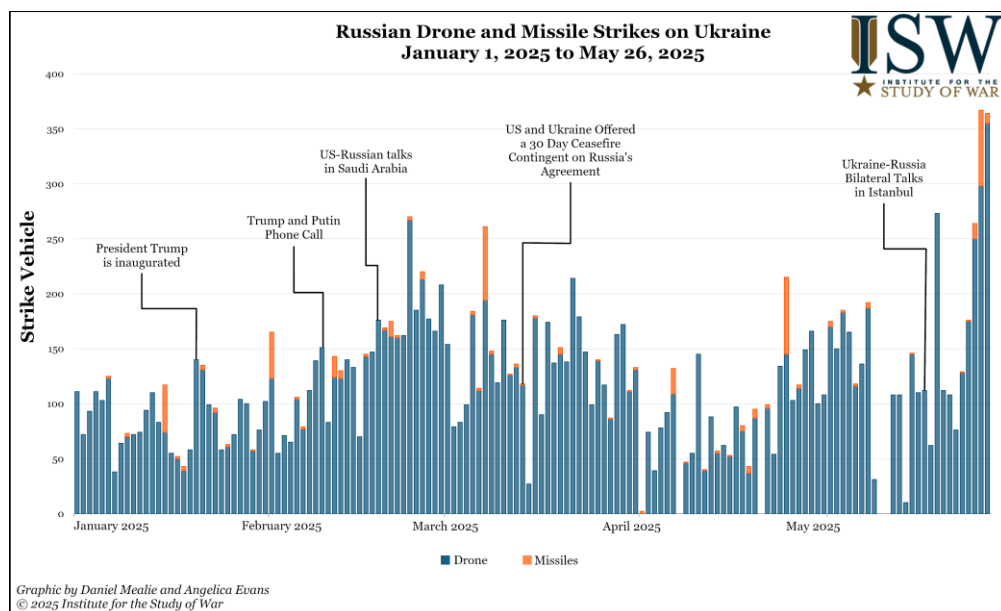


Anna Harvey, Christina Harward, Angelica Evans, Grace Mappes, and Frederick W. Kagan

May 26, 2025, 7:30 pm ET

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 3:00 pm ET on May 26. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 27 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian forces conducted one of their largest drone and missile strikes of the war against Ukraine on the night of May 25 to 26 after three nights of record strikes. The May 25-26 strike is now the second largest combined strike of the war, after Russian forces conducted the largest combined strike on the night of May 24 to 25. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched nine Kh-101 cruise missiles from the airspace over Saratov Oblast and 355 Shahed and decoy drones from the directions of Bryansk, Kursk, and Oryol cities; Millerovo, Rostov Oblast; Shatalovo, Smolensk Oblast; Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai; and occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea.^[1] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces shot down all nine Kh-101 missiles and 233 drones over northern, eastern, southern, western, and central Ukraine and that 55 drones were "lost." Ukrainian officials reported that the Russian strikes targeted Chernihiv, Khmelnytskyi, Kharkiv, Odesa, and Kyiv oblasts.^[2] Ukrainian officials stated that the strikes caused civilian casualties and damaged civilian infrastructure and private residences.



Russia has launched three of its largest strike packages against Ukraine over the last three days, including its two largest combined strikes, and eight of the largest strikes of the war since January

2025.[3] Russian strikes against Ukraine continue to disproportionately impact civilians and civilian infrastructure.[4] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on May 26 that Russia launched over 900 drones against Ukraine over the last three days and that intensified Russian strikes have a significant political meaning.[5] Zelensky stated that Russian President Vladimir Putin is choosing to continue the war rather than engage in meaningful peace negotiations and that there is no evidence that Russia is considering a diplomatic end to the war.[6] Russia may be increasing strikes against Ukraine as part of a cognitive warfare effort to weaken Ukrainian resolve and to undermine Western support for Ukraine.

Russia's increased missile stockpiling, drone production, and drone adaptations demonstrate Russia's commitment to achieving its war goals through military means in a protracted war in Ukraine. The *Economist* reported on May 25 that Ukrainian government sources estimate that the Kremlin has a stockpile of 500 ballistic missiles.[7] The *Economist* also reported that Russia is increasing its production of Shahed drones and can currently produce approximately 100 Shaheds a day — roughly four to five times their assessed daily production rate in late 2024.[8] Ukrainian military intelligence told the *Economist* that Russia plans to increase its production to 500 drones a day by an unspecified future deadline. Ukrainian drone engineers reported that Russia is actively innovating and adapting its Shahed drones to circumvent Ukrainian air defenses, including by using artificial intelligence (AI) and Ukrainian internet and mobile internet networks for navigation to prevent Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference. A Ukrainian officer told the *Economist* that Russian drones are flying at an altitude of 2,000 to 2,500 meters, which is out of range of the small-caliber guns and shoulder-fired missiles that Ukrainian mobile air defense crews use. Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation Head Lieutenant Andriy Kovalenko stated on May 25 that Russian forces recently set a new Shahed flight altitude record of 4,900 meters.[9] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated on May 26 that Russia is increasing its production of both Shahed and decoy drones and that Russian forces are flying drones at higher altitudes.[10] Ihnat reported on May 25 that Russian forces have also resumed their use of Kh-22 cruise missiles after temporarily using fewer cruise missiles in their strike packages.[11] Increasingly large Russian strike packages are consistent with reports that Russia is significantly increasing its domestic Shahed drone, decoy drone, and missile production and storage capabilities. Russia's efforts to increase domestic drone and missile production and ongoing adaptations of these strike packages are likely part of a broader Russian effort to prepare for a protracted war in Ukraine and possibly a future war with NATO.[12]

Ukrainian intelligence continues to assess that the Kremlin is committed to its war aim of achieving complete Ukrainian capitulation and is preparing for a potential future conflict with NATO — in line with ISW's assessments. Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service (SZRU) Head Oleh Ivashchenko stated in an interview with Ukrainian outlet *Ukrinform* published on May 26 that Russia's strategic plans to gain full control over Ukraine remain unchanged.[13] Ivashchenko stated that the entire Ukrainian intelligence community agrees that Russia is trying to take control over all of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts. Ivashchenko stated that Russia also has a long-term goal to establish influence over all post-Soviet states and that Russia will need two to four years after the end of hostilities in Ukraine to restore the Russian military's combat capabilities.

Ivashchenko noted that Russia's ability to rearm its military after the end of its war in Ukraine will depend on Western sanctions. ISW continues to assess that Russia remains committed to pursuing demands that amount to nothing short of Ukraine's full surrender and that Russia will continue to pursue this objective so long as Putin believes Russia can militarily defeat Ukraine.^[14] ISW also continues to assess that the Russian government and military are preparing for a possible future conflict with NATO.^[15] Russian authorities recently renewed their years-long narrative rejecting the legality of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, likely to set conditions for Russia to deny the independence and sovereignty of other former Soviet states in the future.^[16]

Ukrainian intelligence also assessed that Russia is facing a number of critical constraints in its economy and on the battlefield — in line with ISW's ongoing assessments.

Ivashchenko stated that Russia's sovereign wealth fund has fallen from its pre-war level of about \$150 billion to about \$38 billion and that Russia's gold and foreign currency reserves are also decreasing.^[17] Ivashchenko noted that Russia is suffering from serious labor shortages, which are causing problems in the Russian economy, and that Russian authorities are trying to avoid paying the financial incentives that Russia is offering new military recruits. Ivashchenko stated that roughly 80 percent of the equipment that Russian forces are using is refurbished from Russia's Soviet-era stockpiles and that only about 20 percent of the equipment is modern. Ivashchenko's statements are in line with ISW's ongoing assessment that Russia will face a number of materiel, manpower, and economic issues in the near to medium-term if Ukrainian forces continue to inflict damage on Russian forces on the battlefield at the current rate.^[18] Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) will struggle to sustain Russia's current equipment and ammunition burn rates in the future, and Putin has mismanaged Russia's economy, which is suffering from increased and unsustainable war spending, growing inflation, significant labor shortages, and reductions in Russia's sovereign wealth fund.

