Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, May 13, 2023

Riley Bailey, Karolina Hird, Nicole Wolkov, George Barros, and Frederick W. Kagan

May 13, 2023, 5:45pm ET

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

Click here to 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 cutoff for this product was 3pm ET on May 13. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 14 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Important Note: ISW has reindexed its map layer for reported Ukrainian counteroffensives on May 12, 2023. We removed reported Ukrainian counteroffensive coded before May 1, 2023, in order to delineate more clearly new Ukrainian territorial gains from gains secured in previous Ukrainian counteroffensives. ISW retained a few reported Ukrainian counteroffensives polygons from before May 1, 2023, specifically on the Dnipro River Delta south of Kherson Oblast, to preserve context in that complex area of operations. May 1, 2023, is an arbitrary date and does not mark the beginning or end of any assessed Ukrainian or Russian effort. ISW has reindexed its map layers before and similarly removed old reported Ukrainian counteroffensives around Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Chernihiv, and Sumy oblasts following the conclusion of the Battle of Kyiv in April 2022.

Ukrainian forces continue to counterattack in the Bakhmut area amid unconfirmed claims of further marginal Ukrainian gains southwest of the city as of May 13. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces established new positions on the outskirts of Kurdyumivka (14km southwest of Bakhmut) and pushed Russian forces behind the Siversky Donets-Donbas canal in the area.[1] The milblogger also claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced towards Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) from the direction of Predtechyne (16km southwest of Bakhmut). ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these additional Ukrainian gains southwest of Bakhmut or elsewhere in the wider Bakhmut area as of May 13. Ukrainian Eastern Grouping of Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated on May 13 that Ukrainian forces are advancing in unspecified areas of the front, and the Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces are currently conducting active operations in the Bakhmut area.[2] Ukrainian Eastern Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiv Cherevaty stated on May 13 that Ukrainian forces liberated 17.3 square kilometers of territory in the Bakhmut direction over three days of counterattacks.[3] ISW has assessed as of May 13 that the Ukrainian forces have liberated 16.85 square kilometers in the Bakhmut area during recent counterattacks. Russian sources amplified footage purporting to show the aftermath of a recent Ukrainian counterattack on Russian positions near Mayorsk (20km southwest of Bakhmut) and claimed that the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) 3rd Brigade of the 1st Army Corps repelled the

assaults.[4] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that recent successful limited Ukrainian counterattacks north of Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut) degraded Russian forces' ability to interdict the Oo506 highway between Khromove and Chasiv Yar (13km west of Bakhmut), a significant ground line of communication (GLOC) for Ukrainian forces operating in Bakhmut itself.[5] The milblogger claimed that Russian retreats in response to recent Ukrainian counterattacks have occurred in relatively small areas of the frontline but warned that these "regroupings" could become more significant if Russian forces fail to stabilize the frontline.[6] Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin claimed on May 12 that talks of tactical Russian withdrawals are nonsense as Russian forces continue to outright abandon positions in unspecified locations.[7]

Russian forces conducted a Shahed-131/136 drone strike against Ukraine on the night of May 12 to 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that shot down 18 of the 22 Shahed-131/136 drones that Russian forces launched from the northern and southern directions.[8] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that drones struck an infrastructure facility in Khmelnytsky Oblast.[9] Footage published on May 13 purportedly shows the aftermath of the strike in Khmelnytsky Oblast.[10]

