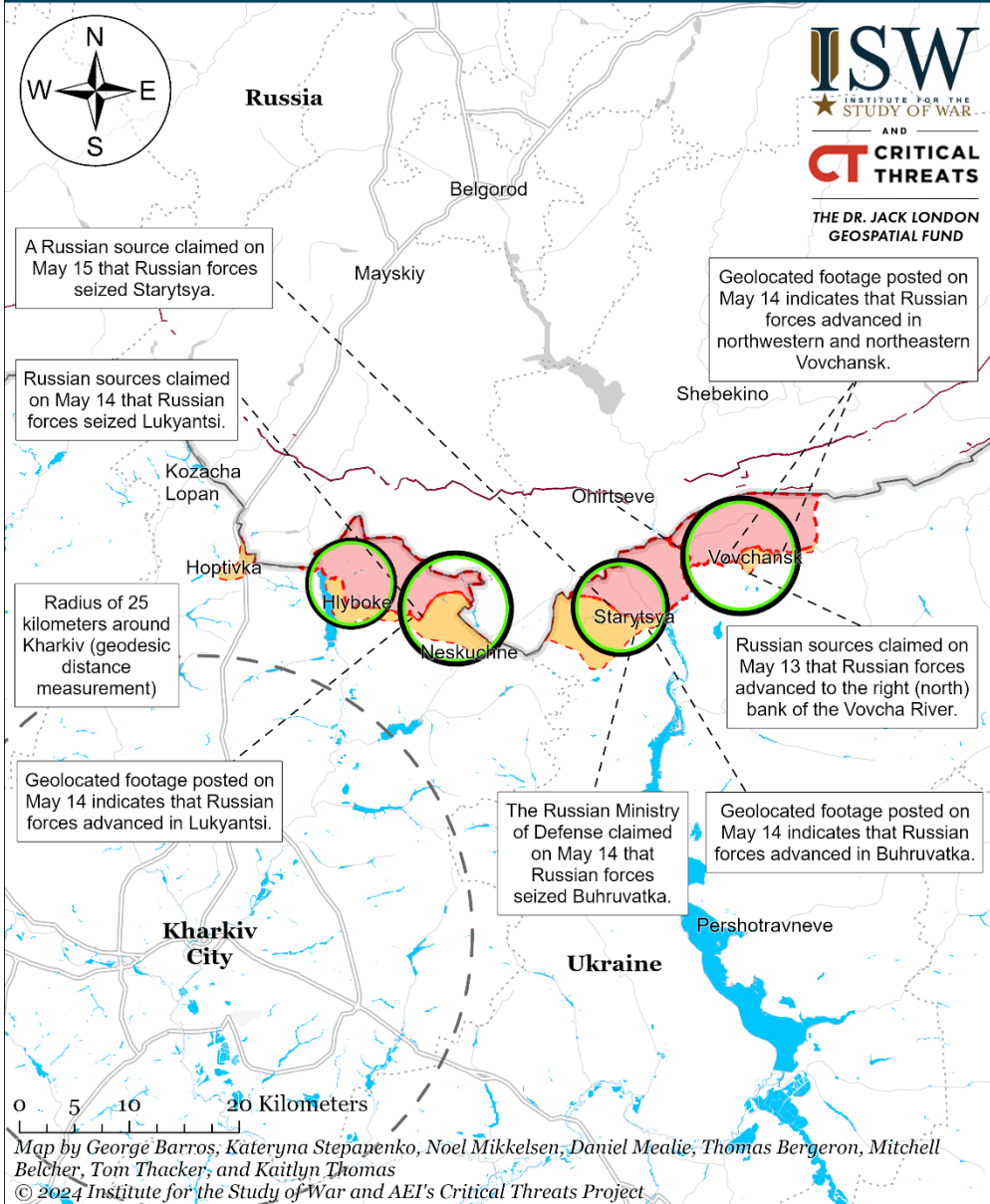
Click [here](#) to see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

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 1:15pm ET on May 15. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 16 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The tempo of Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast continues to decrease after Russian forces initially seized areas that Ukrainian officials have now confirmed were less defended. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Ukrainian military officials stated that Ukrainian forces have partially stabilized the situation in northern Kharkiv Oblast bordering Russia.[1] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Voloshyn stated that Russian forces are attempting to make tactical gains near Lukyantsi and Vovchansk to create footholds for future advances, but that Ukrainian counterattacks and artillery and drone strikes are preventing Russian forces from gaining a foothold in these areas.[2] Kharkiv Oblast Administration officials stated on May 15 that constant Russian shelling makes it impossible for Ukrainian forces to establish fortifications within three to five kilometers of the international border in Kharkiv Oblast and that Ukrainian forces constructed the first and second lines of defense about 12 to 13 kilometers and 20 kilometers from the international border, respectively.[3] ISW currently assesses that Russian forces have advanced no more than eight kilometers from the international border in northern Kharkiv Oblast. Russian forces operating in Russia could easily conduct artillery strikes against Ukrainian defensive positions close to the international border, and Western prohibitions on the use of Western-provided weapons systems for strikes against rear Russian areas across the border make potential fixed Ukrainian defensive positions close to the international border vulnerable and possibly indefensible. Russian forces have been able to make tactical advances in northern Kharkiv Oblast since May 10 in areas where Ukrainian forces purposefully did not establish significant defensive lines and currently appear to be prioritizing the creation of a "buffer zone" over a deep penetration into Kharkiv Oblast.[4]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



- 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 14 that Russian forces seized 10 settlements and more than 186 square kilometers in Kharkiv Oblast over the past three days. A Ukrainian source stated on May 12 that Russian forces seized about 100 square kilometers near the Kharkiv Oblast border. A Russian source claimed on May 12 that Russian forces advanced 30 kilometers wide and seven kilometers deep near Ohirtseve. A Russian source claimed on May 12 that Russian forces advanced approximately four kilometers in the Kharkiv direction. A Ukrainian source claimed on May 12 that Russian forces advanced between 3.2 and 3.7 kilometers towards Hlyboke and Lukyantsi. A Russian source claimed on May 12 that Russian forces seized a total of 88.98 square kilometers in the Kharkiv direction. A Russian source claimed on May 12 that Russian forces advanced 20 kilometers wide and eight kilometers deep at the western Russian penetration in the Kharkiv direction. A Russian source claimed on May 12 that Russian forces seized approximately 27 square kilometers in the Vovchansk direction.

The US Helsinki Commission stated that the US should allow Ukraine to conduct strikes against military targets in Russia's border areas amid an ongoing Russian offensive operation into Kharkiv Oblast from Russia, although US officials continue to express unwillingness to support such strikes. The US Helsinki Commission stated on May 15 that the US should "not only allow but encourage" Ukrainian forces to strike Russian forces firing and staging in Russia's border areas as part of Russia's offensive operations into northern Kharkiv Oblast.[5] US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated earlier on May 15 that the US has not "encouraged or enabled" Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory but noted that Ukraine must decide how to conduct this war.[6] *Politico* reported on May 14, citing two unnamed US officials, that the Biden Administration's policy prohibiting Ukraine's use of US-provided weapons to strike Russian territory has not changed.[7] *Politico's* sources stated that US military assistance to Ukraine is "for the defense and not for offensive operations" into Russian territory. **A Ukrainian operation to strike systems in Russia that are directly supporting Russia's offensive ground operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast would be an inherently defensive effort and to characterize such an effort as "offensive" would be inaccurate.** ISW recently assessed that US limitations on Ukraine's ability to strike military targets in Russia have created a sanctuary in Russia's border areas from which Russian aircraft can conduct glide bomb and missile strikes against Ukrainian positions and settlements and where Russian forces and equipment can freely assemble before entering combat.[8] This US policy is severely compromising Ukraine's ability to defend itself against Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast.[9]

Russian President Vladimir Putin emphatically downplayed the threat of Ukrainian counterattacks along the entire frontline, further indicating that he assesses that Ukraine cannot and will not be able to liberate territory seized by Russian forces and that this will allow Russian forces to pursue creeping advances indefinitely. Putin stated on May 15 in a meeting with Russia's military district commanders that Russian forces are repelling all Ukrainian counterattacks and that Russian forces are constantly improving their positions in all directions in Ukraine.[10] The US Office of the Director of National Intelligence's (ODNI) 2024 Annual Threat Assessment reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin "probably believes" that Russian forces have blunted Ukrainian efforts to retake significant territory and that US and Western support for Ukraine is "finite." [11] Limited Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast suggest that Putin and the Russian military command may be evaluating the risks, prospects, and timeline of offensive operations based on the assumption that Russian forces will be able to advance in any area of the front and consolidate any gains without having to account for Ukrainian tactical counterattacks or a significant Ukrainian counteroffensive operation in the future.[12]

Putin likely has made this assumption based on months of gradual gains throughout eastern Ukraine, but this calculus fundamentally misjudges the tactical capabilities that Ukrainian forces will have once US security assistance begins to arrive to the front at scale. The *New York Times* reported on May 15 that US officials have expressed confidence that the arrival of US security assistance to Ukrainian forces at scale by July 2024 will likely allow Ukrainian forces to reverse many of the tactical gains that Russian forces have achieved in recent weeks.[13] US officials were reportedly hesitant to discuss how US security assistance may facilitate Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in 2025, however.[14] It is imperative for Ukrainian forces to be able to pursue large-scale counteroffensive operations that liberate Russian-occupied territory as soon as conditions permit, otherwise Putin will likely continue to believe that he can pursue grinding offensive operations indefinitely and force Ukraine into the strategic defense until achieving victory.[15]

Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to publicly prioritize the further mobilization of the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) while also attempting to assuage possible domestic fears about the negative effects of increased Russian defense spending. Putin met with the commanders of the Russian military districts and with officials involved in the Russian DIB on May 15 and focused both meetings on the need to develop the Russian DIB and economy.[16] Putin appointed Russian Presidential Aide Alexei Dyumin and Minister of Industry and Trade Anton Alikhanov to the supervisory board of state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec and specifically tasked Dyumin with assisting Russian efforts to provide the Russian military with the necessary weapons and equipment.[17] Putin stated that Russia's "cumulative defense and security spending" in 2024 will be about 8.7 percent (likely referring to defense spending as percentage of GDP), but noted that although this amount is significant, it is much less than Soviet defense spending in the mid-1980s of about 13 percent.[18] Russian business journalists estimated in November 2023 that Russian authorities planned to spend about 39 percent of the 2024 federal budget on defense and law enforcement, and *Reuters* reported in October 2023 that the 2024 Russian federal budget would allocate 29.4 percent to national defense.[19] Putin attempted to downplay the negative effects of increased defense spending on civilians' lives while also claiming that increased defense spending will boost the civilian sector of the economy. Putin stated that even as Russian defense spending grows, the Russian state must fulfill all its social obligations to Russian citizens and develop Russian social spheres, such as education, healthcare, support for veterans, and pensions. Putin claimed that increased Russian defense spending is connected to various civilian production sectors and boosts overall industrial development and job creation. Putin's continued focus on social spending indicates that Putin remains concerned about Russian domestic opinion and is unwilling to rapidly put the Russian economy on a full wartime footing in a way that generates fundamental economic disruption.

Putin specifically noted that the Russian DIB must increase the quality of Russian weapons. Putin stated that "whoever masters the latest means of armed struggle faster, wins" and called for the Russian defense industry to "double, triple" production and create more effective, accurate, and powerful weapons in order to decrease Russian losses.[20] Putin's focus on how technology can facilitate victory is likely a response to Ukrainian officials' recent discussions about how Ukraine needs to innovate technologically in order to beat a numerically superior Russian force.[21] Putin's emphasis on producing higher quality weapons is likely a direct response to Ukraine's higher-quality Western weapons and equipment. Ukrainian officials have noted recently that although Russian artillery supplies have greatly outnumbered those of Ukrainian forces, Ukrainian artillery is more precise than Russian artillery.[22] Although Russian forces have been able to exploit under-provisioned Ukrainian forces and make tactically significant advances along several sectors of the front recently, Russian forces have been unable to make operationally significant gains with their numerical manpower and materiel advantages alone.[23] Putin has consistently indicated that he is unwilling to transfer Russia to a full wartime economy, and a Russian DIB on a full wartime footing would likely still suffer from limiting factors, such as continued labor shortages in Russian defense industrial enterprises and the lack of the domestically produced goods required for advanced systems, and would likely not be able to produce the quantity of all types of weapons and equipment required to sustain Russian operations in Ukraine for years.[24]

Putin is likely concerned about the economic and diplomatic implications of decreased Russian arms exports. Putin thanked former Defense Minister and current Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu for reshaping the Russian military in recent years and claimed that no one, including Russia, understood the "modern methods of conducting armed struggle" before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine — a likely attempt to soften the blow of Shoigu's de facto demotion. Putin

stated that Shoigu will work with the Military-Industrial Complex Commission under the Presidential Administration as well as the Federal Service for Cooperation with Foreign Countries.[25] Putin stated that Russia must ensure its contractual obligations to supply weapons and military equipment to foreign countries but noted that the Russian military's needs are the first priority. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported in March 2024 that Russia exported major arms to 31 countries in 2019 and only 12 in 2023 with Russian arms exports falling by 53 percent between 2014-2018 and 2019-2023.[26] Putin's renewed emphasis on arms exports is likely due to concerns about how the continued loss of federal budget revenue from arms exports will affect the Russian government's ability to sustain or even increase defense spending. Putin's statement about arms exports also suggests that Putin is concerned with how Russia's inability to fulfill arms export contracts since the start of the war in Ukraine has negatively affected Russia's bilateral relations, particularly with non-Western countries with which Russia is trying to curry favor in hopes that these countries will join Russia's imagined wide coalition opposing the collective West. Russia, for example, reportedly delayed the delivery of air defense systems to India, and Indian government sources have previously stated that India wants to distance itself from Russia because the war in Ukraine has limited Russia's ability to provide India with munitions.[27]

The Kremlin confirmed the appointments of the newly formed Moscow and Leningrad military districts (MMD and LMD) and other military district commanders on May 15.

Putin met with the Russian military district commanders and senior Russian defense officials on May 15 thereby confirming that former Russian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Alexander Lapin became LMD commander and former Southern Military District (SMD) Colonel General Sergei Kuzovlev became MMD commander.[28] The Kremlin meeting also confirmed that Lieutenant General Alexander Sanchik replaced Colonel General Sergei Kuzmenko as acting Eastern Military District (EMD) commander, that Colonel General Gennady Anashkin replaced Kuzovlev as acting Southern Military District (SMD) commander, and that Colonel General Andrey Mordvichev will remain Central Military District (CMD) commander.[29] A Russian insider source, who has routinely been accurate about past Russian military command changes, correctly reported on these command changes in early May.[30] ISW has routinely observed that Putin regularly rotates officials and military commanders in and out of favor with the aim of incentivizing different factions to strive to accomplish his objectives and continues to assess that the Kremlin may have decided to change the leadership of the military districts in preparation for its expected summer offensive effort, which is forecasted to begin in late May or in June.[31]

Russian sources speculated that the May 13 detention of Russian Deputy Defense Minister Lieutenant General Yuri Kuznetsov is only the beginning of a wider effort to root out corruption within the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD).

A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed on May 15 that Kuznetsov's detention and the April 24 detention of Russian Deputy Defense Minister Timur Ivanov on charges of accepting bribes prompted rumors that Russian authorities may arrest other unspecified corrupt officials serving in the Russian MoD's Main Operational-Mobilization Directorate, Main Directorate of Combat Training, and other high-level directorates.[32] The milblogger noted that bribery schemes have been incredibly common and pervasive in Russia over the last 15 years and that Russian authorities may limit their efforts to corruption cases that have caused tangible issues with Russian forces' combat effectiveness or operational security. Several Russian milbloggers lamented the pervasiveness of corruption and ineptitude among the Russian high command, and one Russian milblogger called on the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and Investigative Committee to "shake out" all of the corrupt officials within the Russian MoD.[33]

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced during a joint press conference with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on May 15 that the US will provide a two billion dollar "defense enterprise fund" to Ukraine.[34] Blinken stated that the fund has three components: assisting Ukraine in acquiring needed weapons, investing in Ukraine's defense industrial base (DIB), and helping Ukraine purchase military equipment and weapons from the US and other countries.

Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reportedly struck a Russian fuel depot in Rostov Oblast on the night of May 14 to 15.[35] Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* reported that its sources stated that GUR attacked a fuel depot in Proletarsky Raion, Rostov Oblast with drones and that a fire broke out at the facility.[36] *Suspilne's* sources added that Russian forces used the fuel depot for military purposes.[37] Rostov Oblast Governor Vasyl Golubev stated that two Ukrainian drones caused explosions at the facility but denied that there was a fire at the facility.[38]

The Kremlin continues to add European officials to Russia's wanted list as part of Russia's efforts to assert the jurisdiction of Russian federal law over sovereign NATO member states. Russian opposition outlet *Mediazona* published an updated review of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs' (MVD) wanted list on May 15 and noted that the Russian MVD added several dozen more Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, Czech, and Polish officials to the wanted list since February 2024.[39] *Mediazona* reported that there are currently 88 Latvian and 66 Lithuanian politicians from various government levels; five Polish mayors; an unspecified number of former and current council members of several Czech municipalities; and four current and former Estonian officials, including current Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas and Minister of Internal Affairs Lauri Laanemets, on Russia's wanted list. *Mediazona* noted that the Russian MVD also recently added and removed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, as ISW previously reported.[40] ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin's efforts to assert the jurisdiction of Russian law in sovereign European states are intended to set information conditions justifying possible future Russian aggression against NATO.[41]

Key Takeaways:

- **The tempo of Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast continues to decrease after Russian forces initially seized areas that Ukrainian officials have now confirmed were less defended.**
- **The US Helsinki Commission stated that the US should allow Ukraine to conduct strikes against military targets in Russia's border areas amid an ongoing Russian offensive operation into Kharkiv Oblast from Russia, although US officials continue to express unwillingness to support such strikes.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to publicly prioritize the further mobilization of the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) while also attempting to assuage possible domestic fears about the negative effects of increased Russian defense spending.**
- **Putin specifically noted that the Russian DIB must increase the quality of Russian weapons.**
- **Putin is likely concerned about the economic and diplomatic implications of decreased Russian arms exports.**