Russia's own defense industrial production limitations are pushing Russia to rely on its allies and partners and to find cheap solutions to adapt to Ukraine's drone and counter-drone capabilities.

Ivashchenko highlighted North Korea's contribution of six million artillery shells, 120 M1989 Koksan self-propelled artillery systems, and 120 M1991 multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) to Russia since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion.^[19] Ivashchenko stated that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is supplying machines, chemicals, gunpowder, components, and aviation equipment to at least 20 Russian defense industrial enterprises and that 80 percent of the critical electronics in Russian drones are Chinese made. Ivashchenko stated that Belarus is producing ammunition for Russia and that the Belarusian and Russian DIBs are largely integrated. Russian forces have increasingly supplied frontline units with motorcycles and Chinese- and Russian-made buggies for use in assaults — a response to Ukrainian drone advantages on the battlefield and an effort to offset significant armored vehicle losses.^[20] Russia's recent extensive modifications to its long-range Shahed and decoy drones demonstrate that Russia is trying to adapt to Ukraine's successful countermeasures that have been effectively repelling Russia's drone strikes.^[21] Russian forces had previously used Shahed drones to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses so as to allow Russian missiles to hit their targets, but Russia's recent modifications to the drones suggest that Russia is attempting to restore the Shahed as an effective weapon itself.^[22] Russia is likely focusing on adapting the Shaheds, increasing their production rate, and launching them in increasingly large quantities as the drones are relatively cheap

and can be mass produced — unlike costly missiles that Russia can only produce at a relatively much lower rate. Russia is learning lessons about how to adapt its drone and missile strike packages to most effectively penetrate a large air defense umbrella and deplete air defense missile stockpiles, and Russia will carry these lessons into any future conflict.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent demand for Russian forces to create a "buffer zone" along the Russia-Ukraine international border, in addition to Russia's ongoing efforts to seize the remainder of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts, ignores Russia's constraints and underscores Putin's intention to increase his territorial demands. Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported on May 26 that the Russian military command recently redeployed elements of the 752nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (3rd Motorized Rifle Division, 20th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) and 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) to reinforce the Russian force grouping attacking into northern Sumy Oblast.^[23] Mashovets stated that elements of the 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade are operating near Volodymyrivka (north of Sumy City) and in Gordeevka (just north of Volodymyrivka in Russia). Elements of the Russian 752nd Motorized Rifle Regiment have been operating in the Borova and Lyman directions since at least mid-2024.^[24] ISW has observed elements of the 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade engaged in combat in the Bakhmut-Chasiv Yar direction — a priority direction for the Russian military — since mid-2023 and observed reports of the brigade operating in Chasiv Yar as recently as May 6.^[25] ISW has not observed additional reports of these units operating in northern Sumy Oblast but will cover any future reports about these units.

ISW previously noted that Russian forces' inability to penetrate Ukrainian defenses west and southwest of Chasiv Yar is undermining Russia's ability to prepare for major offensive operations against Kostyantynivka and the wider Ukrainian fortress belt.^[26] Redeploying forces away from Chasiv Yar suggests that the Russian military command may intend to delay its offensive operation against Kostyantynivka and supports ISW's ongoing assessment that Russia does not currently have sufficient operational reserves to intensify offensive operations in several different directions simultaneously.^[27] The Russian military command's decision to redeploy units away from this effort suggests that the Russian military may try to simultaneously continue advances in Donetsk Oblast and establish a buffer zone in northern Chernihiv, Sumy, and Kharkiv oblasts, however. The Russian military command may assess that Russian forces have a greater chance of significant advances in northern Sumy Oblast than near Chasiv Yar. Putin recently orchestrated a meeting with Russian officials to float the idea of creating an at least 25-kilometer-wide buffer zone in northern Sumy Oblast, and Putin ordered Russian forces to establish a buffer zone in northern Kharkiv Oblast in May 2024.^[28] ISW previously assessed that Putin likely intends to leverage buffer zones in northern Sumy and Kharkiv oblasts to justify expanding his claims over Ukrainian territory beyond Russia's long-standing claims over Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts.^[29]

Ukrainian forces conducted a series of drone strikes against Russian defense industrial enterprises in the Republic of Tatarstan and Ivanovo and Tula oblasts on May 25 and 26. Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation Head Lieutenant Andriy Kovalenko, who often reports on successful Ukrainian drone strikes against Russia, implied on May 26 that Ukrainian drones struck

the Alabuga Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Yelabuga, Republic of Tatarstan, and the Dmitrievsky Chemical Plant in Kineshma, Ivanovo Oblast.[30] Russian opposition outlet *Astra* and Ukrainian outlet *Militarnyi* published footage on May 25 showing Russian air defenses appearing to defend against Ukrainian drone strikes near the Alabuga SEZ.[31] *Astra* reported on May 26 that at least two drones struck a warehouse at the Dmitrievsky Chemical Plant and that sources in the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations reported that the warehouse sustained damage.[32] The Ivanovo Oblast Operational Headquarters claimed on May 26 that a drone strike damaged a utility building in Kineshma.[33] Geolocated footage published on May 26 shows an explosion near the Scientific-Production Association (SPLAV) in Tula City, which manufactures multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS), grenade launchers, ammunition, and guided and unguided missiles for the Russian military.[34] *Astra* also reported that Ukrainian drones on May 25 struck the Shcheglovsky Val Plant in Tula Oblast, which develops guided weapons, air defense systems, and small arms and produces vehicles for Pantsir-S and Pantsir-S1 air defense system.[35]

The Kremlin's ongoing cognitive warfare effort aimed at preventing future Western military assistance to Ukraine is rooted in fear and the acknowledgement that Russia's only real hope in defeating Ukraine is by isolating Ukraine from its allies. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz stated on May 26 that the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and France no longer impose "any range restrictions" on Ukraine's ability to use the long-range weapons that these countries have provided and noted that Ukraine can target military positions in Russia.[36] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded to Merz and stated that such "potential decisions" would be "quite dangerous" and "run counter to attempts at a [peace] settlement." [37] Pro-Kremlin voices and Kremlin-affiliated milbloggers amplified similar sentiments, with some calling on Russia to respond and others claiming that Russia will achieve its war aims militarily.[38] Peskov's statement is part of a prolonged Russian effort to persuade Western states to cease military support for Ukraine, which Russian President Vladimir Putin himself has explicitly named as a condition for engaging in negotiations for a full ceasefire.[39] Russia's only real hope of winning its war in Ukraine is to convince the West to abandon Ukraine, and the Kremlin likely fears the impacts of continued Western military assistance on Ukraine's military capabilities.[40] Allowing Ukraine to target military warehouses and airbases in Russia also threatens Russia's ability to continue its long-range strike campaign against Ukraine, particularly as Russia seeks to demoralize Ukrainian society through increasingly large and frequent strike packages that disproportionately affect civilian areas.

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian forces conducted one of their largest drone and missile strikes of the war against Ukraine on the night of May 25 to 26, after three nights of record strikes. The May 25-26 strike is now the second largest combined strike of the war, after Russian forces conducted the largest combined strike on the night of May 24 to 25.**
- **Russia's increased missile stockpiling, drone production, and drone adaptations demonstrate Russia's commitment to achieving its war goals through military means in a protracted war in Ukraine.**

- **Ukrainian intelligence continues to assess that the Kremlin is committed to its war aim of achieving complete Ukrainian capitulation and is preparing for a potential future conflict with NATO — in line with ISW's assessments.**
- **Ukrainian intelligence also assessed that Russia is facing a number of critical constraints in its economy and on the battlefield — in line with ISW's ongoing assessments.**
- **Russia's own defense industrial production limitations are pushing Russia to rely on its allies and partners and to find cheap solutions to adapt to Ukraine's drone and counter-drone capabilities.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent demand for Russian forces to create a "buffer zone" along the Russia-Ukraine international border, in addition to Russia's ongoing efforts to seize the remainder of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts, ignores Russia's constraints and underscores Putin's intention to increase his territorial demands.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted a series of drone strikes against Russian defense industrial enterprises in the Republic of Tatarstan and Ivanovo and Tula oblasts on May 25 and 26.**
- **The Kremlin's ongoing cognitive warfare effort aimed at preventing future Western military assistance to Ukraine is rooted in fear and the acknowledgement that Russia's only real hope in defeating Ukraine is by isolating Ukraine from its allies.**
- **Russian forces recently advanced in Sumy Oblast and near Vovchansk, Lyman, and Toretsk.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Russo-Ukrainian War May 26, 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.