Russian media reported that two Russian Mi-8 helicopters, a Su-34 bomber, and an Su-35 fighter crashed in Bryansk Oblast on May 13, which some Russian sources claimed was caused by Ukrainian air defenses. Geolocated footage shows the aftermath of crashes near Surestskii Muravei and Klintsy, about 50km from the Ukrainian border.[11] Russian milbloggers speculated that all four aircraft crashed as the result of a coordinated Ukrainian strike using air defense systems pulled to the border area of Chernihiv Oblast.[12] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has not yet responded to the incident at the time of publication. Ukrainian officials have similarly refrained from commenting on the incidents. However, several Russian milbloggers seized on the incident to criticize aspects of how the Russian aerospace forces conduct air operations and to accuse the leadership responsible for these aircraft of gross negligence and incompetence. Milbloggers warned about Ukrainian capabilities and called for harsh retaliation against Ukraine. Some milbloggers questioned why the two Mi-8 helicopters were flying so close to the border in the first place and called for aerospace commanders to take better steps to move such assets further into the rear.[13] Moscow Duma Deputy Andrey Medvedev warned that Ukrainian counteroffensive actions will not manifest only in mechanized warfare, suggesting that Russian authorities should prepare for further strikes on such aviation assets as part of a wider Ukrainian counteroffensive strategy.[14] Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Deputy Information Minister Daniil Bezsonov accused the Russian aerospace command of "tyranny" and "fraud."[15]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces struck rear Russian areas in Luhansk Oblast with British Storm Shadow cruise missiles on May 12 and 13, prompting heightened Russian anxiety about potential Ukrainian abilities to target Russian logistics. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on May 13 that Ukrainian aircraft struck industrial facilities in occupied Luhansk City with a Storm Shadow cruise missile on May 12.[16] Geolocated footage published on May 13 shows the aftermath of Ukrainian strikes on Yuvileyne (7km west of Luhansk City) on May 13, and Russian sources widely claimed that Ukrainian forces also used Storm Shadow cruise missiles in the subsequent strike.[17] A Russian milblogger claimed that a Storm Shadow cruise missile would have caused more damage, however, and the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Internal Ministry claimed that Ukrainian forces used "Hrim-2" missiles to conduct the May 12 strike.[18] United Kingdom Defense Secretary Ben Wallace confirmed on May 12 that the UK is supplying Ukraine with the missiles but did not specify when or even if Ukraine received them.[19] ISW

has not observed visual confirmation that Ukrainian forces have used Storm Shadow cruise missiles to strike Russian positions in Ukraine. Russian milbloggers claimed that the strike illustrates that Ukrainian forces may be able to target airfields and rear deployment and logistics centers in areas previously considered to be completely safe.[20] A prominent Russian milblogger compared the alleged use of the cruise missiles to the summer of 2022 when Ukrainian forces began using HIMARS rockets to target Russian logistics in Kherson Oblast and argued that the Russian information space is similarly attempting to downplay the impact that such systems may have.[21]

Russian President Vladimir Putin's insistence on conducting the war in Ukraine in the style of the "Great Patriotic Special Military Operation" has opened the door for several hardline actors to advocate for the institutionalization of increasingly Stalinist domestic policies. Russian Investigative Committee Head Alexander Bastrykin proposed on May 13 that, in light of the requirements for "economic security in a war," Russia should take the path of "nationalization of the main sectors" of the economy.[22] A prominent Russian milblogger responded to Bastrykin's statement and noted that whole-scale nationalization has transcended the rhetoric of the Communist Party and is now being advocated for by one of the largest Russian law enforcement agencies.[23] The milblogger remarked that the Russian elites appear to be increasingly using Bolshevik and Stalinist practices to organize Russian society for war in the absence of other successful historical analogues for wartime economic structuring.[24] ISW has previously assessed that Putin is invested in constructing false historical parallels between the war in Ukraine with the Soviet Great Patriotic War.[25] The emulation of these conditions on the highest levels of Russian government will likely continue to have domestic implications as the war continues and opens the door for increased normalization of Soviet and Stalinist practices in all branches of government.

Former Pacific Fleet Commander Admiral Sergey Avakyants reportedly received an appointment to lead a new Russian force generation organization called "Voin" ("Warrior"), which reportedly replaced Russia's legacy Russian Volunteer Society for Assistance to the Army, Aviation, and Navy of Russia (DOSAAF). One Russian source claimed on May 13 that the "Voin" organization, which will provide combat training and education to Russians between 14 and 35 years old, has "completely replaced" DOSAAF, which had been active in recruitment efforts.[26] ISW previously reported that the same Russian milblogger claimed that Avakyants will be forming a new "organization" which could cooperate with DOSAAF.[27] It is unclear what DOSAAF's current status is if this milblogger's report is accurate. It is also unclear if DOSAAF was disbanded and reformed into "Voin" or if "Voin" had subsumed DOSAAF's organization into a new vertically integrated organization under Avakyants' and the Russian Ministry of Defense's (MoD's) control. This report, if accurate, could indicate a Kremlin effort to subordinate DOSAAF — a nominally non-governmental organization — under the MoD. DOSAAF, a Soviet-era youth movement for promoting military skills, has likely supported Russian forces and Wagner Group recruitment and youth education aimed at Russifying youth in occupied Ukraine.[28]

