



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Christina Harward, Angelica Evans, Olivia Gibson, Anna Harvey, and George Barros

May 16, 2025, 8:00 pm 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 interactive map of Ukraine's offensive in Kursk Oblast.

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 12:15 pm ET on May 16. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 17 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian and Russian delegations met in Istanbul on May 16 but made little progress towards agreeing to a full ceasefire or a peace settlement to Russia's war against Ukraine. The Russian delegation reportedly formally demanded that Ukraine cede territory to which Russia has informally been laying claim, while asserting that Russia is ready to continue the war for years. Russia may again formalize previously informal territorial claims in the future as part of Russia's effort to secure full Ukrainian capitulation. Turkish, Ukrainian, and American delegations met on the morning of May 16 in Istanbul, after which Turkish, Ukrainian, and Russian delegations met.[1] Russian Presidential Aide Vladimir Medinsky, the head of the Russian delegation, likely met with US State Department Director of Policy Planning Staff Michael Anton before the Ukrainian-Russian meeting.[2] The Ukrainian delegation, including Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha, and Presidential Administration Chief of Staff Andriy Yermak, met with US Special Envoy to Ukraine General Keith Kellogg, UK National Security Advisor Jonathan Powell, French Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Emmanuel Bonn, and German Chancellor's Advisor for Foreign and Security Policy Gunter Sautter to coordinate positions before the Ukrainian-Russian meeting.[3] Umerov and Medinsky announced that Ukraine and Russia would exchange 1,000 prisoners of war (POWs) each in the near future.[4] Medinsky stated that the Russian and Ukrainian delegations agreed to "write...down in detail" and present their visions for a possible future ceasefire and that bilateral negotiations will continue after this presentation.[5] Kremlin newswire TASS reported that an unspecified source stated that there was no specific date set for Russia and Ukraine to exchange their ceasefire plans.[6]

Medinsky highlighted that Russia is prepared to continue its war in Ukraine for years to come. Medinsky claimed that those "who do not know history" say that there should be a ceasefire first, then negotiations to achieve peace.[7] Medinsky claimed that war and negotiations should be conducted simultaneously, and Carroll reported that Medinsky stated that Russia is "ready to fight for a year, two, three – however long it takes." [8] Medinsky reportedly referenced the Great Northern War (1700-1721) when asking "how long [is Ukraine] ready to fight?" and claimed that "Russia is prepared to fight forever." [9] Russia state media confirmed that Medinsky spoke about the 18th-century war with Sweden during the meeting.[10]

Ukrainian diplomatic sources told various Western and Ukrainian outlets that the Russian delegation made "unrealistic" and "unacceptable" demands that went "far beyond" any demands Russia has previously discussed.[11] The delegation reportedly repeated the Kremlin's demand that Ukrainian forces withdraw from the entirety of the illegally annexed Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts before the start of a ceasefire. *The Economist* foreign correspondent Oliver Carroll reported that a source stated that the Russian delegation additionally threatened to seize Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts, and Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Deputy Oleksiy Goncharenko similarly reported that the Russian delegation threatened to annex Sumy Oblast in order to create a "security zone." [12]

The Kremlin has repeatedly publicly demanded that Ukraine cede all of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts – even the territory that Russian forces currently do not occupy – but had not formally demanded that Ukraine cede all of Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts before the May 16 Istanbul meeting. [13] Russian officials have informally claimed all of Kharkiv Oblast as part of Russia and launched offensive operations to create buffer zones in Kharkiv and Sumy Oblasts in May 2024 and March 2025, respectively, that are likely part of Russian territorial expansion efforts, however. Kharkiv Oblast occupation governor Vitaly Ganchev claimed in early February 2025 that Kharkiv Oblast is "strategically" and politically significant for Russia and that he was "certain" that Russian forces would seize all of Kharkiv Oblast because Russia needed a "sanitary zone" to protect itself from Ukrainian shelling.[14] Ganchev further claimed that Kharkiv Oblast would have held a "referendum" to become the "fifth oblast to join Russia" in September 2022 had it not been for the successful Ukrainian counteroffensive in Kharkiv Oblast at that time. Russian forces launched attacks across the Sumy-Kursk Oblast border in April 2025 to create a buffer zone and possibly press further toward Sumy City in order to expand Russian territorial demands in Ukraine.[15] Russian forces similarly launched offensive operations in May 2024 to create a buffer zone in northern Kharkiv Oblast, and Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev stated at that time that Russia's envisioned "buffer zone" should encompass all of Ukraine, suggesting that the Kremlin's concept of the buffer zone is a thinly veiled justification for Russia's intent to subsume larger portions of Ukraine.[16]

Russian officials have long been informally laying claim to additional territories in Ukraine beyond Sumy, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts. Russian officials, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, have consistently claimed that "Novorossiya" – an invented region of Ukraine that Kremlin officials have claimed includes all southern and eastern Ukraine – is an "integral" part of Russia and that Odesa City is a "Russian" city." [17] Novorossiya geographically encompasses Kharkiv Oblast. Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo stated in April 2025 that the "return" of the west (right) bank of the Dnipro River to Russia is "fundamentally important" and an

"absolute priority." [18] Saldo called for Russia to completely control the areas of the Dnipro River that pass through Kherson, Zaporizhia, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts – a call for Russia to not only gain control over parts of Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts that Russian forces do not currently occupy but to control parts of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, which Russia has not formally claimed or illegally annexed. **The Kremlin may increasingly adopt this pattern of informally discussing additional Russian territorial claims and then formally introducing these claims as demands in peace negotiations in the future.**

ISW has consistently assessed that Russian President Vladimir Putin will not compromise in peace negotiations unless Ukraine and the West inflict significant battlefield and economic losses on Russia and force Putin to rethink his theory of victory. Putin articulated his theory of victory for his war in Ukraine in June 2024, which posits that Russia will be able to win a war of attrition against Ukraine by continuing gradual, creeping advances indefinitely and preventing Ukraine from conducting successful, operationally significant counteroffensive operations, assuming Russia's war effort outlasts Western support for Ukraine. [19]

ISW previously assessed that Russia faces a number of compounding materiel, defense industrial, manpower, and economic issues that threaten Russia's ability to continue the war in Ukraine in the long term. [20] Putin is likely prioritizing dividing Ukraine's Western allies and weakening Western support to Ukraine in order to secure his desired end state in negotiations, rather than effectively addressing Russia's domestic problems. Putin's decision to intensify offensive operations throughout Ukraine in March and April 2025 is only exacerbating these issues and underscores his commitment to pressuring Ukraine in negotiations. ISW continues to assess that increased Western – especially US – military aid and economic sanctions are necessary to enable Ukraine to inflict significant battlefield losses on Russia and force Putin to either change his theory of victory or make an economically painful and unpopular decision to implement another partial involuntary reserve call-up.