- 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

Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation

Limited fighting continued in Kursk Oblast on May 26.

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked near Tetkino (southwest of Glushkovo) and toward Novyi Put (east of Tetkino).^[41]

Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service (SZRU) Head Oleh Ivashchenko reported on May 26 that Ukrainian forces maintain some positions in Kursk and Belgorod oblasts.^[42]

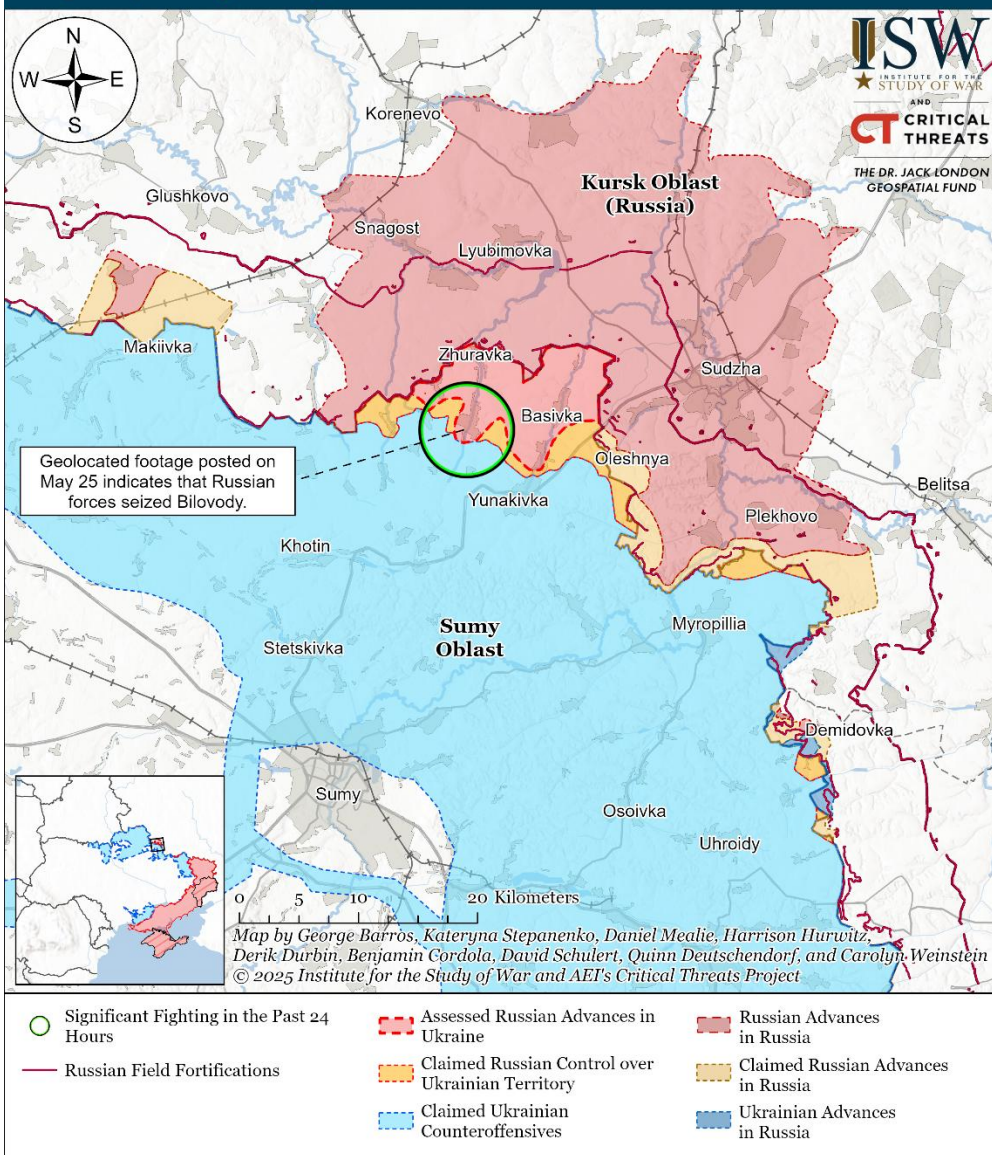
Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 217th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (98th VDV Division) and motorized rifle elements subordinated to the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) are reportedly fighting near Tetkino.^[43]

Neither Russian nor Ukrainian forces reported ground activity in northwesternmost Belgorod Oblast on May 26.

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 recently advanced in Sumy Oblast.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Sumy Direction May 26, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on May 25 indicates that Russian forces, reportedly elements of the Russian 83rd Airborne (VDV) Brigade, advanced into southern Bilovody (northeast of Sumy City) and likely seized the settlement.[44]

Unconfirmed claims: Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that Ukrainian forces advanced up to 300 meters near Oleshnya (east of Loknya).[45] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces seized Volodymyrivka (west of Bilovody), and Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces consolidated positions in northern Yunakivka (southeast of Bilovody) and advanced to the northern outskirts of Vodolahy (west of Bilovody).[46]

Russian forces continued ground attacks near Bilovody, Yunakivka, Loknya (north of Yunakivka), and Vodolahy (west of Bilovody).[47] Ukrainian sources reportedly counterattacked near Bilovody and Oleshnya.[48]

Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service (SZRU) Head Oleh Ivashchenko reported that Belarus keeps roughly 2,000 military personnel deployed along the Belarusian-Ukrainian international border to pin Ukrainian forces.[49]

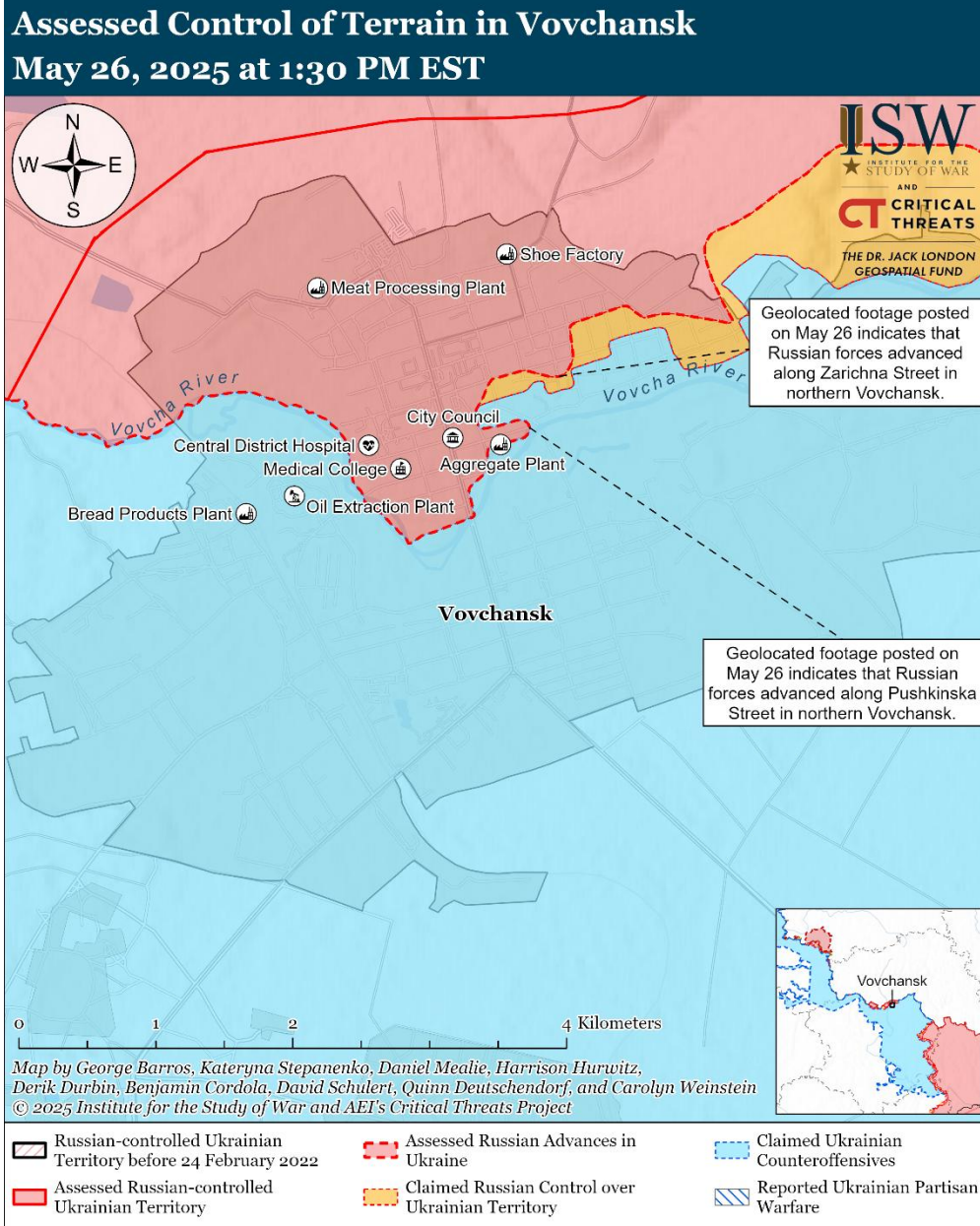
Order of Battle: Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 9th Motorized Rifle Regiment (18th Motorized Rifle Division, 11th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) and 83rd VDV Brigade are fighting in the Veselivka-Vodolahy and Zhuravka-Bilovody directions as well as between Loknya and Bilovody.[50] Elements of the Russian "Anvar" Spetsnaz detachment (possibly referring to the BARS-25 "Anvar" volunteer detachment) and Chechen "Zapad Akhmat" Battalion reportedly continue operating in the Sumy Oblast border area.[51]