Belarusian President Lukashenko was reportedly hospitalized at a presidential hospital in Minsk on May 13. Independent Belarusian monitors reported that Lukashenko was hospitalized in Minsk around 19:00 local time on May 13 but that Lukashenko's motorcade had left the hospital by around 21:00.[29] The status of Lukashenko's health condition remains unclear. Lukashenko has not been seen in public nor has his office updated his weekly schedule with any events since his visit to Moscow on May 9.[30] Lukashenko did not deliver his traditional Victory Day address in Minsk, Belarus, on May 9 although it is not clear why.[31]

Takeaways

- Ukrainian forces continue to counterattack in the Bakhmut area amid unconfirmed claims of further marginal Ukrainian gains southwest of the city as of May 13.
- Russian forces conducted a Shahed-131/136 drone strike against Ukraine on the night of May 12 to 13.
- Russian media reported that two Russian Mi-8 helicopters, an Su-34 bomber, and an Su-35 fighter crashed in Bryansk Oblast on May 13, which some Russian sources claimed was caused by Ukrainian air defenses.
- Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces struck rear Russian areas in Luhansk Oblast with British Storm Shadow cruise missiles on May 12 and 13, prompting heightened Russian anxiety about potential Ukrainian abilities to target Russian logistics.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin's insistence on conducting the war in Ukraine in the style of the "Great Patriotic Special Military Operation" has opened the door for several hardline actors to advocate for the institutionalization of increasingly Stalinist domestic policies.
- Former Pacific Fleet Commander Admiral Sergey Avakyants reportedly received an appointment to lead a new Russian force generation organization called "Voin" ("Warrior"), which reportedly replaced Russia's legacy Russian Volunteer Society for Assistance to the Army, Aviation, and Navy of Russia (DOSAAF).
- Belarusian President Lukashenko was reportedly hospitalized at a presidential hospital in Minsk on May 13.
- Russian forces continued limited ground attacks northeast of Kupyansk and northwest of Svatove.
- Russian forces made marginal gains within Bakhmut and continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk front.
- Russian forces targeted Ukrainian positions in southern Ukraine west of Hulyaipole.
- Russian forces are reportedly replenishing units with mobilized personnel.
- Russian authorities continue efforts to deport Ukrainian children to Russia under the guise of "rest and relaxation" schemes.

Key

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are wellcovered 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 these Russian

violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and 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 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts

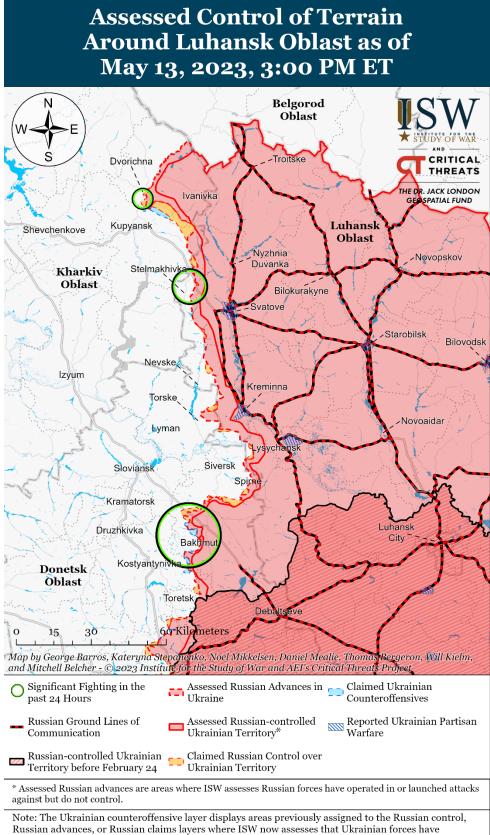
Activities	in	Russian-occupied	areas

Russian	Main	Effort	_	Eastern	<u>Ukraine</u>

<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces continued limited ground attacks northeast of Kupyansk and northwest of Svatove on May 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces attempted to improve their tactical positions and conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Masyutivka, Kharkiv Oblast (13km northeast of Kupyansk) and Novoselivske (14km northwest of Svatove) and Stelmakhivka (15km west of Svatove) in Luhansk Oblast.[32]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kreminna area on May 13. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted assaults near Hryhorivka (11km south of Kreminna).[33] Another Russian milblogger claimed that there was intense fighting near Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna) as of May 12.[34] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces did not conduct any offensive operations in the Kreminna area on May 13.[35]



established a presence beyond a short-term raid. Inclusion of an area on this layer does not imply that ISW assesses that the area is part of any upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive operation.