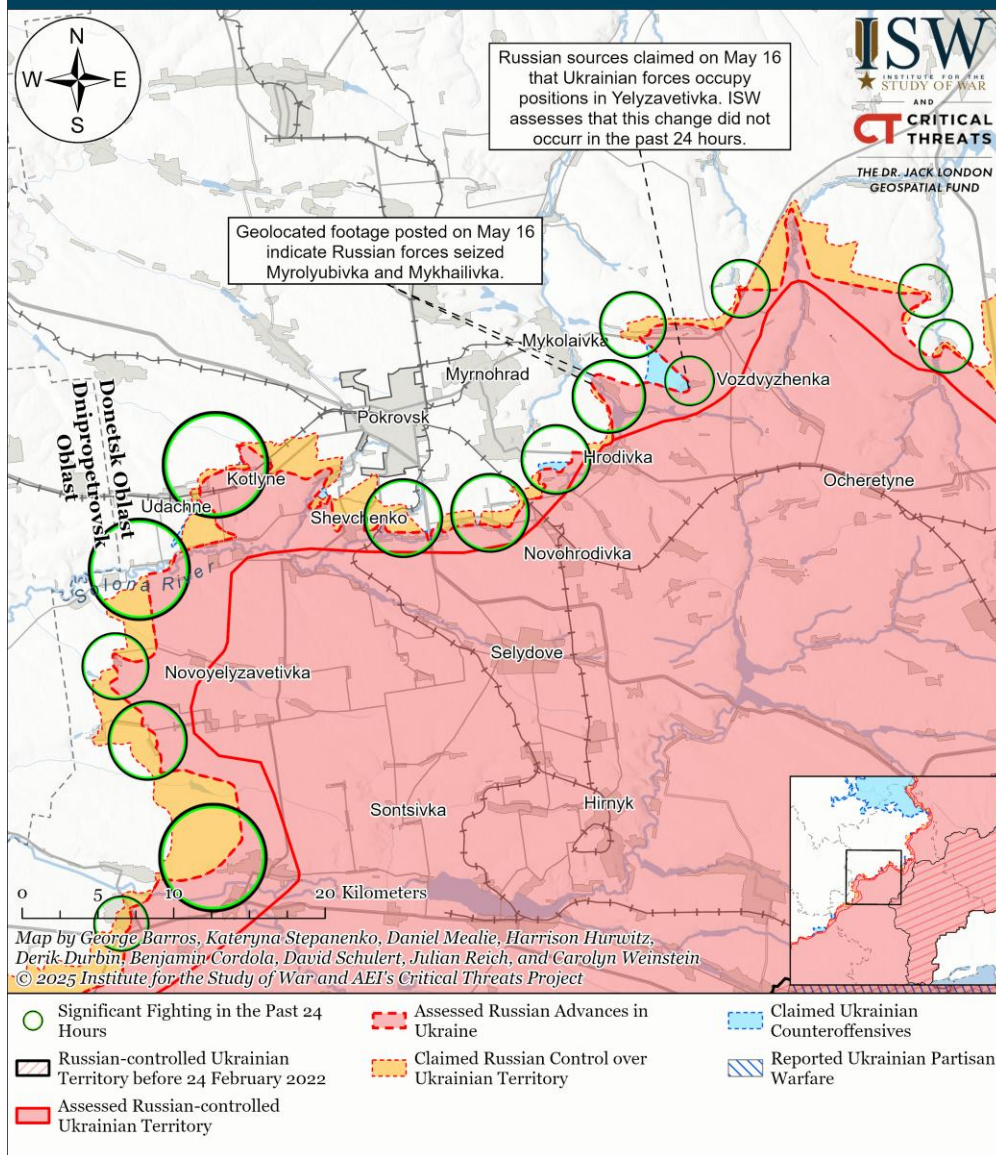
Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly approved a series of command changes in the Russian military, including a new Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Ground Forces. Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on May 15 to appoint former Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces General Oleg Salyukov as Deputy Secretary of the Russian Security Council. [21] Kremlin-affiliated outlet *Izvestia*, citing an unspecified source, reported on May 15 that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) appointed Colonel General Andrei Mordvichev as Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces of the Armed Forces to replace Salyukov. [22] Mordvichev most recently served as the commander of both the Russian Central Grouping of Forces and Central Military District (CMD) and oversaw Russia's seizure of Avdiivka in February 2024. [23] Russian milbloggers claimed that the Russian MoD also appointed Colonel General Valery Solodchuk as the new CMD commander, and Russian outlet *Ura* reported that a high-ranking source in Russian military circles confirmed these reports. [24] Solodchuk most recently served as commander of the Kursk Grouping of Forces and led Russia's efforts to eliminate the Ukrainian salient in Kursk Oblast. [25] Russian insider sources and milbloggers welcomed Mordvichev's appointment and interpreted it as a sign that the Kremlin is initiating a modernization effort to enhance Russia's ability to plan and execute operations in Ukraine and beyond. [26]

The Kremlin is likely appointing Mordvichev to proliferate positional warfare tactics and operational concepts for grinding marginal advances – the main tactics Russian forces used in the Avdiivka-Pokrovsk direction – across Russia’s Ground Forces. Mordvichev’s appointment indicates that the Kremlin approves of the tactics developed under Mordvichev’s command – namely, the use of grinding, highly attritional, infantry-led assaults – and aims to institutionalize these tactics that the CMD used to advance in the Avdiivka-Pokrovsk direction since late 2023.

Mordvichev is one of the few Russian commanders to have achieved tactical penetrations of the Ukrainian line in the last two years and one of Russia’s most celebrated commanders at the moment, but these limited tactical penetrations have come at great costs.[27] Russian forces suffered significant personnel and equipment losses in exchange for approximately 60 kilometers of penetration since elements of the CMD first redeployed to the Avdiivka-Pokrovsk direction in October 2023.[28] Mordvichev’s appointment is likely also an effort to distill lessons learned and tactics from the CMD to the rest of the Russian military, as ISW has previously observed Russian units in the Kupyansk and Velyka Novosilka directions implementing the attritional assaults that the CMD utilized to seize Avdiivka in February 2024.[29]

Russian forces are continuing to expand their salient northeast of Pokrovsk and southwest of Toretsk, although it remains unclear whether the Russian military command will prioritize further advances towards Kostyantynivka or Pokrovsk during Summer 2025. Geolocated footage published on May 16 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in northern Myrolyubivka (east of Pokrovsk) and seized Myrolyubivka and Mykhailivka (just west of Myrolyubivka).[30] Russian milbloggers claimed on May 16 that Russian forces advanced further north and southwest of Myrolyubivka and northwest of Hrodivka (east of Pokrovsk).[31] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) credited elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 1st Donetsk People’s Republic Army Corps [DNR AC], Southern Military District [SMD]) with seizing Myrolyubivka, and a Kremlin-affiliated milblogger insinuated that the 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade is subordinated to the Central Grouping of Forces.[32] The brigade was likely previously subordinated under the Southern Grouping of Forces, as the Russian military command redeployed elements of the 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade from the Kurakhove direction to reinforce offensive operations near Vozdvyzhenka (east of Pokrovsk) in January 2025.[33] ISW has not observed reports of the brigade engaged in combat since March 2025, however. Elements of the 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade and other elements of the 51st CAA appeared to culminate in Toretsk in February and March 2025, but the brigade may be reentering combat after a period of rest and reconstitution.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Pokrovsk Direction May 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