- **The Kremlin confirmed the appointments of the newly formed Moscow and Leningrad military districts (MMD and LMD) and other military district commanders on May 15.**
- **Russian sources speculated that the May 13 detention of Russian Deputy Defense Minister Lieutenant General Yuri Kuznetsov is only the beginning of a wider effort to root out corruption within the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD).**
- **US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced during a joint press conference with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on May 15 that the US will provide a two billion dollar "defense enterprise fund" to Ukraine.**
- **Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reportedly struck a Russian fuel depot in Rostov Oblast on the night of May 14 to 15.**
- **The Kremlin continues to add European officials to Russia's wanted list as part of Russia's efforts to assert the jurisdiction of Russian federal law over sovereign NATO member states.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances in northern Kharkiv Oblast, near Siversk, and west of Donetsk City.**
- **Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council Secretary Oleksandr Lytyvyenko assessed on May 15 that Russian forces will have enough tanks and armored fighting vehicles for the next year and half of fighting in Ukraine at their current operational tempo.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 15, 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 two 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

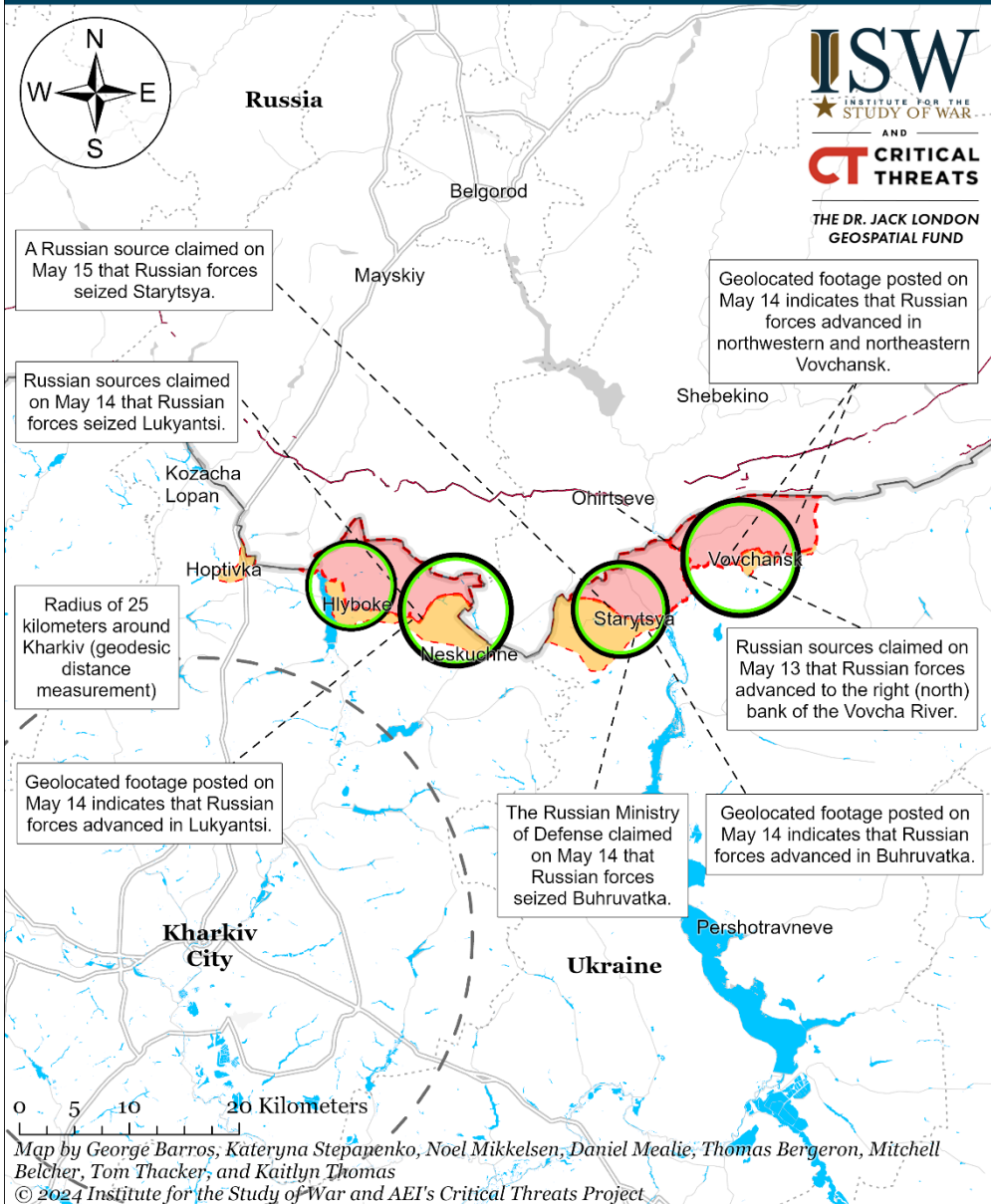
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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)

NOTE: ISW is adding a section to cover Russian offensive operations along the Belgorod-Kharkiv axis as these offensive operations comprise an operational effort separate from Russian offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line. ISW may enlarge the scope of this section should Russian forces expand offensive operations along the Russian-Ukrainian international border in northeastern Ukraine.

Russian forces continued to make tactical advances in the Lyptsi direction (north of Kharkiv City) as of May 15. Geolocated footage published on May 15 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced east of Hlyboke (north of Lyptsi) and along the east bank of the Travyanske Reservoir (northwest of Lyptsi).[42] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Hlyboke and Lukyantsi (northeast of Lyptsi).[43] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Russian elements of the 18th Motorized Rifle Division (11th Army Corps, Leningrad Military District [LMD]) seized Lukyantsi on March 13 and that Ukrainian forces recently pushed Russian forces out of Zelene (northeast of Lyptsi).[44] Lyptsi Village Military Administration Head Serhiy Kryvetchenko stated Russian forces have entered Lukyantsi.[45] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults between Borysivka (northeast of Lyptsi) and Neskuchne (northeast of Lyptsi).[46]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
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- ▨ Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
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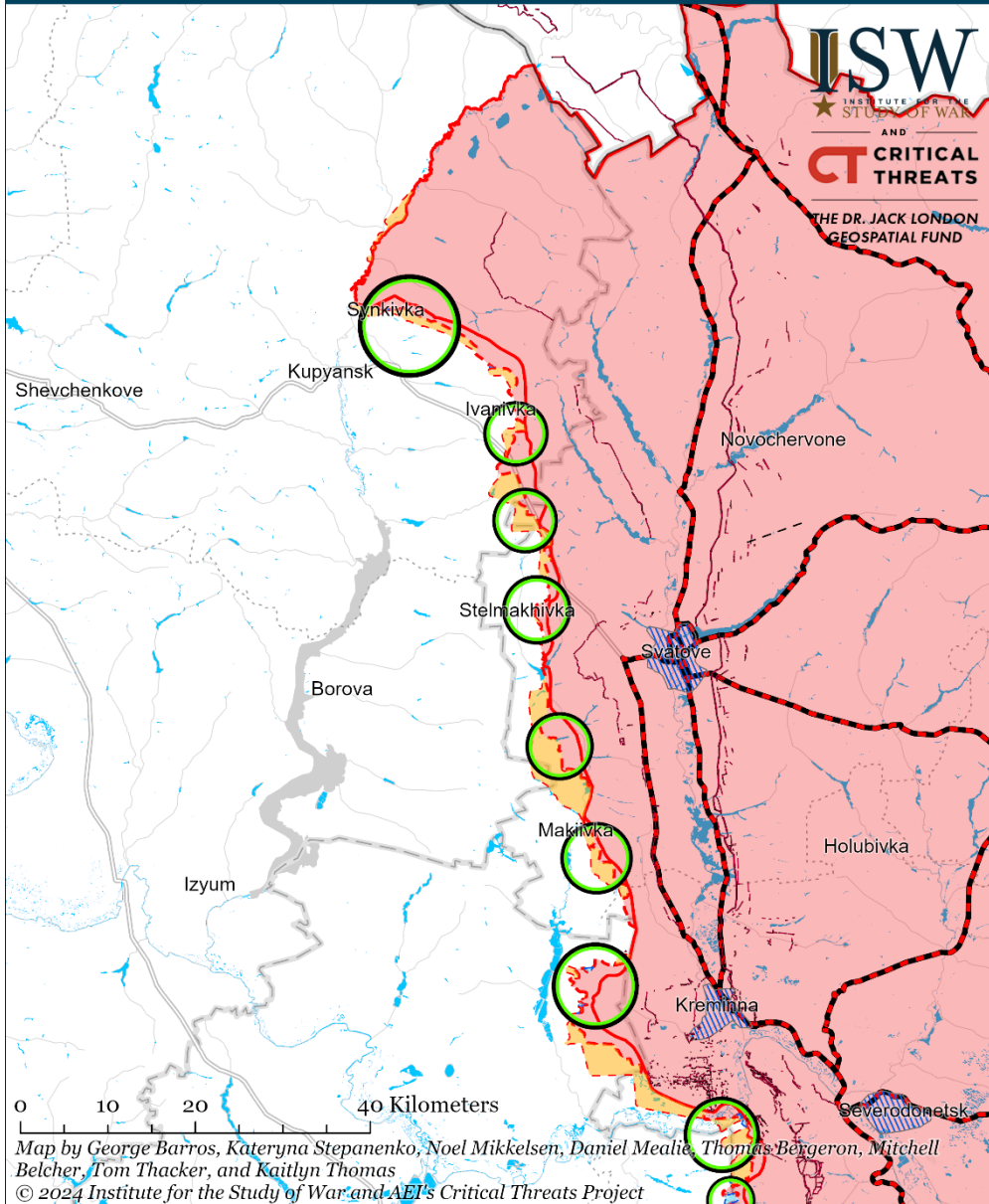
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Russian forces recently made further tactical advances near Vovchansk (northeast of Kharkiv City). Geolocated footage published on May 14 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in northern Starytsya (southwest of Vovchansk).[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized Starytsya, while others claimed that fighting continued in the settlement.[48] Ukrainian MoD Spokesperson Dmytro Lazutkin stated that Russian forces entered Vovchansk and that small Russian infantry groups are trying to gain a foothold in the northern part of Vovchansk.[49] Vovchansk City Military Administration Head Tamaz Gambarashvili stated that small arms battles are ongoing on the northern outskirts of Vovchansk and that small Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups are trying to establish positions within the settlement.[50] Ukrainian General Staff Spokesperson Dmytro Lykhovyi also stated that Ukrainian forces moved to more advantageous positions in unspecified areas near Vovchansk to save the lives of Ukrainian personnel.[51] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced within Vovchansk and continued ground attacks southwest of Vovchansk near Izbitske and Buhruvatka.[52]