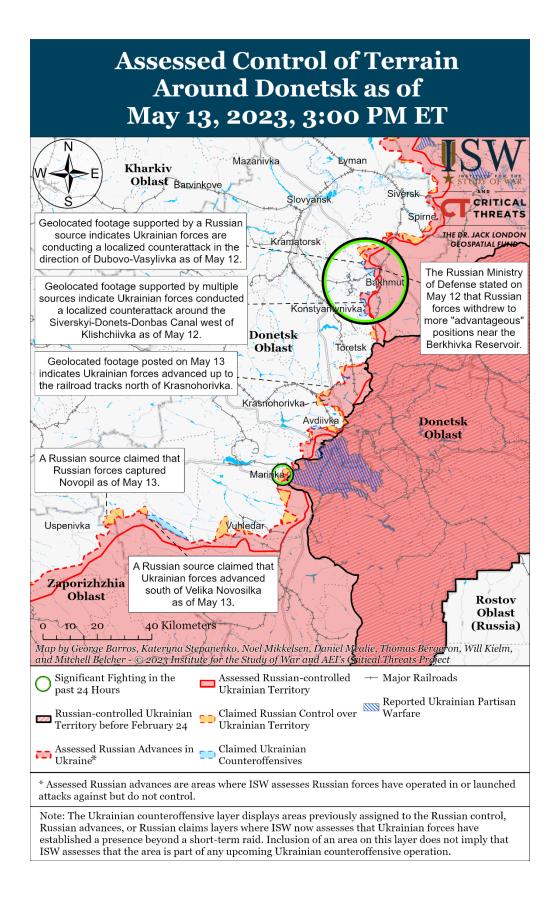
<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian Objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

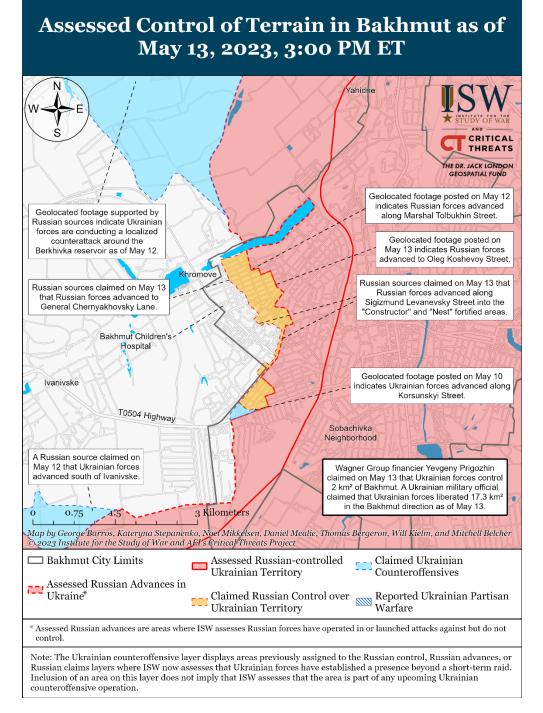
Russian forces have made marginal gains within Bakhmut as of May 13. Geolocated footage published on May 13 indicates that Russian forces made marginal advances in northwestern Bakhmut.[36] Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin claimed on May 12 that Wagner forces advanced up to 400m in Bakhmut and that Ukrainian forces currently control two square kilometers of the city.[37] Prigozhin and a Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces made further marginal advances in southwest Bakhmut as of May 13, although ISW has not yet seen visual confirmation of these claims.[38] A Russian milblogger claimed that there were also combat clashes near Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut).[39] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations in Bakhmut itself; within 11km northwest of Bakhmut near Orikhovo-Vasylivka, Hryhorivka, and Bohdanivka; and within 14km southwest of Bakhmut near Bila Hora and Stupochky.[40]

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk front on May 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled numerous Russian assaults near Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka).[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Novomykhailivka (36km southwest of Avdiivka) and towards Avdiivka from the direction of Opytne (4km south of Avdiivka).[42]