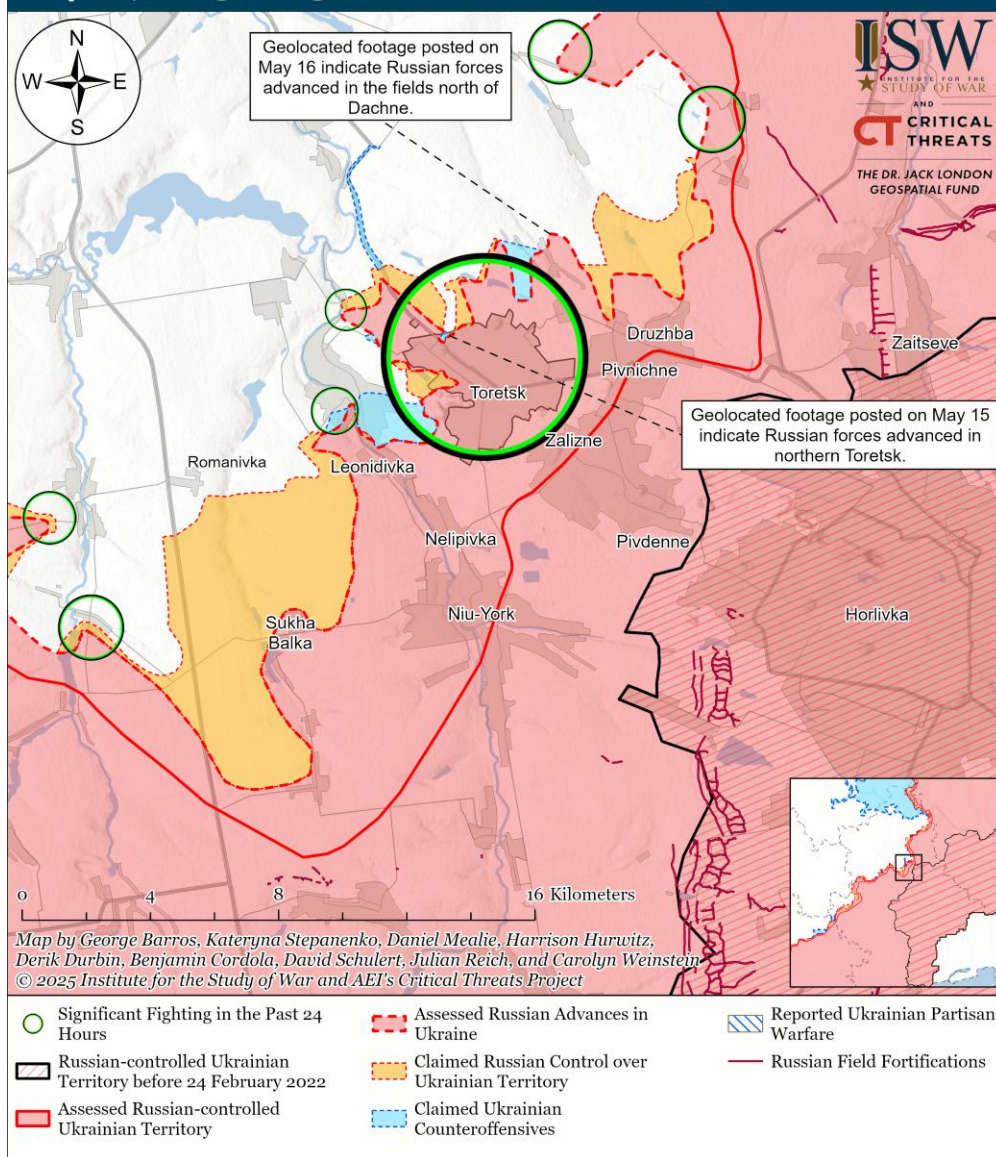


Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on May 16 that Ukrainian forces maintain some positions near and within Yelyzavetivka (east of Myrolyubivka) that are complicating Russian advances towards Myrnohrad (west of Yelyzavetivka and just east of Pokrovsk) and Pokrovsk.[34] Russian milbloggers also recently acknowledged that Ukrainian forces maintain positions north of Yalyzvetivka, and ISW is therefore expanding Ukrainian advances in the area, although these advances are likely not recent.[35] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 20th Motorized Rifle Division (8th CAA, SMD) and 51st CAA are attempting to advance from Malynivka toward Novoekonomichne and north of Nova Poltavka (all northeast of Pokrovsk) in order to force Ukrainian forces to withdraw from Yelyzavetivka and to envelop Pokrovsk and Myrnohrad.[36]

Russian forces have recently intensified offensive operations northeast and east of Pokrovsk after largely abandoning this area in favor of advances further northeast of Pokrovsk toward Kostyantynivka

and southwest of Pokrovsk toward Novopavlivka in early 2024.[37] Ukrainian officials recently reported that Russia is reinforcing its units in the Pokrovsk direction, and ISW recently observed reports that elements of the Russian 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th Army Corps [AC], Eastern Military District [EMD]) recently redeployed from the Kurakhove direction to near Malynivka.[38] These recent redeployments and the reported appointment of Valery Solodchuk as Central Military District (CMD) commander after his recent success in Kursk Oblast indicate that the Russian military command may refocus on the seizure of Pokrovsk and Myrnohrad in the coming weeks and months. ISW previously assessed that Russian forces may attempt to advance along the Vozdvyzhenka-Yelyzavetivka-Myrne-Razine line to envelop Pokrovsk instead of fighting through the more urban and heavily defended settlements of Novoekonomichne and Myrnohrad closer to Pokrovsk.[39] The Russian military command may redeploy forces from Kursk Oblast or additional elements of the 51st CAA to the CMD's area of responsibility (AoR) around Pokrovsk and reintensify efforts to advance west of Pokrovsk should the Russian military command prioritize seizing Pokrovsk over pushing further toward Kostyantynivka from the southwest during Summer 2025.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Toretsk Direction May 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



The Russian military command may alternatively choose to continue prioritizing advances toward Kostyantynivka in Summer 2025. Russian forces intensified offensive operations aimed at eliminating the Ukrainian pocket southwest of Toretsk in February and March 2025, and recent Russian advances into Novoolenivka and near Zorya (both southwest of Toretsk) will likely force Ukrainian forces to withdraw from their limited positions remaining in the pocket in the near future.[40] Mashovets stated that Russian forces are currently attempting to attack along the T-0504 Pokrovsk-Kostyantynivka highway toward Stepanivka (northwest of Toretsk) and Yablunivka (west of Toretsk).[41] Mashovets stated that elements of the 20th Motorized Rifle Division are the main force attacking between Stara Mykolaivka (southwest of Toretsk) and Nova Poltavka and that elements of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th CAA) are attacking in other areas southwest of Toretsk, including toward Romanivka.[42] ISW previously assessed that Russian forces likely intend to leverage advances southwest of Toretsk to

push along the H-20 Donetsk City-Kostyantynivka highway and facilitate deeper advances northeast of Pokrovsk along the T-0504 Pokrovsk-Kostyantynivka highway toward Kostyantynivka.[43] ISW recently observed reports that elements of the Russian 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) redeployed from western Zaporizhia Oblast to the Stara Mykolaivka area and that unspecified drone operators recently redeployed from the Kursk direction to near Kalynove (south of Stara Mykolaivka).[44] The Russian military command may continue to reinforce the Russian force grouping southwest of Toretsk and attempt to advance further along the H-20 Donetsk City-Kostyantynivka highway toward Oleksandro-Kalynove (west of Toretsk) in the coming weeks if they intend to prioritize offensive operations against Kostyantynivka in Summer 2025.

Russia is unlikely to have sufficient manpower, materiel, and operational planning capabilities to conduct both an envelopment of Pokrovsk and a significant offensive operation toward Kostyantynivka in the coming months. Russian advances southwest of Toretsk currently support both of these efforts, but the Russian military command will likely have to choose to prioritize one direction in the coming weeks due to near-term constraints in Russia's manpower and materiel reserves.[45] Recent Ukrainian estimates suggest that Russia is recruiting enough forces to slowly grow their force grouping in Ukraine, but ISW has not observed indications that the Kremlin has generated a sufficient operational reserve to support multiple intensified operations as of this report.[46]

Russian forces have thus far struggled to break out of Chasiv Yar and Toretsk, which has likely complicated Russia's plans for an offensive against Kostyantynivka and the wider Ukrainian fortress belt. Russian forces may conduct an operational pause after they level the frontline southwest of Toretsk in order to give Russian units in Chasiv Yar and Toretsk time to make more significant advances before beginning a concerted offensive against Kostyantynivka. The recent intensification in Russian activity northeast, east, and south of Pokrovsk suggests that Russian forces may assess that Ukrainian positions in Pokrovsk are becoming increasingly vulnerable and that Russian forces should renew their efforts to envelop the town. The Russian military command may attempt to pursue the envelopment of Pokrovsk and significant advances toward Kostyantynivka simultaneously, but pursuing both operations will expedite the timeline for a likely Russian culmination and will undermine Russian forces' ability to accomplish either goal. Russian forces also must continue to balance offensive operations near Toretsk and Pokrovsk with the manpower and materiel demands of ongoing efforts to advance into Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, seize Kupyansk, and push toward Borova, Lyman, Sumy City and Kharkiv City.