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 15, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian forces continued ground assaults northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and Petropavlivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Pishchane, Kotlyarivka, Ivanivka, Berestove, Krokmalne, and Stelmakhivka; west of Svatove near Miasozharivka; southwest of Svatove near Novoyehorivka and Tverdokhlibove; northwest of Kreminna near Makiivka, Novosadove, and Terny.[53] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced from Kolomyichykha towards Andriivka (both west of Svatove), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[54] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces with armored vehicle support initially advanced to the northern outskirts of Kyslivka (southeast of Kupyansk), but that Russian forces later repelled the assault.[55] Elements of the Russian 47th Tank Division (1st Guards Tank Army, Moscow Military District) are reportedly operating near Kyslivka.[56]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kupyansk as of May 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

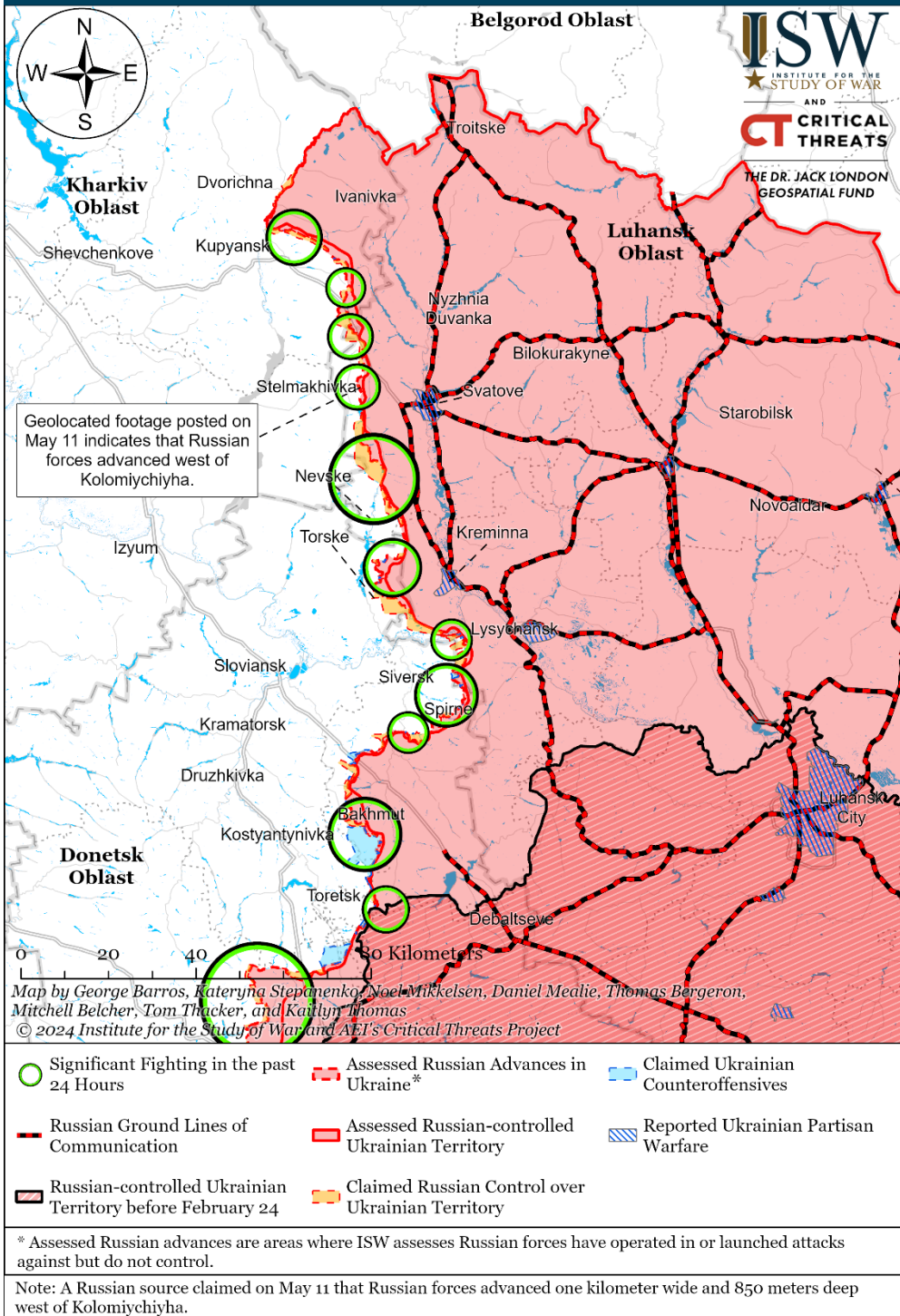


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| Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours | Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine * | Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives |
| Russian Ground Lines of Communication | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare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

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Note: A Russian source claimed on May 11 that Russian forces advanced one kilometer wide and 850 meters deep west of Kolomyichyha.

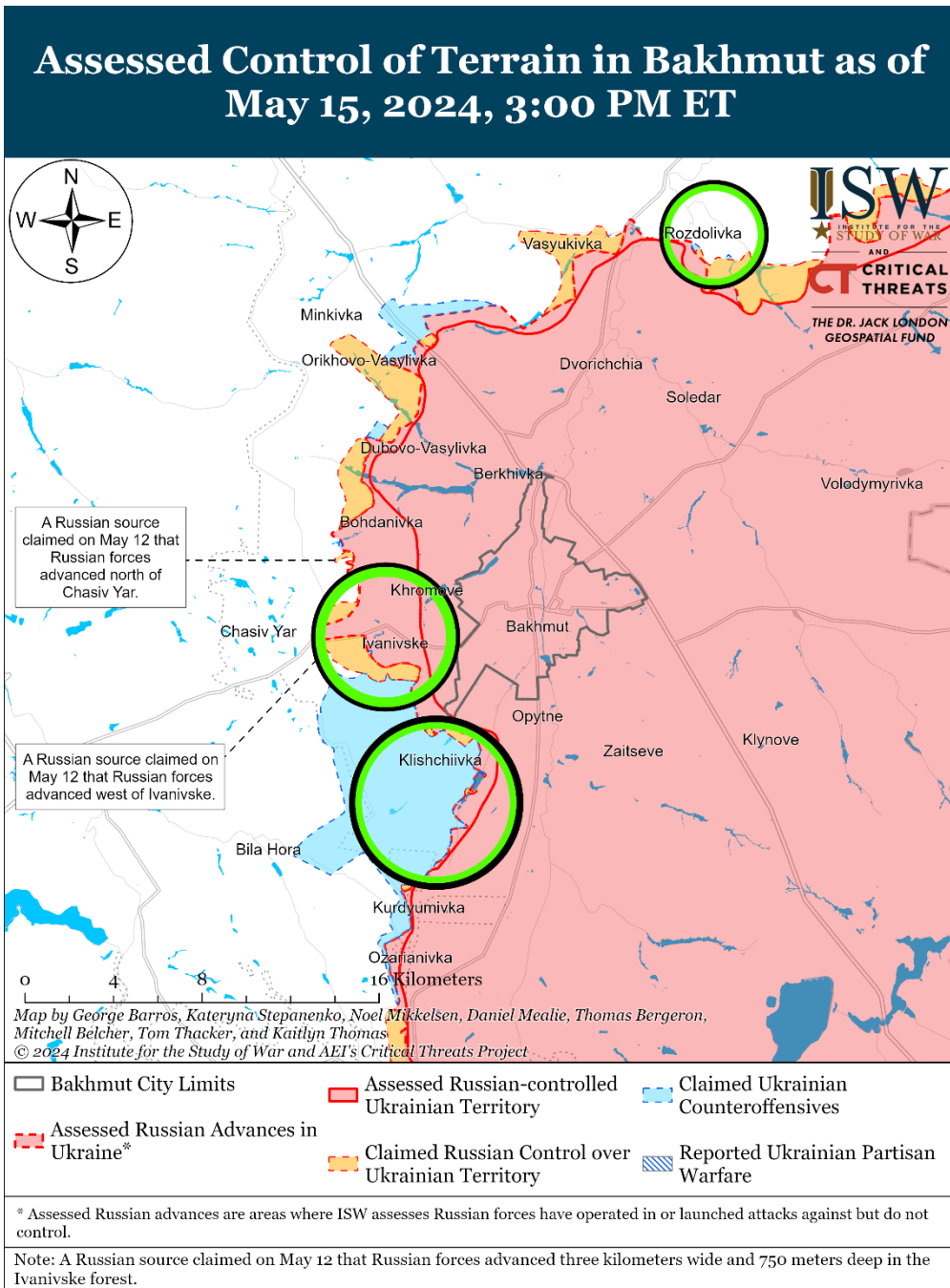
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of May 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