Russian	Main	Effort	–	Eastern	Ukraine
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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 recently advanced northeast of Kharkiv City.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on May 26 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in northern Vovchansk (northeast of Kharkiv City) and likely seized the Vovchansk Aggregate Plant.[52]

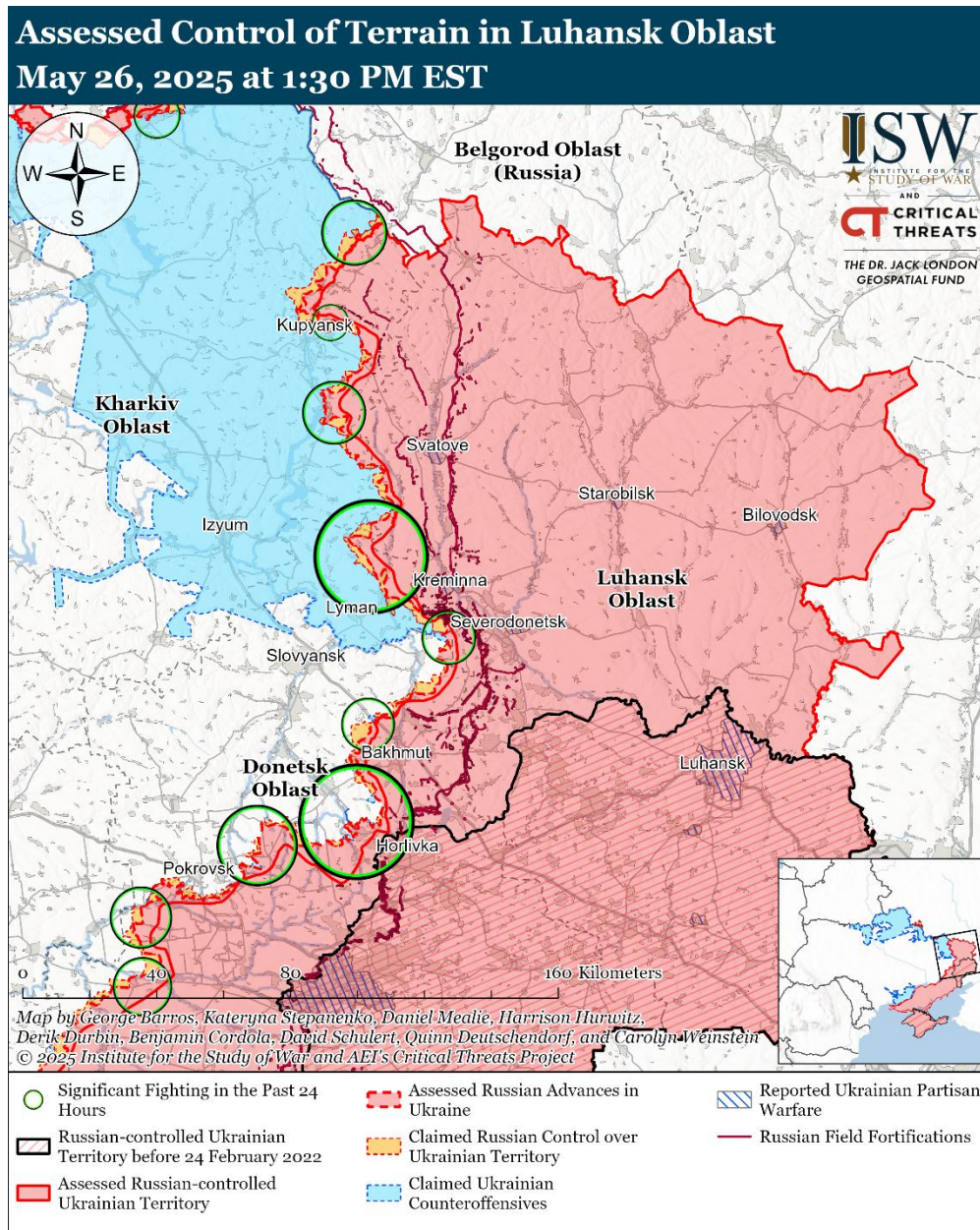


Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced northeast of Tykhe (northeast of Kharkiv City).^[53]

Russian forces continued ground attacks north of Kharkiv City near Lyptsi and northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk, Vovchanskyi Khutory, and Tykhe on May 25 and 26.^[54]

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 26 but did not make confirmed advances.



Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces reached the eastern outskirts of Holubivka (north of Kupyansk) and the northeastern outskirts of Mala Shaplivka (northwest of Kupyansk).^[55]

Russian forces continued ground attacks northwest of Kupyansk near Mala Shapktivka; northeast of Kupyansk near Krasne Pershe and along the international border near Stroivka; and east of Kupyansk toward Petropavlivka on May 25 and 26.[56]

A Ukrainian soldier operating in the Kupyansk direction reported that Russian forces on the east (left) bank of the Oskil River send small infantry groups to sneak past Ukrainian positions and accumulate for larger assaults on the west (right) bank in order to cut Ukrainian logistics across the river.[57] The soldier reported that Russian forces primarily conduct assaults on motorcycles and are husbanding armored vehicles due to heavy losses.