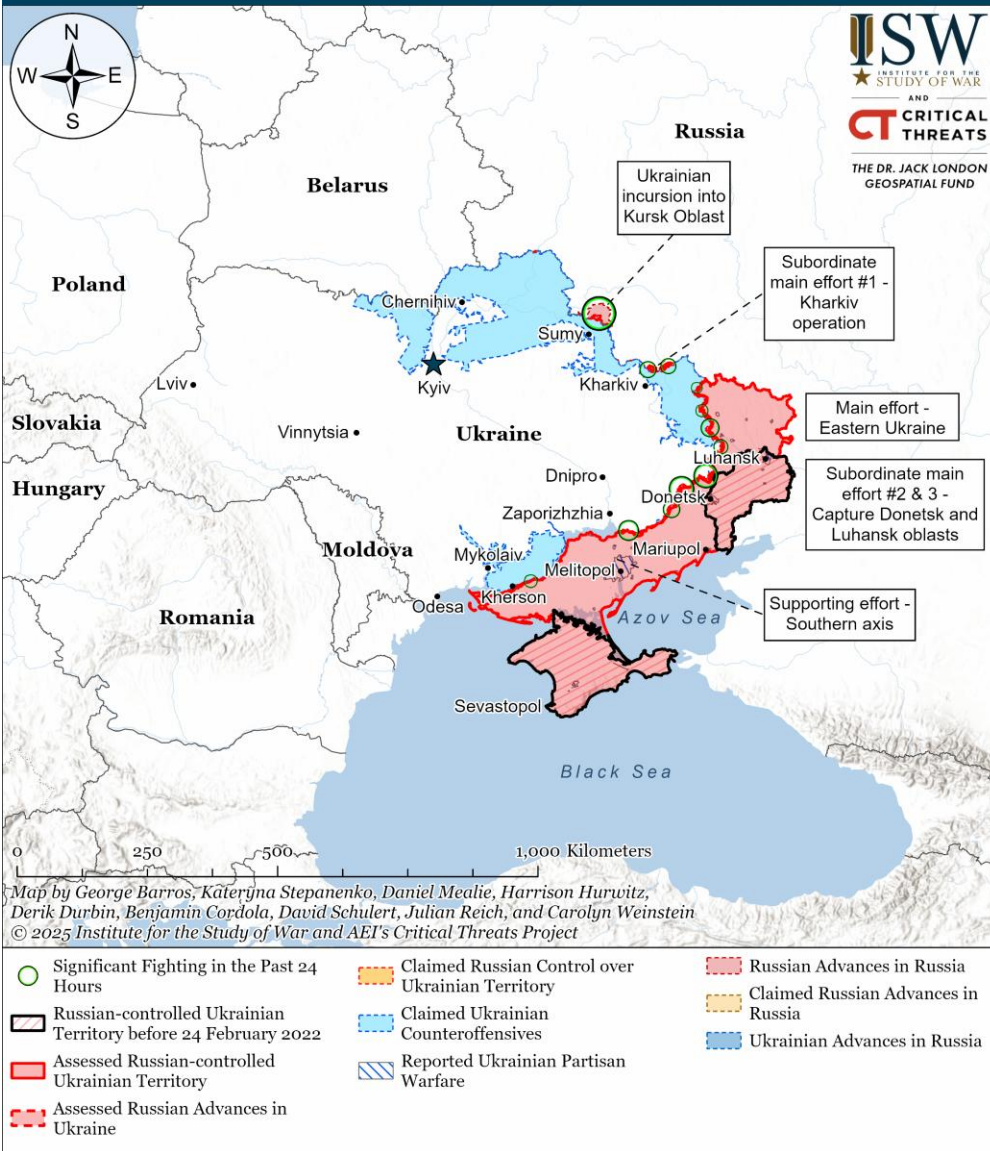
Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian and Russian delegations met in Istanbul on May 16 but made little progress towards agreeing to a full ceasefire or a peace settlement to Russia's war against Ukraine.**
- **Medinsky highlighted that Russia is prepared to continue its war in Ukraine for years to come.**
- **The Kremlin has repeatedly publicly demanded that Ukraine cede all of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts – even the territory that Russian forces**

currently do not occupy - but had not formally demanded that Ukraine cede all of Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts before the May 16 Istanbul meeting.

- ISW has consistently assessed that Russian President Vladimir Putin will not compromise in peace negotiations unless Ukraine and the West inflict significant battlefield and economic losses on Russia and force Putin to rethink his theory of victory.**
- Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly approved a series of command changes in the Russian military, including a new Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Ground Forces.**
- Russian forces are continuing to expand their salient northeast of Pokrovsk and southwest of Toretsk, although it remains unclear whether the Russian military command will prioritize further advances towards Kostyantynivka or Pokrovsk during Summer 2025.**
- Russia is unlikely to have sufficient manpower, materiel, and operational planning capabilities to conduct both an envelopment of Pokrovsk and a significant offensive operation toward Kostyantynivka in the coming months.**
- Russian forces recently advanced near Toretsk, Pokrovsk, and Novopavlivka and in the Zaporizhia direction.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Russo-Ukrainian War May 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



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.

- Alleged Ceasefire Violations
- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Supporting Effort – Northern Axis

- 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, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas, and possibly advance into Dnipropetrovsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Alleged Ceasefire Violations

There are no active ceasefires in Ukraine.

Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation

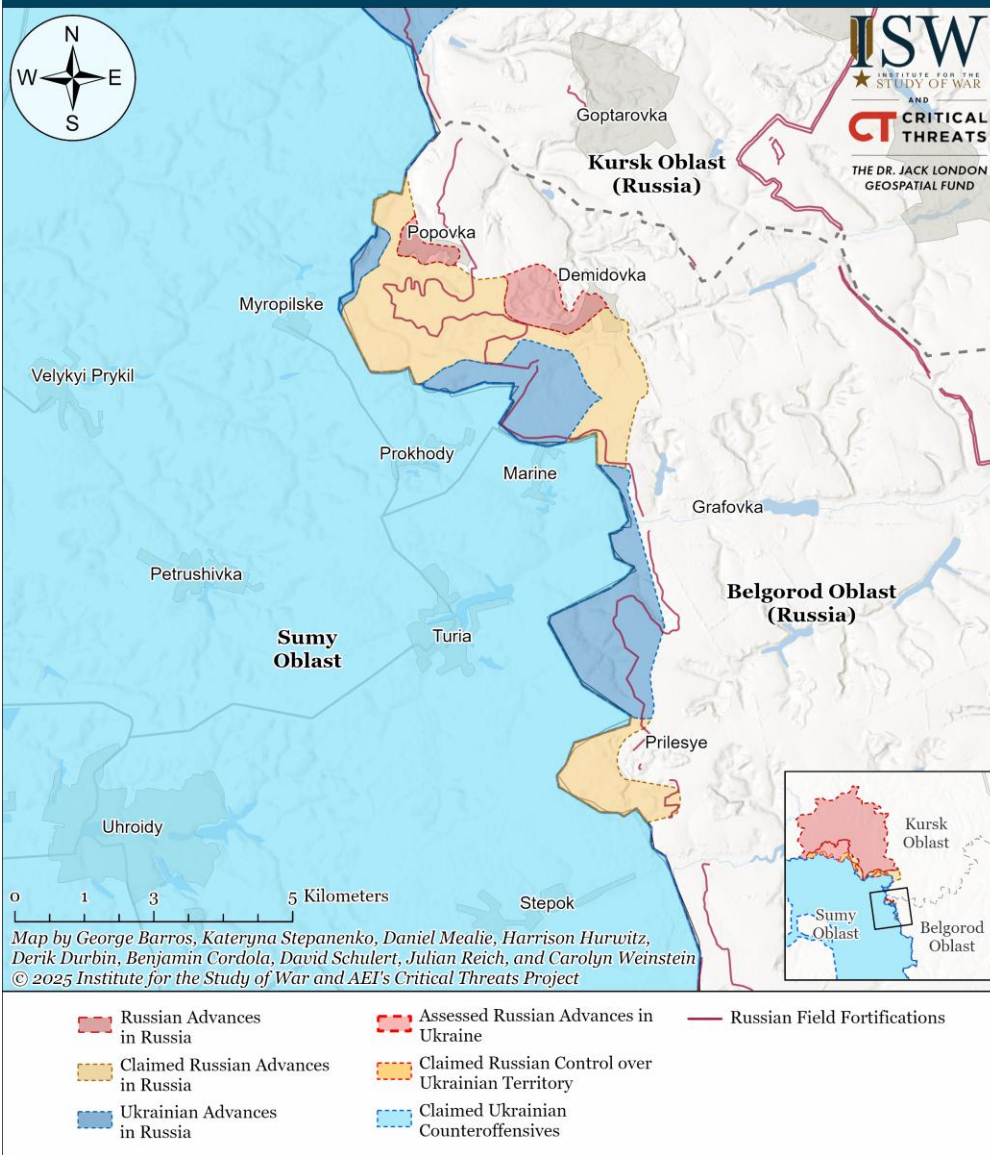
Fighting continued in Kursk Oblast on May 15 and 16.[47]