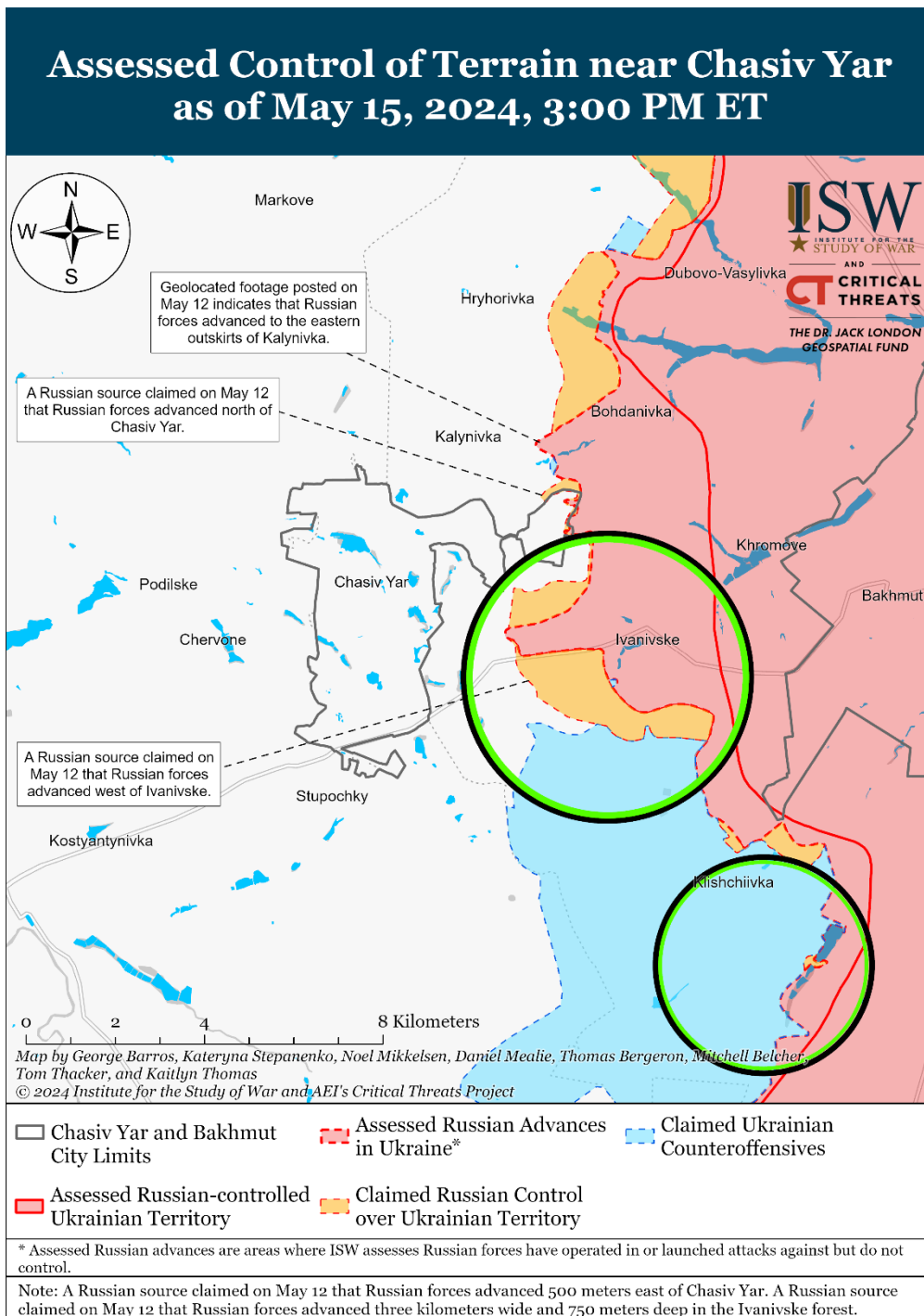
Ukrainian forces recently marginally advanced in the Siversk direction (northeast of Bakhmut) amid continued Russian assaults in the area on May 15. Geolocated footage published on May 14 indicates

that Ukrainian forces recently marginally advanced in a forest area between Vesele and Spirne (both southeast of Siversk).[57] Russian forces continued ground assaults east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske, southeast of Siversk near Ivano-Darivka and Spirne, and south of Siversk near Rozdolivka.[58] Elements of the Russian "Alexander Nevsky" Brigade are reportedly operating near Soledar (north of Bakhmut).[59]



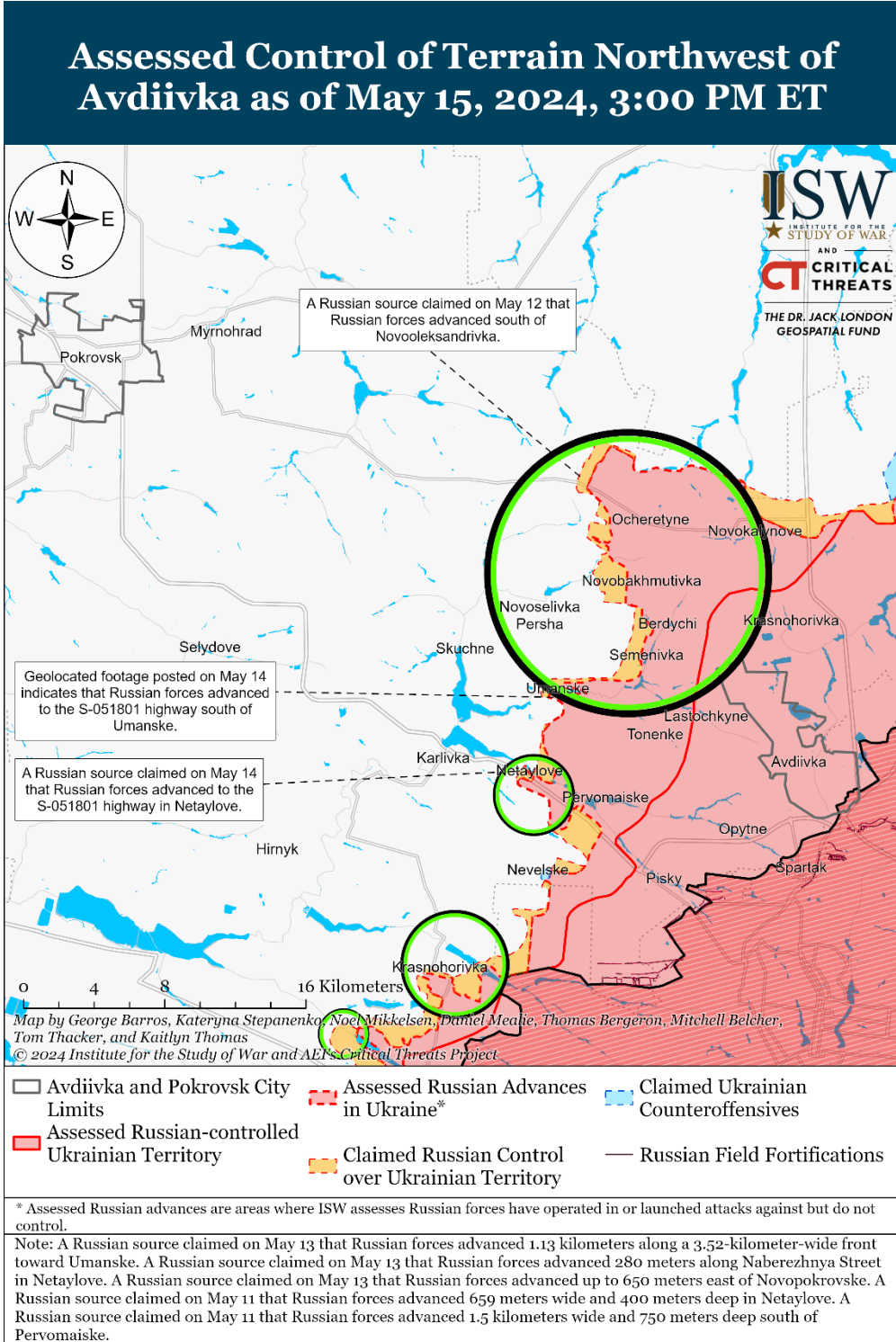
Russian forces continued ground assaults near Chasiv Yar on May 15, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced into Kalynivka (just north of Chasiv Yar) from the southeast and gained a foothold in the settlement.[60] The milblogger claimed that most of eastern Kalynivka is a contested "gray zone" that neither Russian nor Ukrainian forces control. ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these Russian claims. Several Russian milbloggers denied claims that Ukrainian forces transferred elements of three brigades from

Chasiv Yar to the Kharkiv direction and called such claims "deliberate misinformation." [61] Russian forces continued assaults northeast of Chasiv Yar near Bohdanivka; in the Novyi Microraion in eastern Chasiv Yar; east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske; southeast of Chasiv Yar near Klishchiivka, Andriivka, and Kurdyumivka; and south of Chasiv Yar near Bila Hora. [62] Elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating in the Chasiv Yar direction. [63]