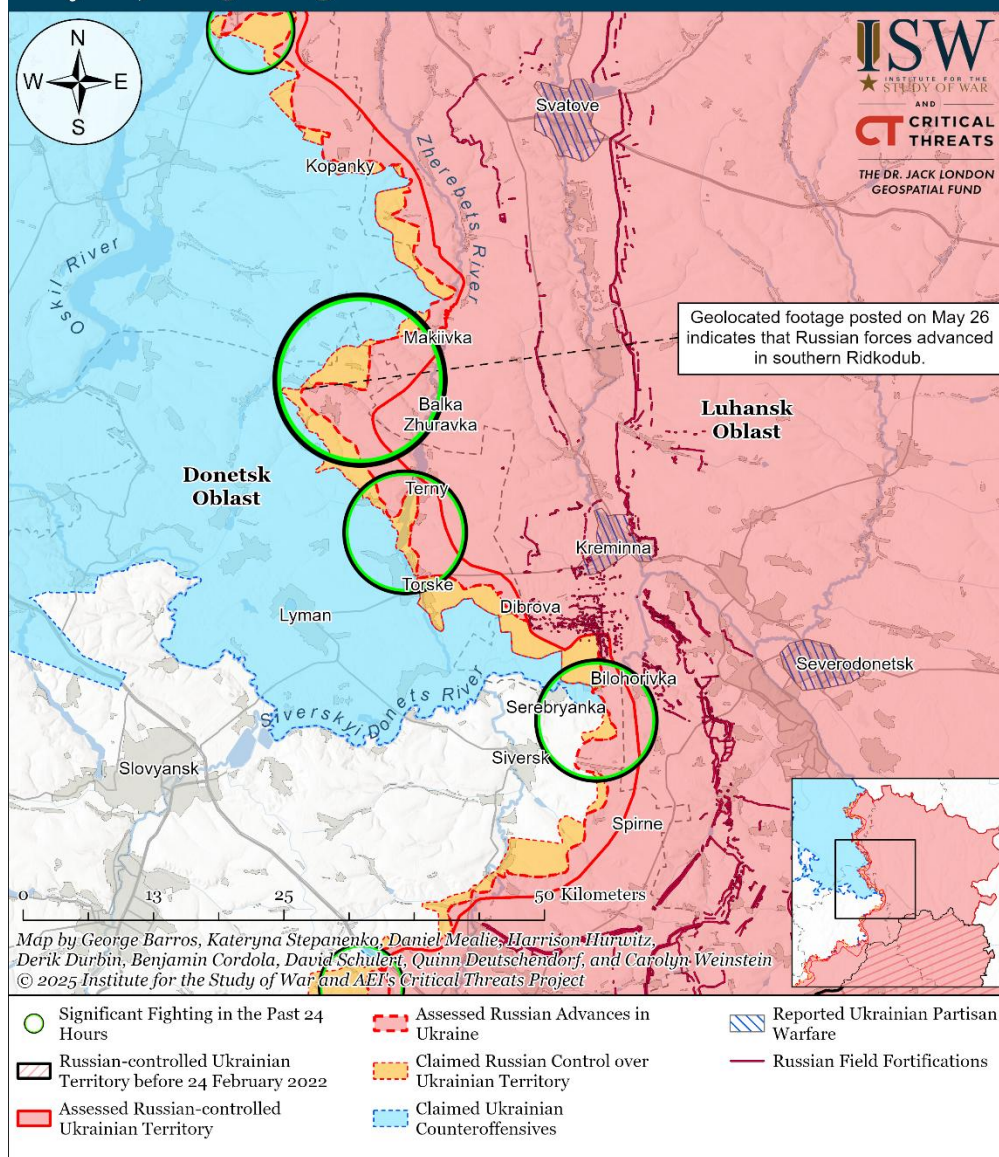
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Borova direction on May 26 but did not advance.

Russian forces continued ground attacks northeast of Borova near Zahryzove and Nova Kruhlyakivka and southeast of Borova near Hrekivka and Olhivka on May 25 and 26.[58]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Lyman direction.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on May 26 indicates that Russian forces reached the southern outskirts of Ridkodub (north of Lyman).[59]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Svatove-Kreminna Direction May 26, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



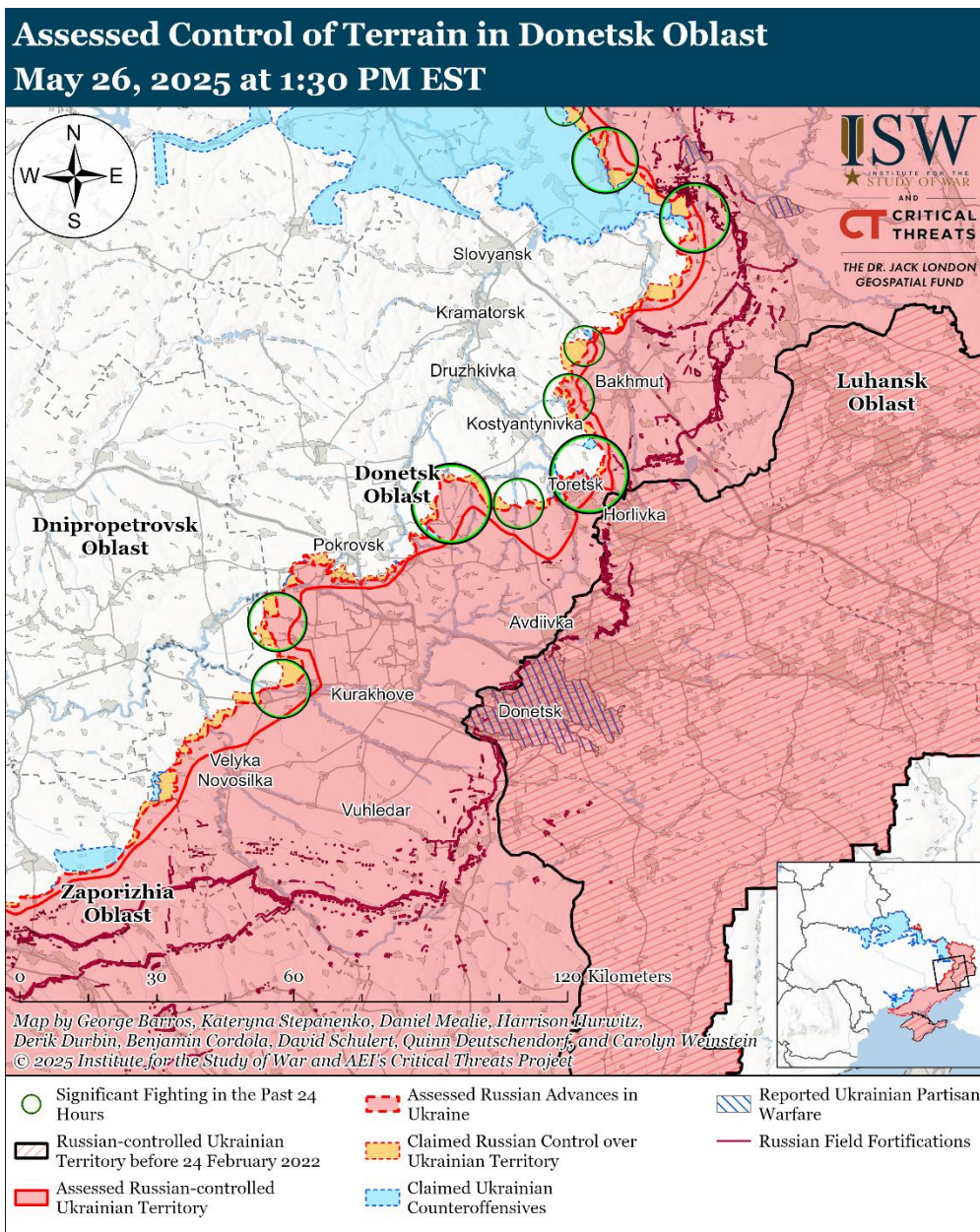
Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces from Myrne (northeast of Lyman).[60] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced south of Ridkodub, northeast of Novomykhailivka (northeast of Lyman), and south of Zelena Dolyna (north of Lyman).[61]

Russian forces continued offensive operations north of Lyman near Ridkodub, Lypove, Karpivka, Novyi Mir, and Zelena Dolyna; northeast of Lyman near Novomykhailivka, and Yampolivka; and east of Lyman near Torske and the Serebrianske forest area on May 25 and 26.[62]

Order of Battle: Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 1st and 15th motorized rifle regiments (both of the 2nd Motorized Rifle Division, 1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) are fighting along the Nove-Ridkudub and Katerynivka-Novyi Mir lines and that elements of the 254th Motorized Rifle Regiment (144th Motorized Rifle Division, 20th Combined Arms Army [CAA], MMD) are fighting near Zelena Dolyna and north of Novomykhailivka.[63] Elements of the Russian 67th Motorized Rifle Division, including its 31st Motorized Rifle Regiment, and the 164th and 169th motorized rifle brigades (all of the 25th CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly fighting near Torske.[64]

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 26 but did not advance.



Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Siversk near Hryhorivka and Bilohorivka and east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske on May 25 and 26.[65]

Russian forces advanced in the Chasiv Yar direction as Russian forces continued offensive operations in the area on May 26.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 4 indicates that Russian forces advanced southwest of Ozaryanivka (southwest of Chasiv Yar), but this advance did not occur recently.[66]

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized Stupochky (south of Chasiv Yar), but another Russian milblogger denied this claim.[67]

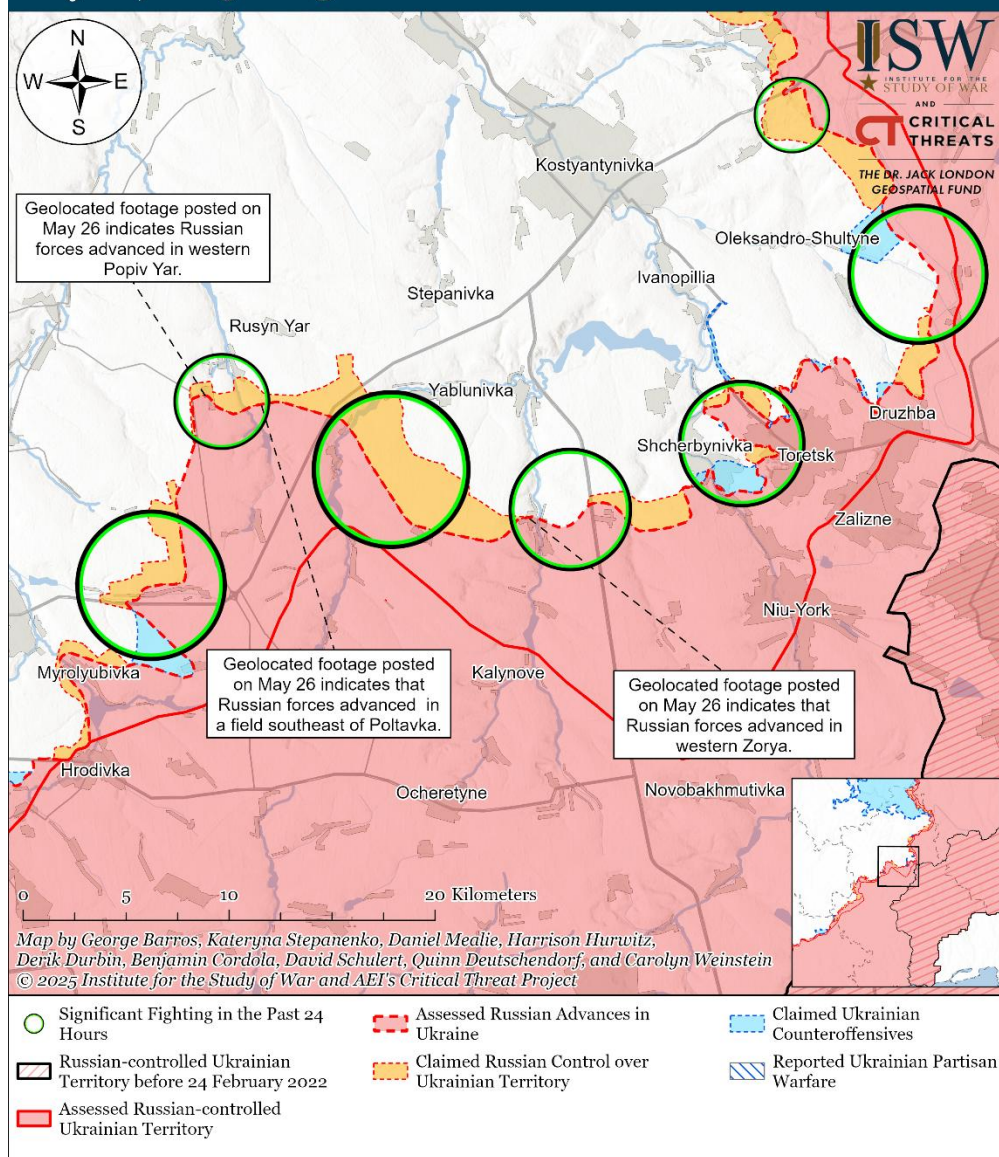
Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Chasiv Yar itself; northeast of Chasiv Yar near Orikhovo-Vasylivka; south of Chasiv Yar near Predtechyne and toward Bila Hora; and southeast of Chasiv Yar near Kurdyumivka on May 25 and 26. [68]

Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces reported on May 26 that Russian forces are using armored vehicles and motorcycles in assaults in the Chasiv Yar direction.[69]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 85th Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC], Southern Military District [SMD]) and 27th Artillery Regiment (6th Motorized Rifle Division, 3rd Army Corps [AC]) are reportedly operating in the Chasiv Yar direction.[70]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Toretsk direction.

Assessed Control of Terrain Southwest of Toretsk May 26, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on May 26 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced to central Popiv Yar and in the fields southeast of Poltavka (both west of Toretsk).^[71] Additional geolocated footage published on May 26 shows Russian forces engaging with civilians in Zorya (southwest of Toretsk), including that Russian forces have likely seized the settlement and that Ukrainian forces are not contesting the settlement.^[72]

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian source claimed that Russian forces seized Popiv Yar.^[73] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced to southern Poltavka, northeast of Oleksandropil (southwest of Toretsk), and north and northeast of Novoolenivka (west of Toretsk).^[74] A Russian

milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) seized positions on the western outskirts of Yablunivka (east of Popiv Yar).[75] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are advancing toward the Kleban-Byn reservoir (northeast of Popiv Yar) and south of Rusyn Yar (north of Popiv Yar).[76]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in Toretsk itself; north of Toretsk near Dyliivka; immediately west of Toretsk near Shcherbynivka and Novospaske (formerly Petrivka); further west of Toretsk near Popiv Yar and Poltavka; and southwest of Toretsk near Romanivka, Zorya, Oleksandropil, and Oleksandro-Kalynove on May 25 and 26.[77] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are withdrawing from limited positions south of Zorya and Romanivka (east of Zorya) and that elements of the Russian 68th Tank Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA) are clearing positions in these fields.[78] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking near Popiv Yar and Zorya.[79] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on May 26 that Ukrainian forces also recently counterattacked south of Hnativka (south of Zorya).[80]

Mashovets stated on May 26 that elements of the Russian 51st CAA (formerly Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC, SMD) and 150th Motorized Rifle Division are attempting to advance toward Pleshchiivka (northwest of Toretsk) along the T-0516 Toretsk-Kostyantynivka highway, but that Ukrainian positions in western and northwestern Toretsk are complicating this effort.[81] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA) and 163rd Tank Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division) are attempting to bypass Ukrainian positions in the Toretska Mine in northwestern Toretsk and Krymske (immediately north of Toretsk). Mashovets stated that Russian forces are attempting to force Ukrainian forces to withdraw from Krymske under threat of envelopment. Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 20th and 150th motorized rifle divisions (both of the 8th CAA) are continuing to attack southwest of Toretsk toward Kostyantynivka, including along the H-20 Donetsk City-Kostyantynivka highway and the T-0504 Pokrovsk-Kostyantynivka highway.[82]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Pokrovsk direction on May 26 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 68th AC (Eastern Military District [EMD]) seized Myrne (northeast of Pokrovsk), and another milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced north of the settlement.[83] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced east of Shevchenko Pershe and north of Myrolyubivka (both northeast of Pokrovsk).[84]