Russian milbloggers claimed on May 15 and 16 that fighting continues in Tetkino (southwest of Glushkovo) and near Gornal (southwest of Sudzha).[48] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked from Atynske (southeast of Tetkino in Sumy Oblast) and Ryzhivka (just south of Tetkino across the international border).[49]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 352nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (11th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly operating near the international border near Sudzha.[50]

Neither Ukrainian nor Russian sources reported ground activity in northwestern Belgorod Oblast on May 16.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Belgorod Direction May 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

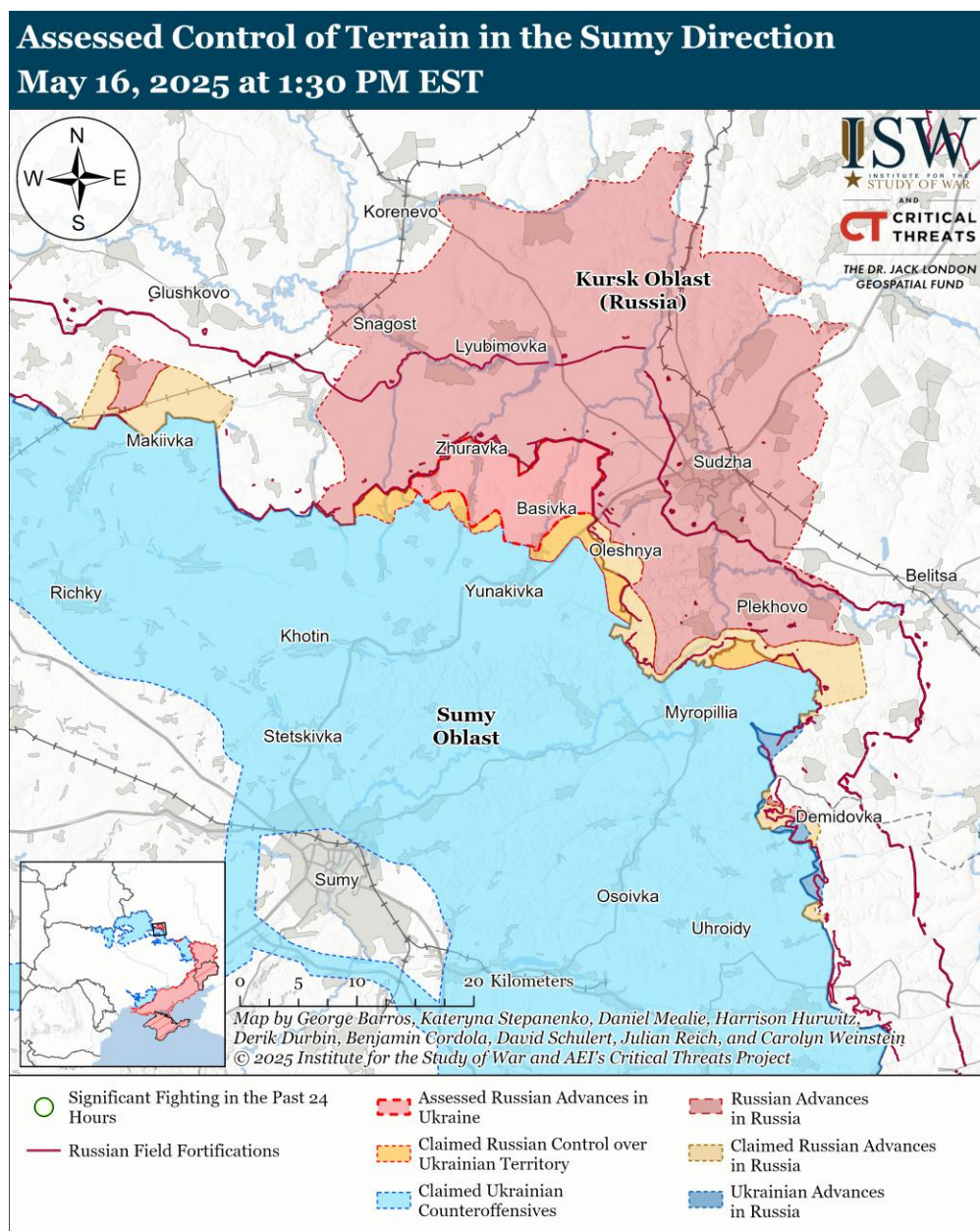


Russian Supporting Effort – Northern Axis (Russian objective: Create defensible buffer zones in northern Ukraine along the international border and approach to within tube artillery range of Sumy City)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in Sumy Oblast on May 16 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 352nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (11th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) advanced from Veselivka (northeast of Sumy City).[51]

Fighting continued north and northeast of Sumy City along the Vodolahy–Loknya line.[52] Russian milbloggers claimed on May 16 that Ukrainian forces counterattacked north of Sumy City near Bezsalivka.[53]



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)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kharkiv direction on May 16 but did not make any confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 300 meters toward Vovchanski Khutory (northeast of Kharkiv City).[54]

Russian forces attacked north of Kharkiv City near Lyptsi, Kurdiivka and Hlyboke and towards Vysoka Yaruha and northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk and Vovchanski Khutory.[55] Geolocated footage published on May 15 indicates that Russian forces recently conducted an unsuccessful reconnaissance-in-force mission south of Zhuravlevka (north of Kharkiv City in Belgorod Oblast) toward the international border, possibly to prepare for future offensive operations in the area west of Striplecha (just east of Zhuravlevka in Kharkiv Oblast).[56] Official Ukrainian sources reported on May 15 that Russian forces attacked in the directions of Kurdiivka and Vysoka Yaruga and used an unspecified number of armored vehicles and a significant number of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and motorcycles.[57] Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces reported that Russian forces also attacked near Hlyboke with one car and six motorcycles.[58]

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 in the Kupyansk direction on May 16 but did not advance.

Russian forces attacked north of Kupyansk near Putnykove and southeast of Kupyansk toward Pischane and Novoosynove on May 15 and 16.[59]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Borova direction on May 16 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed on May 15 that Russian forces advanced on the eastern bank of the Tekuch River near Hrekivka (southwest of Borova).[60]

Russian forces attacked north of Borova near Bohuslavka and toward Novoplatonivka; northeast of Borova near Zahryzove, Kruhlyakivka, Nova Kruhlyakivka, and Kolisnykivka; and southeast of Borova toward Olhivka on May 15 and 16.[61]