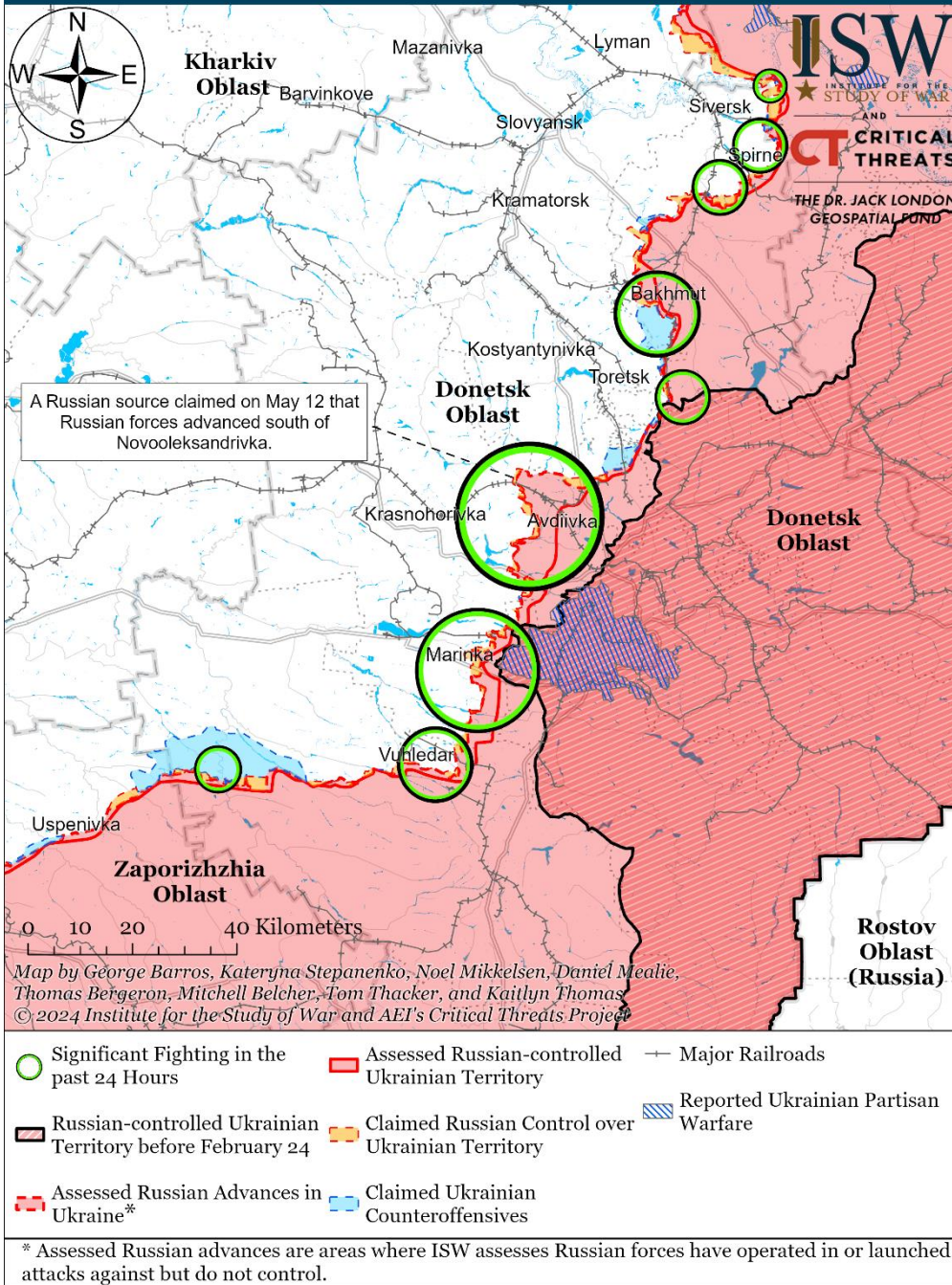
Russian forces reportedly advanced near Avdiivka on May 15, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Umanske (west of Avdiivka) and advanced near Netaylove, Nevelske, and south of Pervomaiske (all southwest of Avdiivka). [64] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of Russian forces operating in western Umanske nor of further

Russian advances near Netaylove, Nevelske, and Pervomaiske. One Russian milblogger noted that the pace of Russian offensive operations in the Avdiivka direction has significantly slowed in recent days.[65] Russian forces continued assaults northwest of Avdiivka near Kalynove, Novooleksandrivka, Sokil, Yevhenivka, Soloyove, Novoselivka Persha, and Novopokrovske and west of Avdiivka near Yasnobrodivka.[66] Elements of the Russian 74th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly operating near Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka).[67]



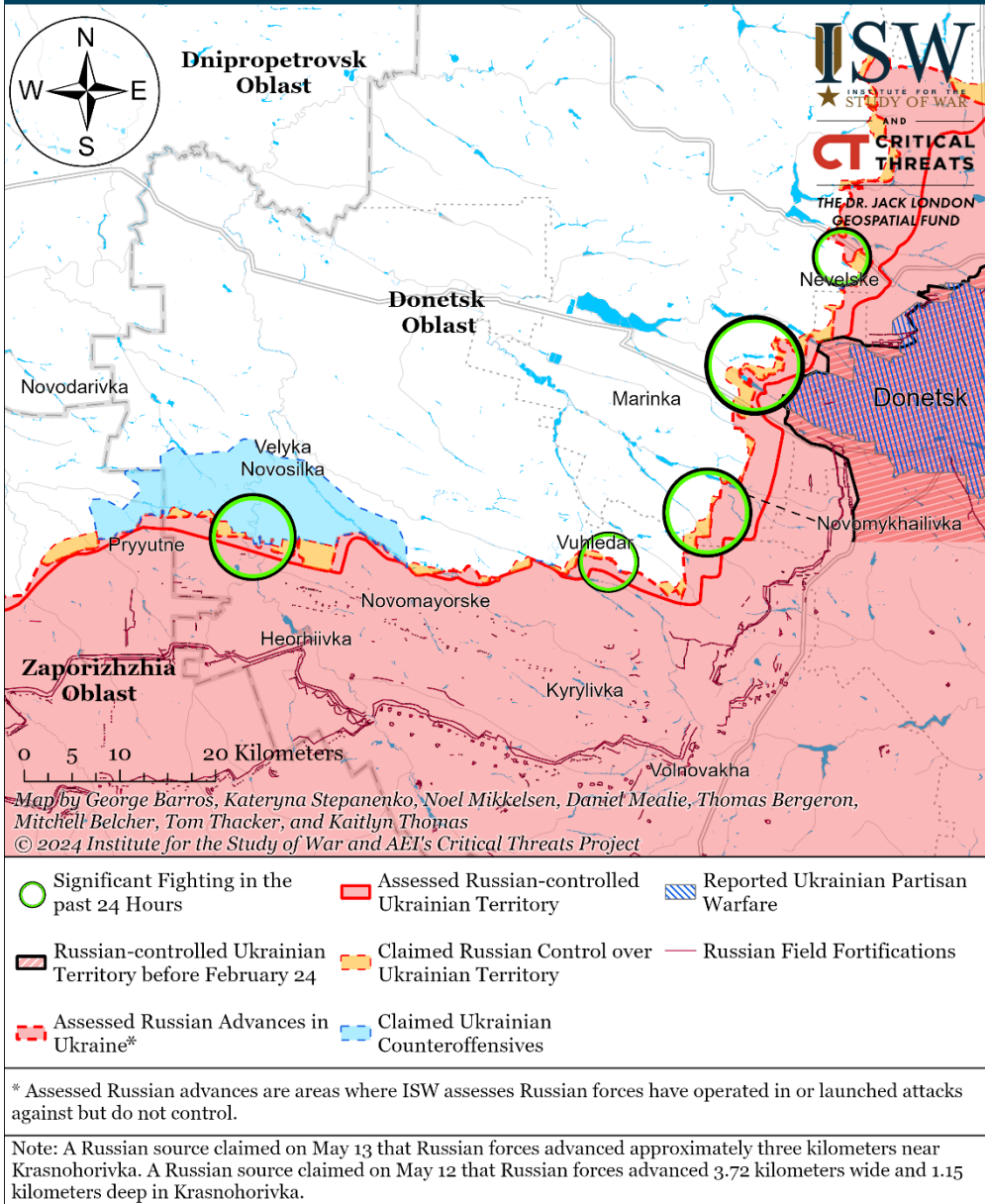
Russian forces recently marginally advanced west of Donetsk City amid continued fighting west and southwest of the city on May 15. Geolocated footage published on May 15 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced within Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City).[68] Ukrainian sources stated that Russian forces recently conducted a roughly reinforced company sized mechanized assault near Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City) and that Ukrainian forces destroyed four Russian tanks and six infantry fighting vehicles during the Russian assault.[69] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced to the southern outskirts of Paraskoviivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[70] Russian forces also continued assaults west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Vodyane and Kostyantynivka.[71] Elements of the "Russkiye Yastreby" (Russian Hawks) Detachment and the 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps [AC]) are reportedly operating near Krasnohorivka.[72]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of May 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces recently marginally advanced in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area amid continued fighting in the area on May 15. Geolocated footage published on May 15 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced within Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka).[73] Russian forces continued assaults south of Velyka Novosilka near Staromayorske.[74] Elements of the Russian 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly operating near Urozhaine.[75]