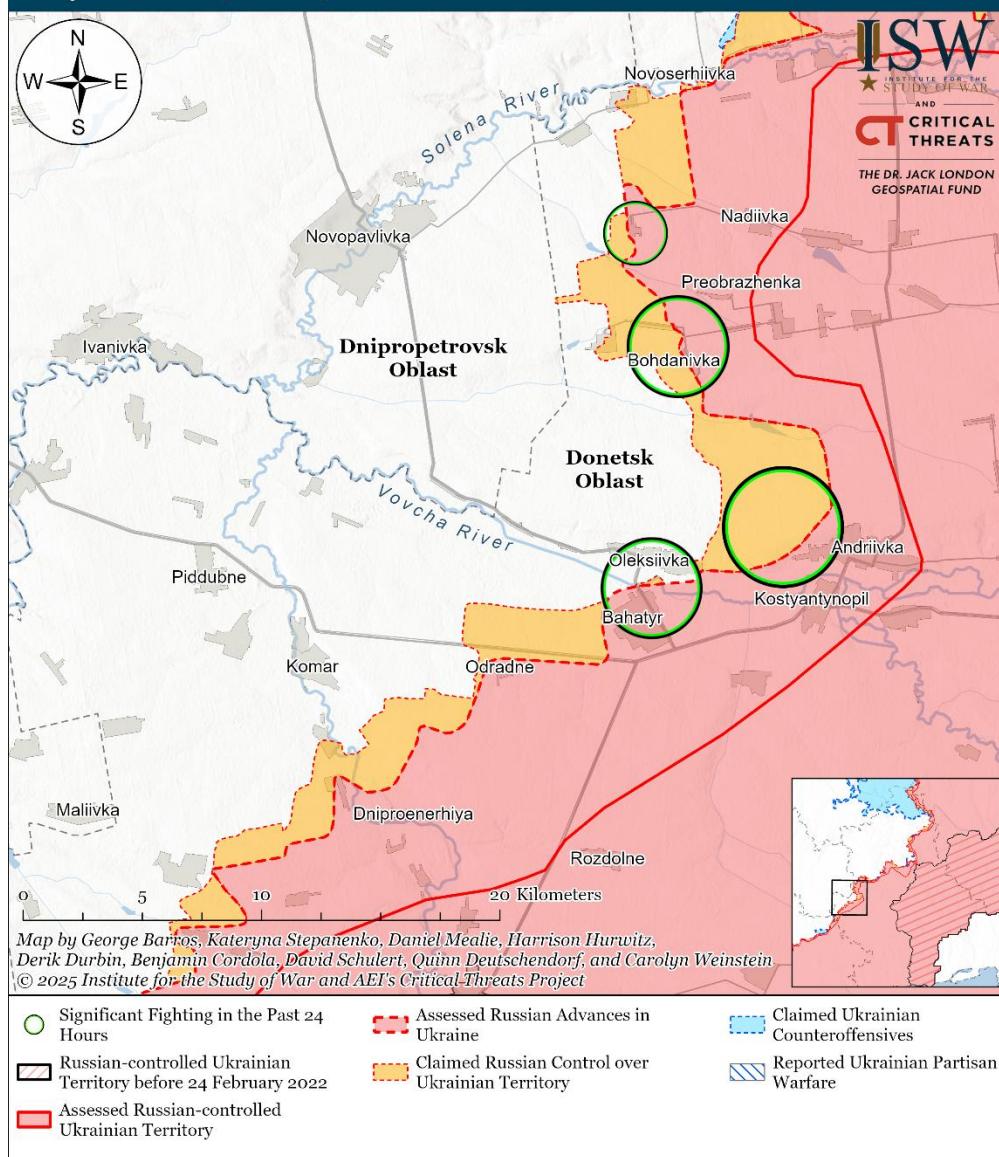
Russian forces continued offensive operations northeast of Pokrovsk near Shevchenko Pershe, Malynivka, Yelyzavetivka, and Myrolyubivka; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Zvirove; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Udachne on May 25 and 26.[85] Mashovets stated that

elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA) are attacking from Malynivka toward Novoeconomichne (northeast of Pokrovsk), and that elements of the 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA) and 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th AC) are also attacking northeast of Pokrovsk.[86] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Malynivka.[87]

The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Pokrovsk direction stated that Russian attacks in the area have become less intense but that Russian forces may be preparing for renewed offensive operations.[88] The spokesperson noted that Russian forces are relying on recently recruited and poorly trained servicemembers to replace personnel losses.

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Novopavlivka direction on May 26 but did not make confirmed advances.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Novopavlivka Direction May 26, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced 400 meters toward Muravka (northeast of Novopavlivka).^[89] Mashovets credited elements of the Russian 27th Motorized Rifle Division (2nd CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) with recently advancing to Novomykolaivka (northeast of Novopavlivka) and elements of the Russian 90th Tank Division (41st CAA, CMD) with advancing into Troitske and southeast of Horikhove (both east of Novopavlivka).^[90]

Russian forces continued offensive operations northeast of Novopavlivka near Novomykolaivka and Muravka and east of Novopavlivka near Kotlyarivka, Troitske, and Horikhove on May 25 and 26.^[91]

Mashovets noted that the Russian military command has concentrated elements of five CAAs in the Novopavlivka direction – the CMD's 2nd and 41st CAAs and the EMD's 5th, 29th, and 36th CAAs – for the Russian offensive operation against Novopavlivka.^[92] Mashovets stated that other unspecified elements of the 51st CAA are also operating in this area.

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kurakhove direction on May 26 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced north and west of Odradne (southwest of Kurakhove).^[93]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations west of Kurakhove near Kostyantynopil, Bahatyr, Andriivka, and Oleksiivka and southwest of Kurakhove near Odradne on May 25 and 26.^[94] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Oleksiivka and Dachne (northwest of Oleksiivka).^[95]

Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Major Viktor Trehubov stated on May 26 that positions near Bahatyr, Kostyantynopil, and Odradne are constantly changing hands between Russian and Ukrainian forces and that fighting is very intense in this area.^[96]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Velyka Novosilka direction on May 26 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in northern and eastern Zelene Pole (west of Velyka Novosilka), west of Novopil (just south of Zelene Pole), and south of Komar (northwest of Velyka Novosilka).^[97] A milblogger claimed that Russian forces have encircled Zelene Pole and Novopil.^[98]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations northwest of Velyka Novosilka near Vilne Pole, Shevchenko, Vesele, and Burlatske and toward Myrne and Komar; west of Velyka Novosilka near Zelene Pole and Novosilka; and southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Novopil on May 25 and 26.^[99] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Zelene Pole, Komar, and Novopil.^[100]