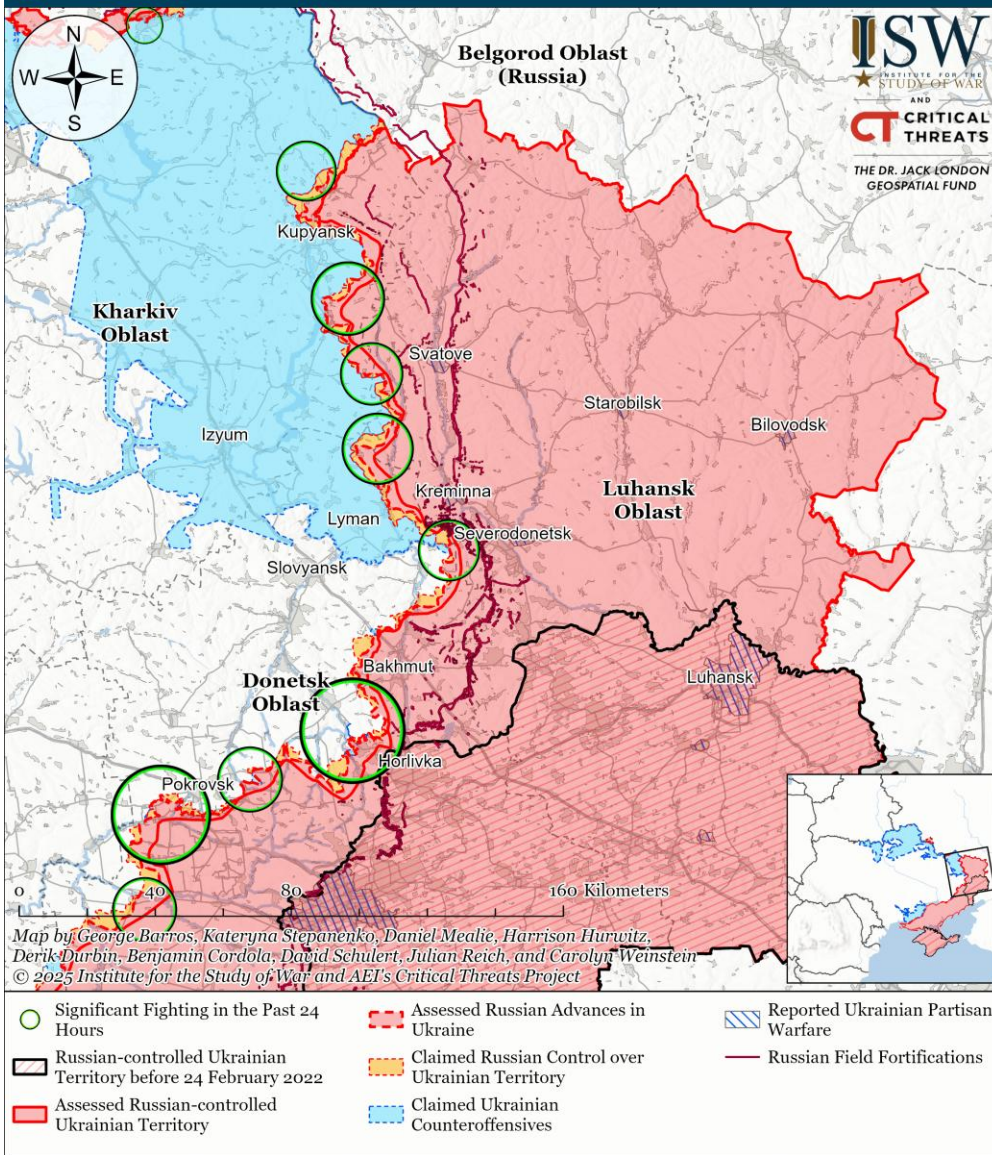
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Lyman direction on May 16 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed on May 15 that Russian forces advanced northeast of Novomykhailivka (northeast of Lyman).[62]

Russian forces attacked north of Lyman near Novyi Mir and Ridkodub and toward Zelena Dolyna; northeast of Lyman near Kolodyazi; and southeast of Lyman in the Serebrianske forest area on May 15 and 16.[63]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 67th Motorized Rifle Division (25th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly operating in Torske (east of Lyman).[64]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Luhansk Oblast May 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas, and possibly advance into Dnipropetrovsk Oblast)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Siversk direction on May 16 but did not advance.

Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Siversk near Bilohorivka and Hryhorivka and east of Siversk near Verkhynokamyanske on May 15 and 16.[65]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Chasiv Yar direction on May 16 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced within Chasiv Yar, northwest of Kalynivka (north of Chasiv Yar), and into Stupochky (south of Chasiv Yar).[66]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Chasiv Yar itself; southeast of Chasiv Yar near Kurdyumivka and Klishchiivka; and south of Chasiv Yar near Bila Hora on May 15 and 16.[67]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 1442nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (6th Motorized Rifle Division, 3rd Army Corps [AC]) are reportedly operating in Stupochky.[68]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Toretsk direction.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on May 12, 15, and 16 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in northern Toretsk, north of Dachne (north of Toretsk), west of Dyliivka (north of Toretsk) and in the northern outskirts of Druzhba (northeast of Toretsk).[69]

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Toretsk and northwest of Oleksandropil (west of Toretsk).[70]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in Toretsk itself; north of Toretsk near Dyliivka and Krymske; west of Toretsk near Katerynivka; and southwest of Toretsk near Novospaske (formerly Petrivka), Zorya, Stara Mykolaivka, and Nova Poltavka and toward Popiv Yar on May 15 and 16.[71]

See topline text for additional details on Russian activity southwest of Toretsk.

Ukrainian Luhansk Group of Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Dmytro Zaporozhets stated on May 16 that elements of the Russian 132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC, Southern Military District [SMD]) are utilizing unit commanders in infantry assaults in the Toretsk direction.[72]

Ukrainian and Russian forces recently advanced in the Pokrovsk direction.

Assessed Ukrainian advances: *See topline text for reports of Ukrainian advances east of Pokrovsk.*

Assessed Russian advances: *See topline text for reports of Russian advances east of Pokrovsk.*

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced northwest of Zvirove (south of Pokrovsk).[73]

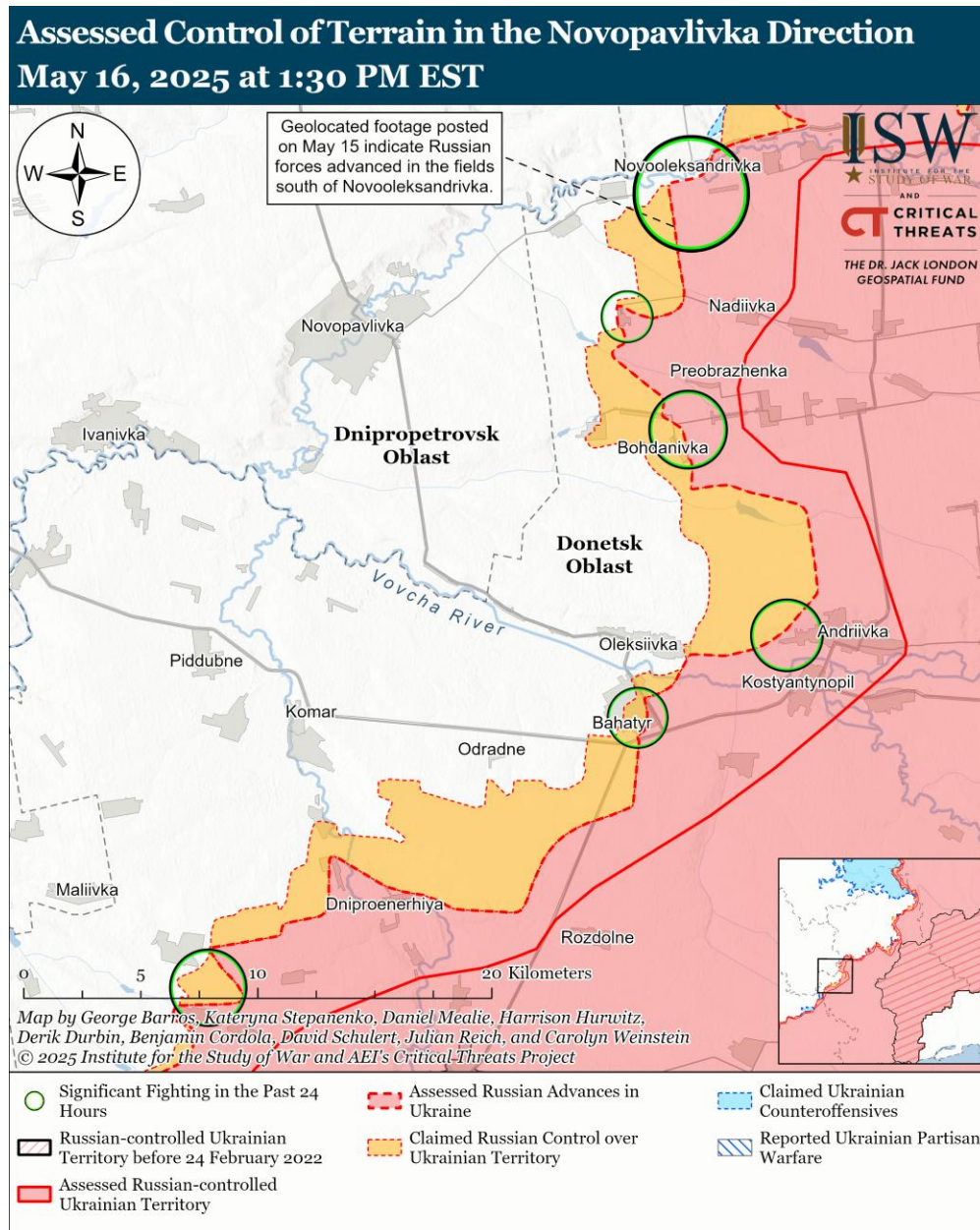
Russian forces continued offensive operations northeast of Pokrovsk near Myrolyubivka and Malynivka; east of Pokrovsk near Yelyzavetivka, Pomin, and Myrnohrad; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Novoukrainka; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Udachne and Kotlyne on May 15 and 16.[74]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Novopavlivka direction.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on May 15 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Novooleksandrivka (northeast of Novopavlivka).[75]