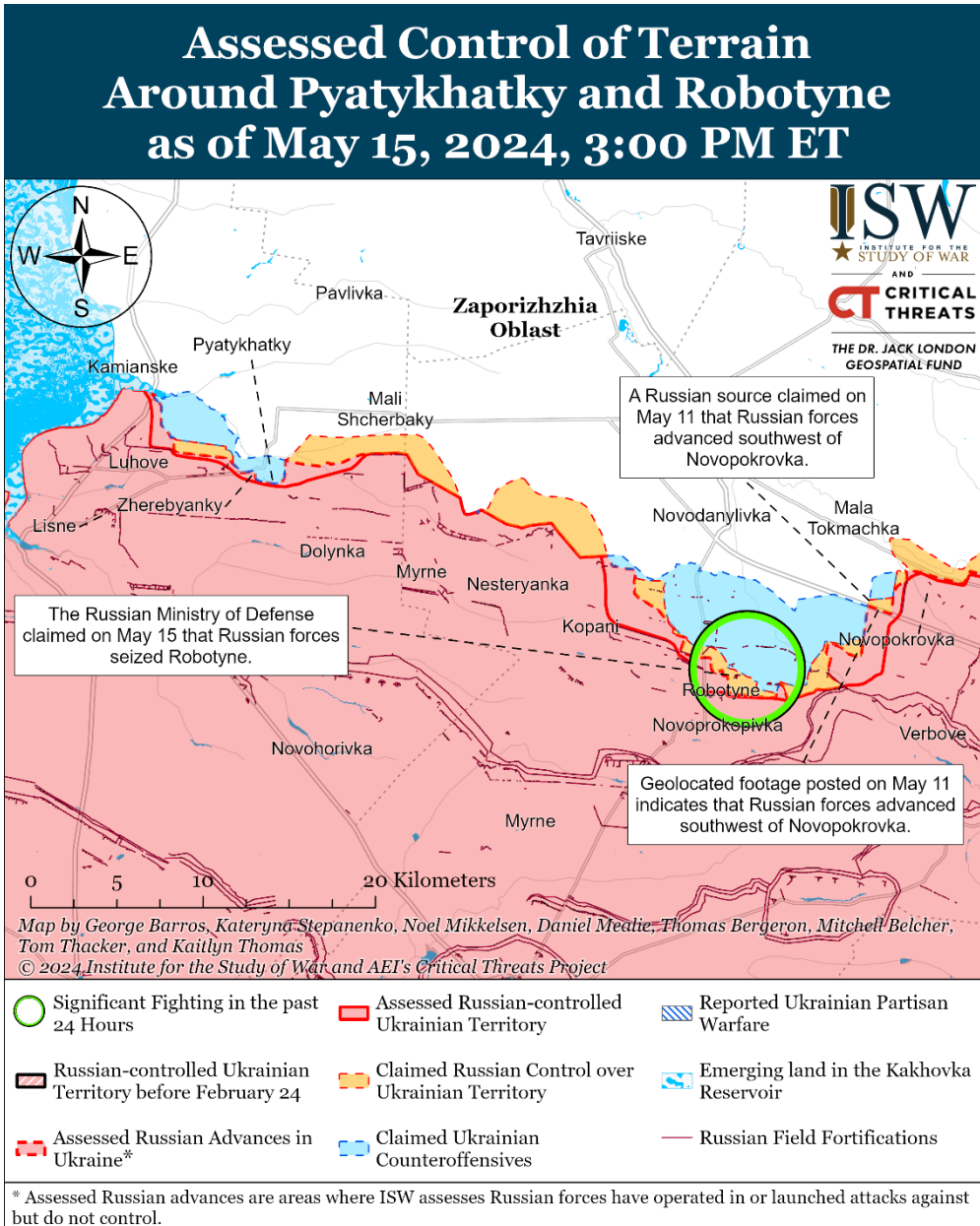
Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Donetsk Oblast as of May 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



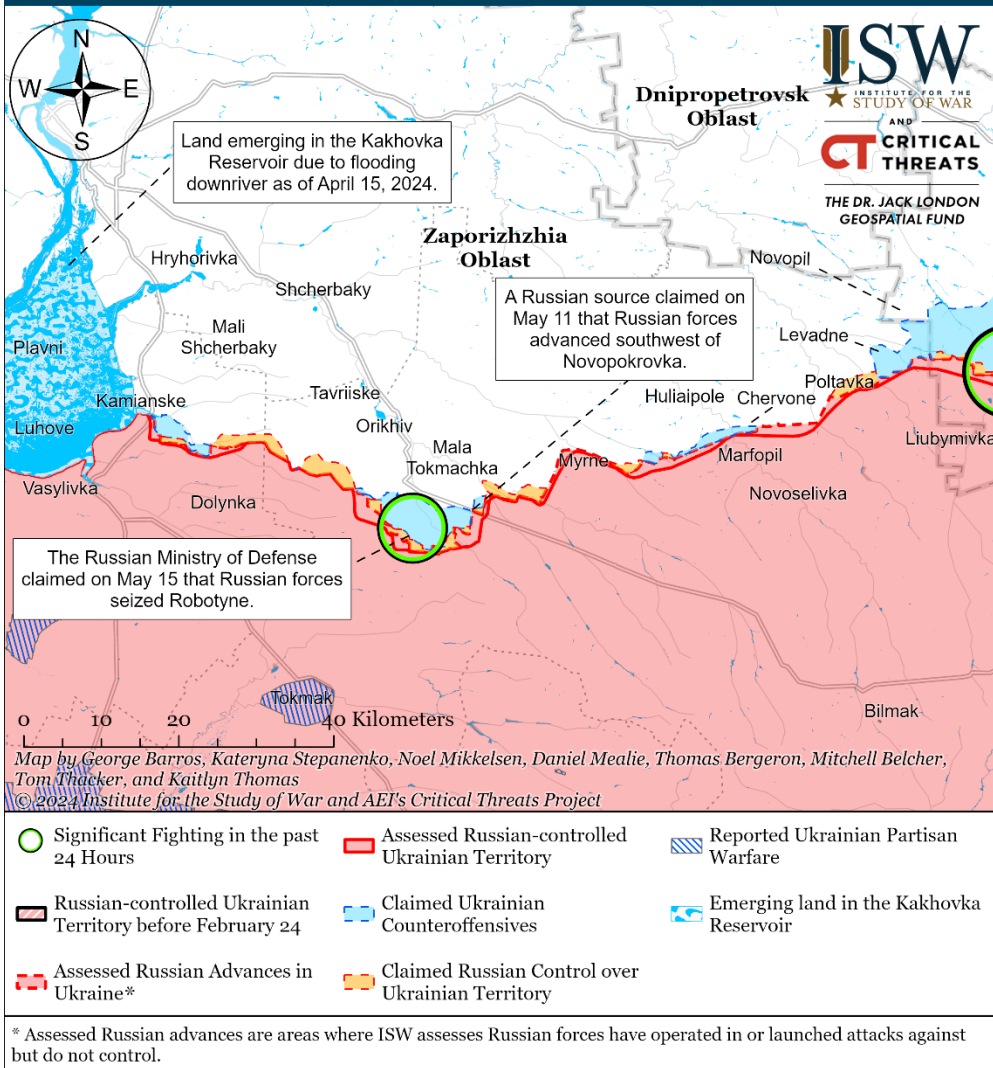
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces completely seized Robotyne on May 15, but there were no confirmed advances in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[76] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command and Navy Spokesperson Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk stated that Russian claims about the seizure of Robotyne are untrue.[77] One Russian milblogger initially claimed that Russian forces seized a stronghold in northern Robotyne and suggested that Russian forces seized the settlement.[78] The milblogger later claimed, however, that elements of the Russian 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Brigade, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military

District) that are reportedly operating within Robotyne claimed that Ukrainian forces are still present in northern Robotyne and that it is not clear if Russian forces have consolidated positions in eastern Robotyne.[79] Other Russian milbloggers also expressed doubt about the Russian MoD's claim.[80] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne) and south of Hulyaipole (east of Orikhiv), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[81] Russian forces continued offensive operations near Robotyne and Verbove.[82] Elements of the Russian 38th Motorized Rifle Brigade (35th CAA, Eastern Military District) are reportedly operating near Hulyaipole; elements of the 392nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (likely a reformed Soviet-era unit) are operating in the Zaporizhzhia direction; and elements of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Brigade's 70th and 291st motorized rifle regiments are operating east of Robotyne and in southern Robotyne, respectively.[83]