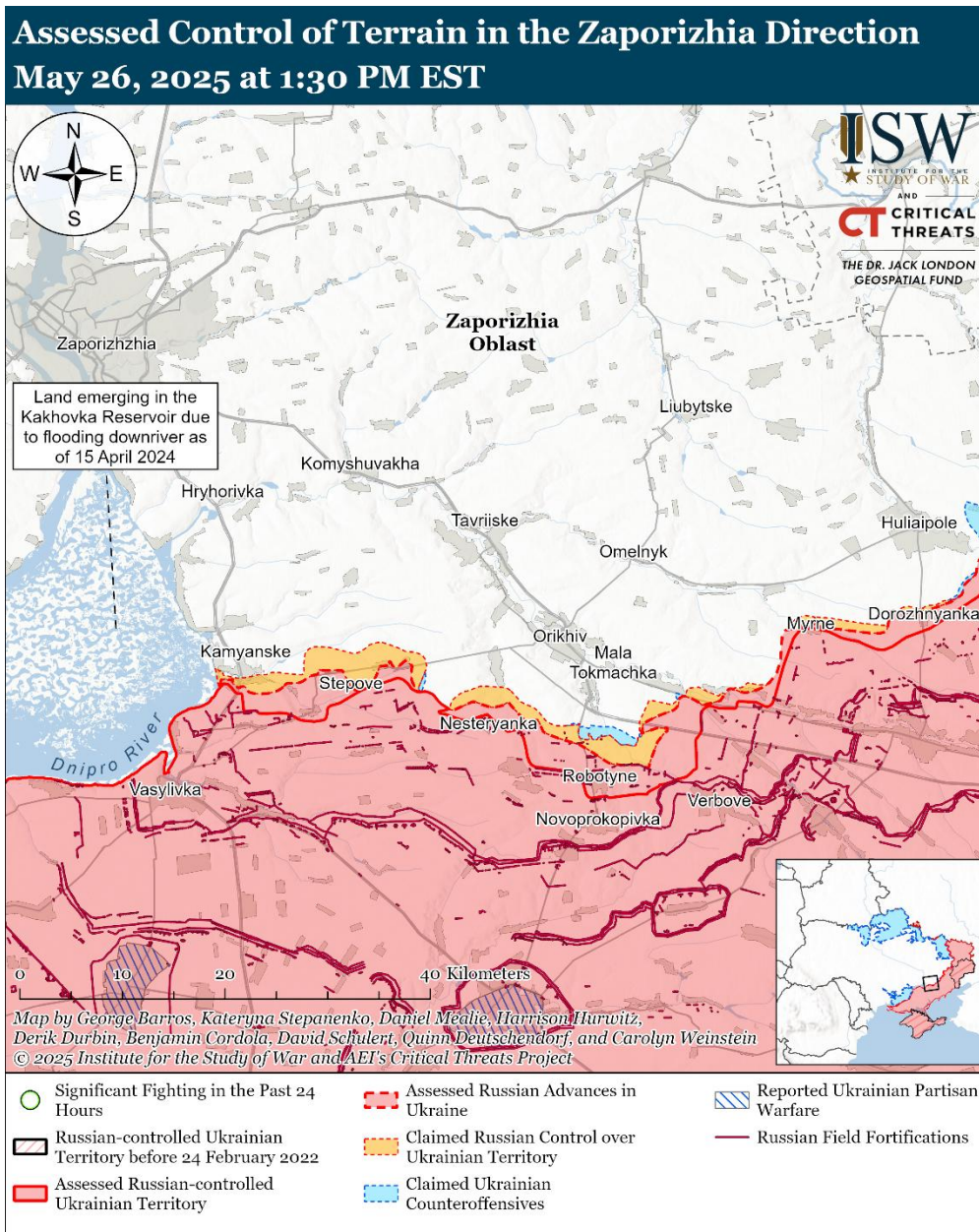
A Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian military command introduced additional, unspecified forces into battle on the southern outskirts of Komar.^[101]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 11th Air Force and Air Defense Army (Russian Aerospace Forces [VKS] and EMD) are reportedly striking Ukrainian targets in the Vremivka (Velyka Novosilka) direction.[102] Elements of the 30th Artillery Brigade and 5th Tank Brigade (both of the 36th CAA, EMD) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Fedorivka (northwest of Velyka Novosilka).[103]

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)

Ukrainian Southern Defense Forces Spokesperson Colonel Vladyslav Voloshyn reported on May 25 that Russian forces recently resumed assaults in the Hulyaipole direction.[104]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Zaporizhia direction on May 26 but did not advance.



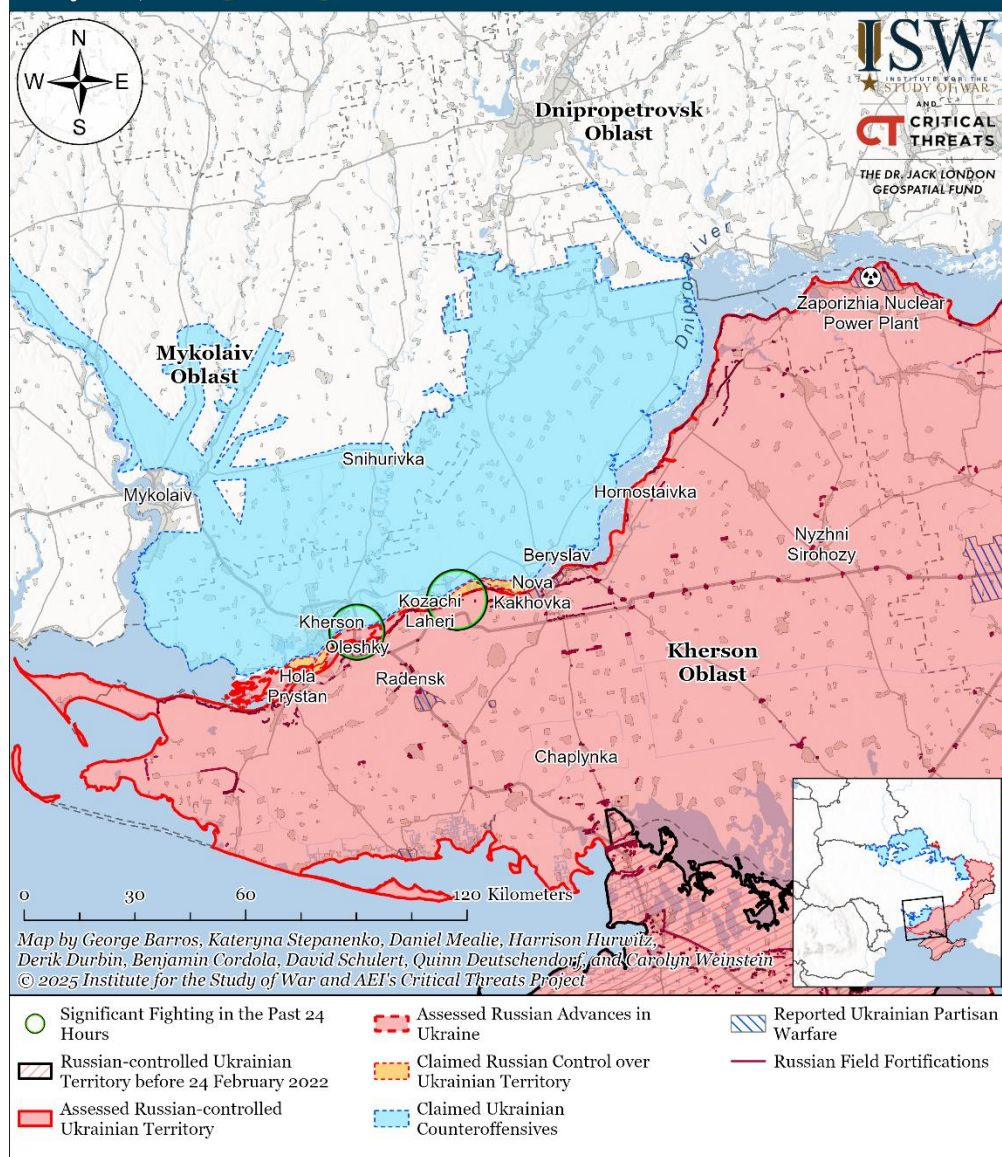
Russian forces attacked southwest of Orikhiv near Novoandriivka and Stepove and toward Mali Shcherbaky on May 25 and 26.^[105]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in Mala Tokmachka (southeast of Orikhiv).^[106]

Ukrainian Southern Defense Forces Spokesperson Colonel Vladyslav Voloshyn reported on May 25 that Russian forces are intensifying assaults toward Orikhiv.^[107] Voloshyn stated that Russian forces are attacking in small infantry groups and that the Russian military has supplied each company of roughly 90 servicemembers with 30 motorcycles. Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on May 13 that the Russian military is working to equip each battalion with up to 30 motorcycles, each platoon with up to nine motorcycles, and each company with up to 15 motorcycles.^[108]

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations southwest of Kherson City near Kozachi Laheri and in the Dnipro River Delta area on May 25 and 26 but did not advance.^[109]

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

See topline text.

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

Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service (SZRU) Head Lieutenant General Oleh Ivashchenko stated on May 26 that, contrary to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's statements, Ukrainian intelligence has not recorded the movement of Russian nuclear weapons or Oreshnik ballistic missiles to Belarus.[110] Ivashchenko noted

that Ukrainian intelligence has documented that Belarus is setting up storage facilities for nuclear warheads, indicating that Russia may deploy nuclear warheads to Belarussian territory in the future. The deployment of nuclear weapons to Belarus is in line with the December 2024 security agreement between Russia and Belarus which allows for the use of "all available forces and means" to protect the partner countries.[111]

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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