Russian forces continued assaults northeast of Novopavlivka near Novooleksandrivka and Novoserhiivka and toward Muravka; east of Novopavlivka near Kotlyarivka, Zaporizhzhia, and Troitske; and southeast of Novopavlivka near Bohdanivka on May 15 and 16.[76] Ukrainian Joint

Forces Commander Lieutenant General Serhiy Nayev reported on May 16 that Ukrainian forces recently repelled a multi-directional reinforced company-sized Russian mechanized assault with 12 armored vehicles, five tanks, and 25 motorcycles in an unspecified area between the Novopavlivka through Velyka Novosilka directions.[77] A Ukrainian outlet suggested that the mechanized assault may have occurred near Novooleksandrivka.[78]



Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kurakhove direction on May 16 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Odradne (southwest of Kurakhove) and Bahatyr (west of Kurakhove).[79] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces occupy central Bahatyr.[80]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations west of Kurakhove near Andriivka, Kostyantynopil, and Bahatyr on May 15 and 16.[81] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked near Bahatyr.[82]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Velyka Novosilka direction on May 16 but did not make confirmed advances.

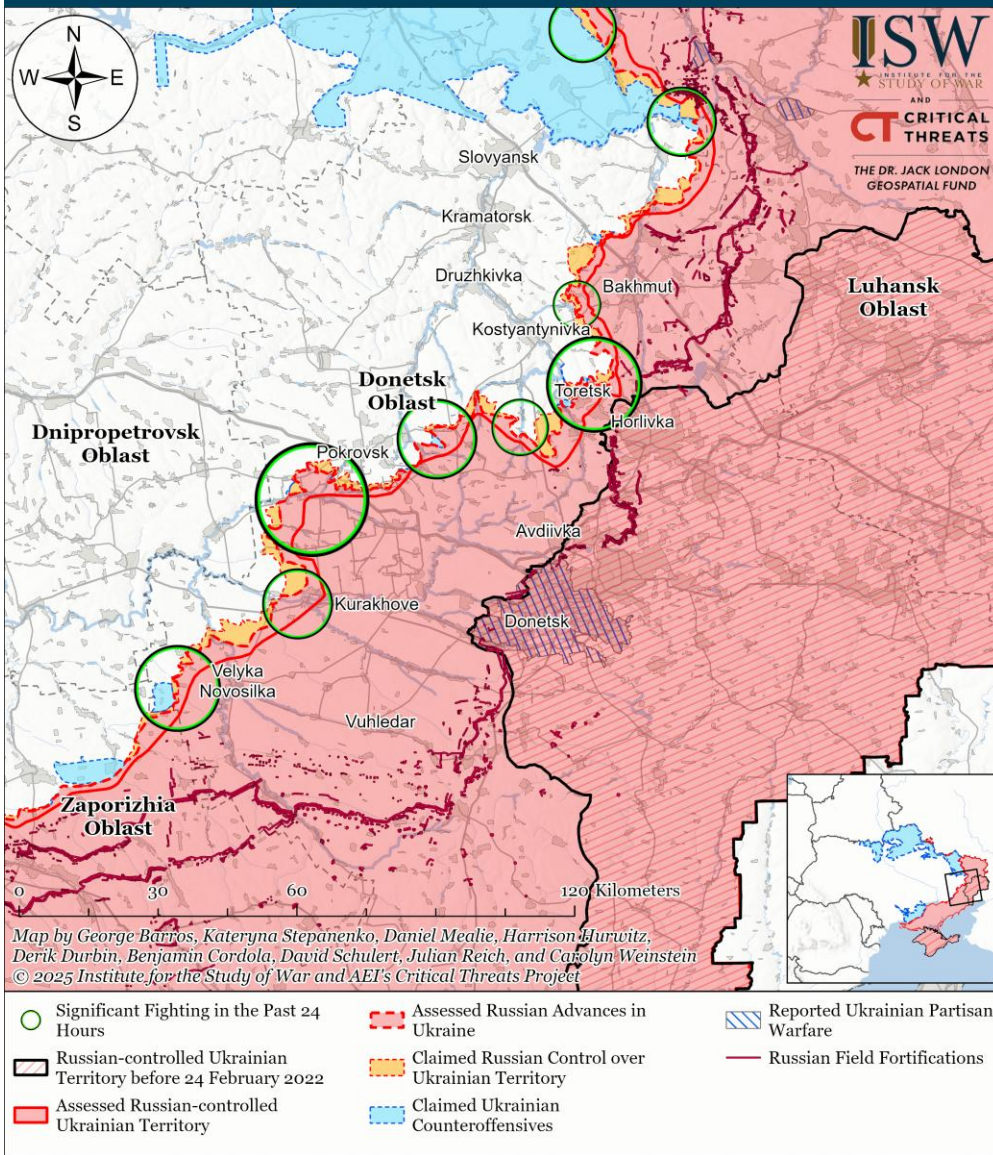
Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Burlatske (northwest of Velyka Novosilka), south and northwest of Vilne Pole (northwest of Velyka Novosilka), northwest of Novosilka (west of Velyka Novosilka), and east of Novopil (southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[83]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations northwest of Velyka Novosilka near Shevchenko, Pryvilne, and Vilne Pole; west of Velyka Novosilka near Novosilka; and southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Zelene Pole on May 15 and 16.[84]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on May 16 that the elements of the Russian 5th CAA (EMD) seized Vilne Pole, but ISW assessed Russian forces seized the settlement as of May 15.[85]

Order of Battle: Artillery elements of the Russian 305th Artillery Brigade and drone operators of the 57th and 60th motorized rifle brigades (all of the 5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating in the Velyka Novosilka direction.[86]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Donetsk Oblast May 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



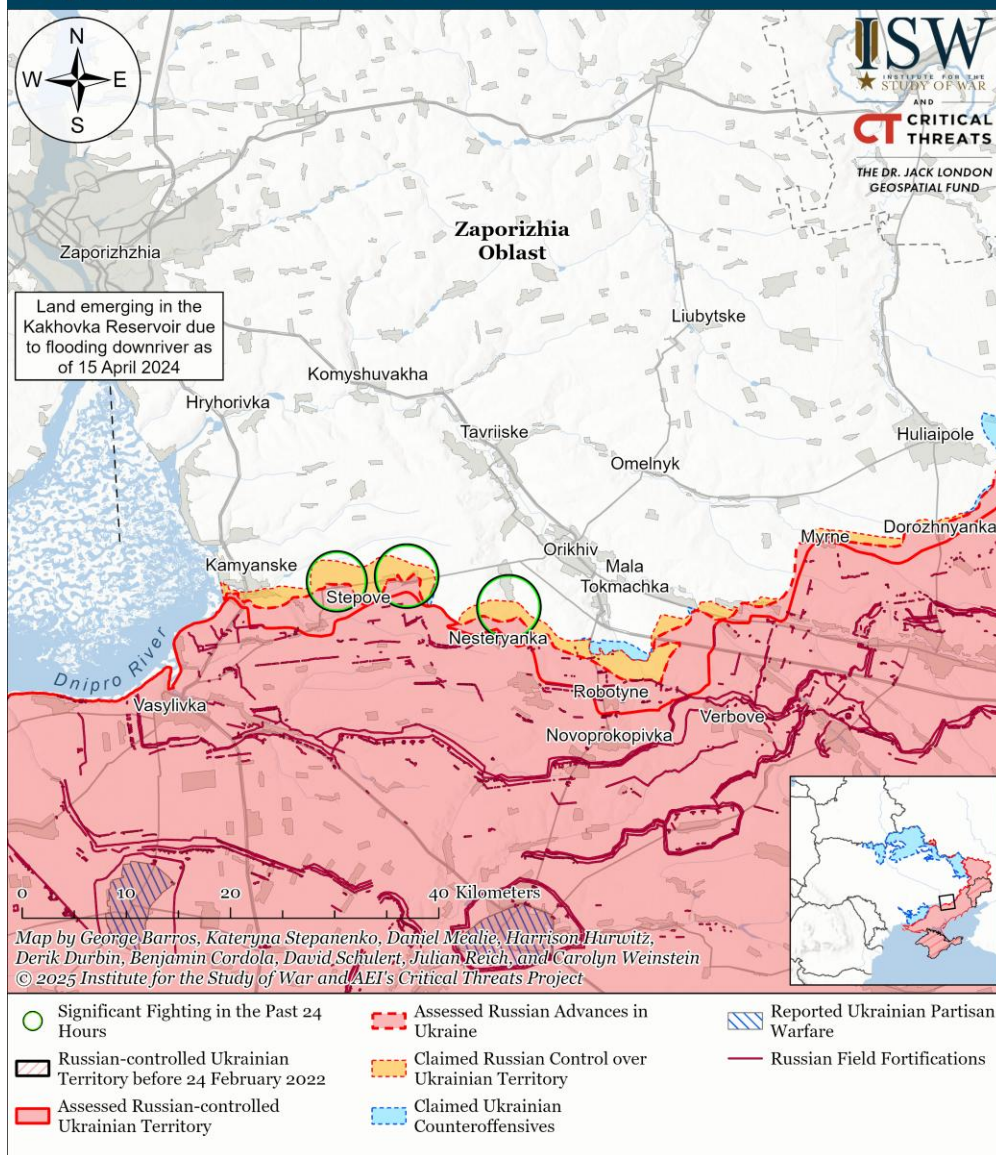
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions, secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes, and advance within tube artillery range of Zaporizhzhia City)