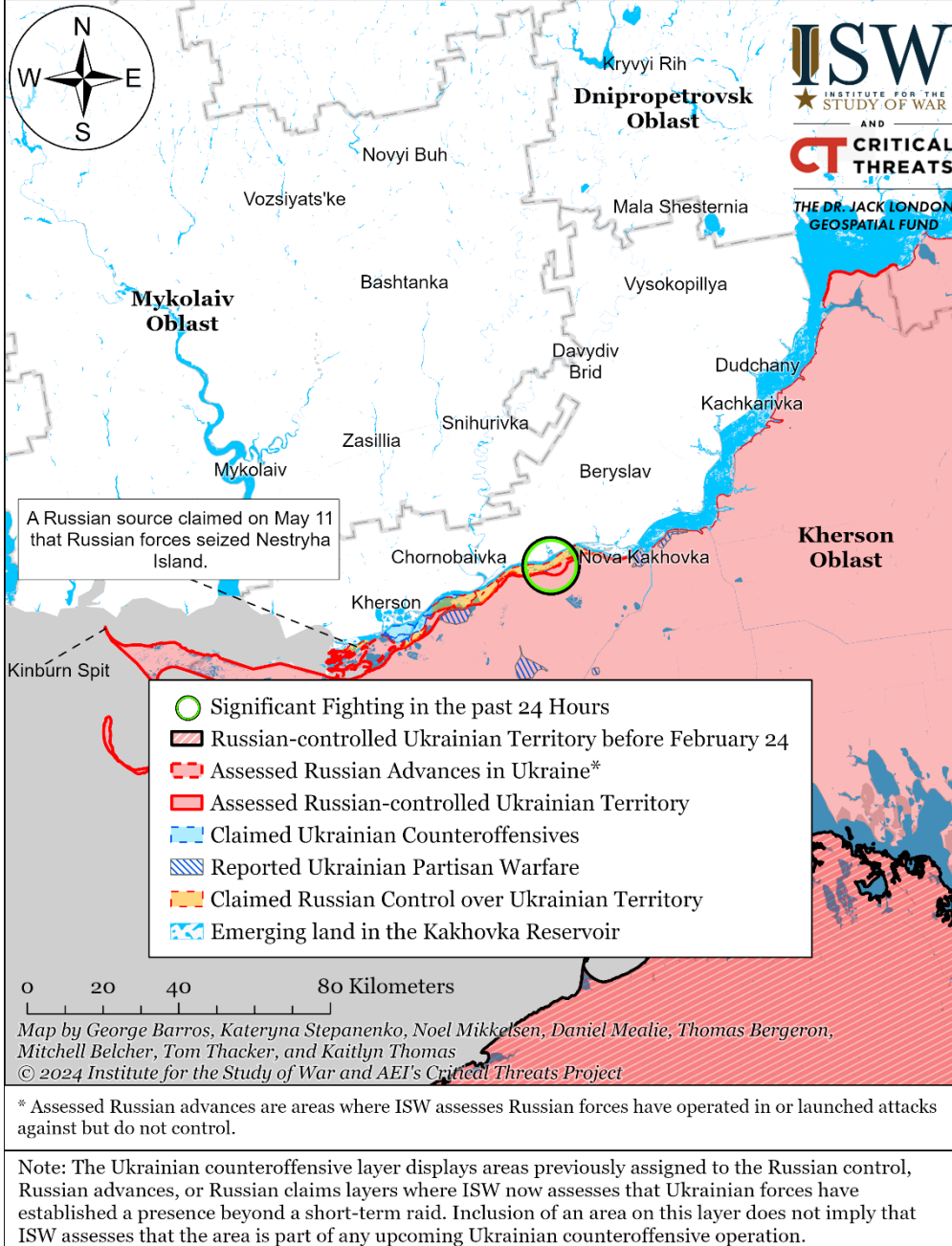


Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of May 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional engagements continued near Krynky in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast on May 15.[84] A Russian milblogger amplified complaints from a Russian servicemember reportedly operating on islands in the Dnipro River Delta about the lack of Russian electronic warfare (EW) systems and trained personnel.[85] Another Russian milblogger amplified a report from a Russian servicemember reportedly operating near Krynky about how Russian artillery is accidentally striking Russian forces in friendly fire incidents.[86]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces likely conducted an ATACMS strike on Belbek Airfield in occupied Crimea on the night of May 14 to 15. Russian sources posted footage reportedly of the Ukrainian strike on Belbek.[87] Ukrainian journalist Yuriy Butusov reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed a MiG-31 aircraft, two air defense systems, and a radar system and damaged three Su-27 aircraft at Belbek Airfield.[88] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces shot down 10 ATACMS missiles over Crimea on the night of May 14 to 15.[89] Sevastopol occupation governor Mikhail Razvozhayev identified the missiles as the cluster munitions equipped version of the ATACMS missiles.[90] A prominent Russian milblogger

claimed that Ukrainian forces launched up to 16 ATACMS against Belbek Airfield and that Russian forces downed about 13 missiles.[91]

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

Russian forces conducted a series of limited missile strikes against Ukraine on May 14 and 15. Kharkiv Oblast Police Chief Volodymyr Tymoshko reported that Russian forces struck Kharkiv City with two S-300 missiles on the evening of May 14.[92] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted a strike on Mykolaiv City with unspecified missiles on May 15, and Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated that Russian forces struck an automotive service station in Mykolaiv.[93] Ukrainian Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Military Administration Head Serhiy Lysak reported that Russian forces struck infrastructure in Dnipro City with an unspecified number of missiles, and Ukraine's Eastern Air Command reported that Ukrainian forces shot down a Russian Kh-59/69 cruise missile over Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.[94]

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

Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council Secretary Oleksandr Lytyvyenko assessed on May 15 that Russian forces will have enough tanks and armored fighting vehicles for the next year and half of fighting in Ukraine at their current operational tempo.[95] Russia is relying on vast Soviet-era stores of vehicles and other equipment to sustain operations and losses in Ukraine at a level far higher than the current Russian defense industrial base (DIB) can offset.[96] Russian forces reportedly removed 25 to 40 percent of its tank strategic reserves, depending on the model, from open-air storage facilities since 2022 as of March 2024.[97] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported on February 4 that the Russian defense industry can produce 250–300 “new and thoroughly modernized” tanks per year and can repair around 250–300 additional damaged tanks per year.[98] The Russian DIB's constrained ability to produce new tanks and the large but finite number of Soviet stocks means that there is a limit to the duration of regular Russian mechanized assaults in Ukraine at the current scale.

Kalashnikov Concern, a subsidiary of the Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec, reportedly assumed control over St. Petersburg-based optics manufacturer JSC Lomo.[99] Kremlin newswire TASS reported on May 14 that Russian DIB sources stated that JSC Lomo had been jeopardizing defense orders for years but still produces items that are extremely important for Russian forces.[100] TASS' sources reported that Kalashnikov Concern actively uses JSC Lomo's products in sniper rifles and precision weapons and made the decision to assume control of JSC Lomo to reduce costs.[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)

Ukrainian defense enterprises continue to expand domestic production and produce technologically advanced systems for use on the frontline. The head of Ukraine's state-owned defense enterprise manager Ukroboronprom, Herman Smetanin, stated on May 8 that Ukroboronprom's production volume has increased by a factor of three and that the company aims to increase production in some

areas up to 10 times in 2024.[102] Smetanin stated that Ukraine has significantly increased the production of artillery ammunition and is gradually moving to the production of 60mm artillery shells.[103] The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on May 11 that it has approved nine domestically produced land-based robotic systems for operation by Ukrainian forces and that these systems can conduct combat operations with small arms, evacuate wounded, and demine areas.[104]

The US approved the emergency sale of three additional HIMARS systems to Ukraine for an estimated \$30 million on May 10.[105] The US Defense Security Cooperations Agency and German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius noted that Germany would be purchasing the HIMARS systems from the US on Ukraine's behalf.[106] Ukrainian forces have previously used HIMARS systems to significant effect, particularly contributing to the Russian withdrawal from the west (right) bank of Kherson Oblast in November 2022, and continue to use HIMARS to strike Russian force concentrations in rear and deep rear areas in occupied Ukraine.[107]

Western partners continue to pledge air defense assets for Ukraine. Canadian Defense Minister Bill Blair stated on May 10 that Canada will contribute \$55.7 million to a German-led initiative to provide UA with air defense systems.[108] The German MoD stated on May 11 that Canada will finance the purchase of IRIS-T air defense systems for Ukrainian forces.[109] French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu stated during a hearing at the national assembly on March 15 that France will send a second batch of Aster missiles for the SAMP/T air defense system to Ukraine but did not specify the size or value of the package.[110]

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)

ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas today.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian President Vladimir gave an interview to People's Republic of China (PRC) state outlet *Xinhua News Agency* on May 15, in which he promoted the PRC's vague peace plan and longstanding Kremlin information operations about negotiations.[111] The Kremlin has routinely feigned interest in meaningful negotiations while placing the onus for negotiations on the West in an effort to prompt the West to make concessions on Ukrainian territorial integrity and sovereignty.[112] Putin likely hopes that these information operations may generate interest in the PRC's relatively stagnating effort to portray itself as a credible mediator for the war in Ukraine and set conditions for negotiations more favorable to Russia.

Kremlin officials continue to portray the West and the US as seeking to destabilize Georgia amid continued protests in Tbilisi against Georgia's Russian-style "foreign agents" bill. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre stated on May 14 that Georgia's Kremlin-style "foreign agents" bill would move Georgia further away from the values of the European Union (EU) and NATO, prompting Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova to accuse the US of "openly threatening" Georgia.[113] Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili recently reiterated a series of standard anti-Western and pseudohistorical Kremlin narratives during his first public speech since announcing his return to Georgian politics, and both Kremlin actors and select Georgian officials will likely increasingly malign the West as attempting to interfere in Georgian affairs amid the ongoing

protests.[114] Members from the ruling Georgian Dream party 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.[115]

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 opposition railway workers stated on May 15 that they have noticed increased measures to cover up preparations for the movement of Russian military equipment and personnel between Belarus and Russia.[116] Belarusian opposition railway workers stated that there has been an increase in communications between the Russian and Belarusian ministries of defense (MoD) and Belarusian railway operators but did not confirm that Russian forces will resume transporting materiel and personnel on Belarusian railways.[117] Russian forces previously used contingents in Belarus to leverage Belarusian training capacity and to fix Ukrainian forces to the Belarusian-Ukrainian border, and the Kremlin may hope to once again achieve these effects with renewed limited deployments to Belarus.[118]

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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