Russian forces recently advanced in the Zaporizhia direction.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on May 15 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced northwest of Lobkove (southwest of Orikhiv).[87]

Russian forces attacked southwest of Orikhiv near Shcherbaky, Mali Shcherbaky, Novoandriivka, and Stepove on May 15 and 16.[88]

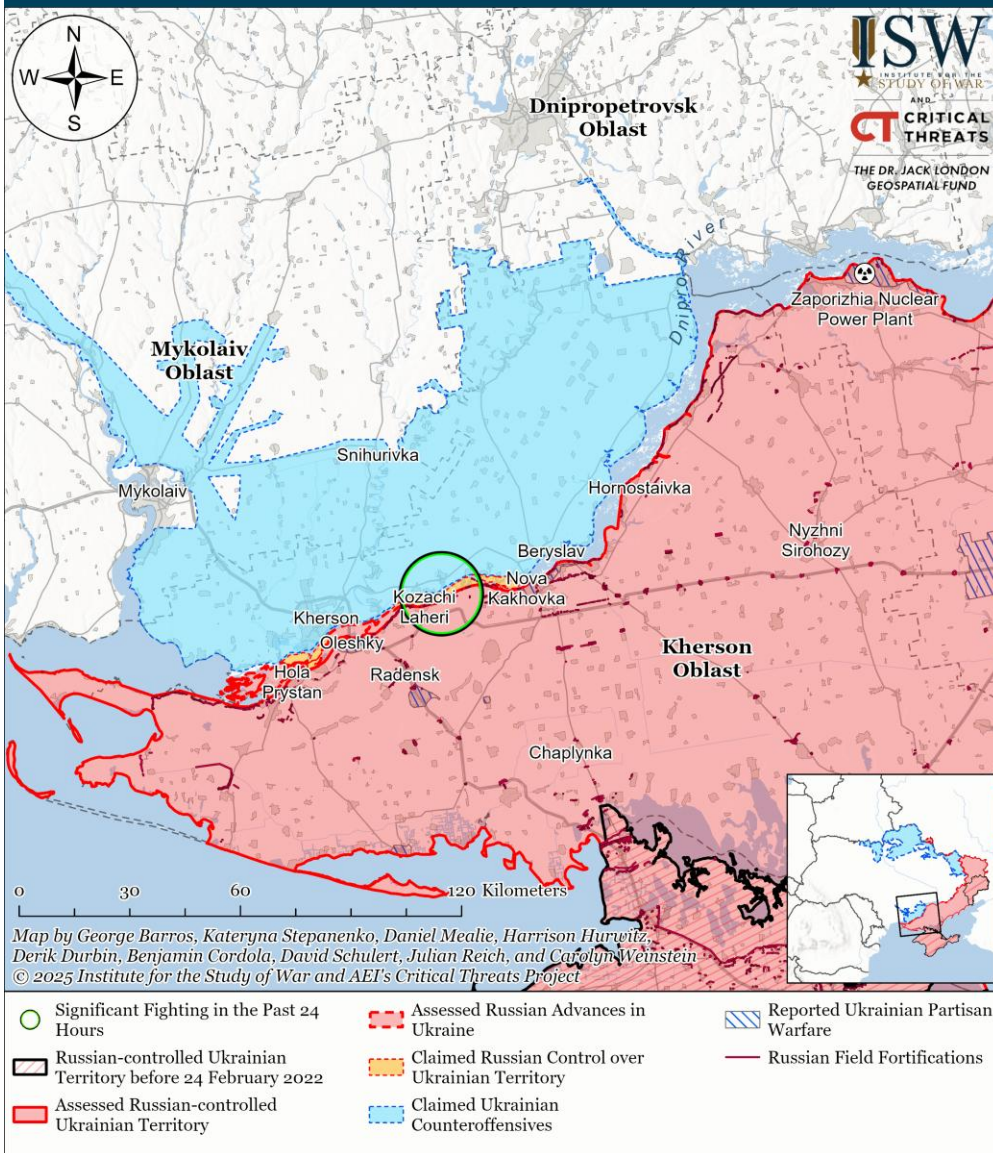
Assessed Control of Terrain in the Zaporizhia Direction May 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian forces conducted limited offensive operations in the Kherson direction on May 15 and 16 but did not advance.[89]

A Russian milblogger claimed on May 16 that Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups periodically cross from the Russian-occupied east (left) bank of the Dniro River to the west (right) bank.[90]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kherson Direction May 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Ukrainian forces likely conducted a drone strike against a Russian military base in occupied Crimea on May 16. The "Atesh" Crimea-based Ukrainian partisan group reported that there were explosions at the base of the Russian 126th Coastal Defense Brigade and the 8th Separate Artillery Regiment (both of the 22nd Army Corps [AC], Black Sea Fleet [BSF]) near occupied Perevalne (southeast of Simferopol).[91] Geolocated footage published on May 16 shows an explosion and fire at an ammunition warehouse in Perevalne.[92] Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation Head Lieutenant Andriy Kovalenko, who often reports on successful Ukrainian drone strikes, stated that "unknown drones" struck Russian warehouses in occupied Crimea overnight.[93]

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 drone strikes against Ukraine overnight on May 15 and 16. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 112 Shahed and decoy drones from the directions of Bryansk, Kursk, and Oryol cities; Millerovo, Rostov Oblast; and Primorsko-Aktarsk, Krasnodar Krai.[94] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 73 Shahed drones over northern, eastern, southern, and central Ukraine and that 36 drones were "lost." Ukrainian official sources reported that Russian drones struck Odesa, Zhytomyr, Chernihiv, Mykolaiv, and Kyiv oblasts.[95]

Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks)

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin met with Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov in Minsk on May 16 to discuss strengthening defense cooperation.[96] Lukashenko and Belousov emphasized that Belarus and Russia are planning the upcoming "Zapad-2025" joint military exercise in both Russia and Belarus. Lukashenko thanked Russia for providing Belarus with military hardware, including airplanes and helicopters, and announced that Belarus is actively working to implement Russian President Vladimir Putin's plan to deploy advanced weaponry, including Oreshnik medium-range missiles, in Belarus.[97] Belousov highlighted that Russia is training over 300 Belarusian servicemembers at Russian military educational institutions in modern combat operations and unmanned systems.[98] Belarusian International Military Cooperation Department Head Valery Revenko stated on February 20 that the "Zapad-2025" exercise will occur in mid-September 2025, but it remains unclear how many servicemembers will participate.[99] Russia may use the exercise to permanently forward deploy Russian forces in Belarus. Russia and Belarus ratified a treaty in March 2025 allowing Russia to build military bases in Belarus.[100]

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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