Ukrainian forces are operating in areas north of Avdiivka where Russian sources previously claimed that Russian forces had advanced as of May 13. Geolocated footage published on May 12 and 13 indicate that Ukrainian forces are operating near the railway line north of Krasnohorivka (10km north of Avdiivka) and west of Novobakhmutivka (13km northeast of Avdiivka).[43]

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on May 13.[44]

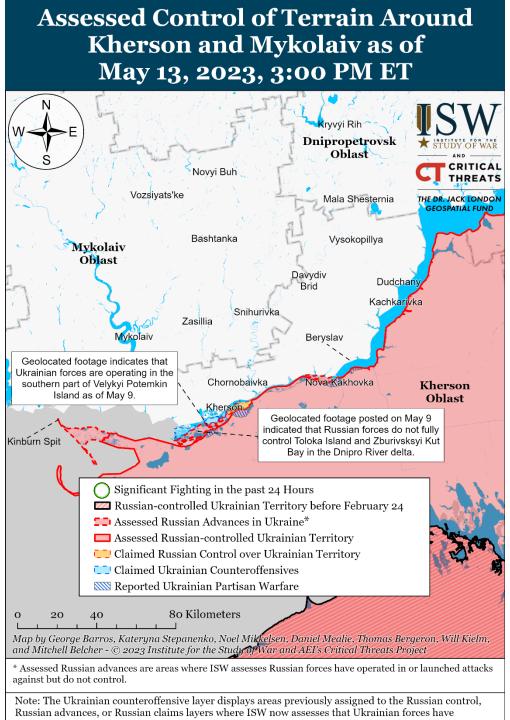




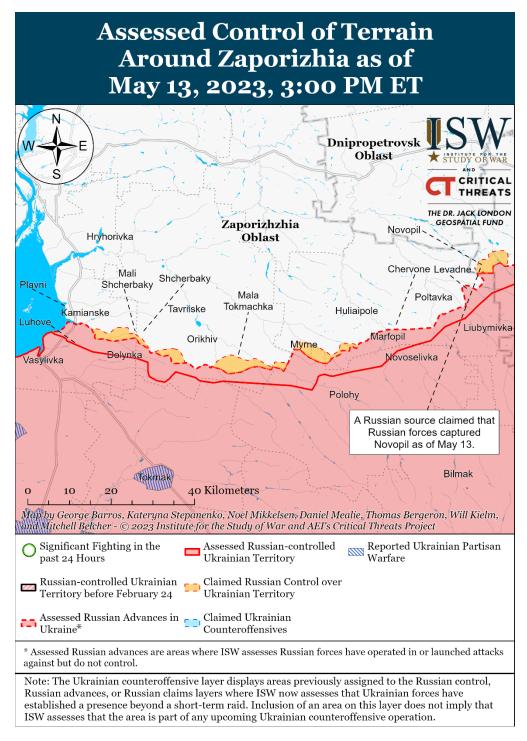
<u>Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces targeted Ukrainian positions in southern Ukraine west of Hulyaipole on May 13. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces have significantly intensified unmanned reconnaissance over the past day, launched about 24 drones along the frontline, and shelled Ukrainian positions 88 times.[45] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command also stated that two

Russian Su-35 aircraft launched four KAB-500 bombs at the Beryslav raion.[46] A Russian milblogger additionally published footage on May 13 that purportedly shows Ukrainian forces operating in the Dachy area in Kherson Oblast on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River.[47]



established a presence beyond a short-term raid. Inclusion of an area on this layer does not imply that ISW assesses that the area is part of any upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive operation.



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

Russian forces are reportedly replenishing units with mobilized personnel. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces are replenishing units operating in the Svatove direction with mobilized personnel including those who have undergone treatment for mental disorders.[48] ISW has previously reported on Russian forces recruiting sick and diseased personnel.[49]

<u>Activities in Russian-occupied areas</u> (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian civilians into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Russian authorities continue efforts to deport Ukrainian citizens to Russia under the guise of "rest and relaxation" schemes. Footage circulated by Russian milbloggers on May 12 shows Russian Duma Deputy and former Commissioner of Children's Rights Anna Kuznetsova welcoming a group of Ukrainian children and parents from Krasnochereske, Luhansk Oblast, in Anapa, Krasnodar Krai.[50] Kuznetsova stated that Russian authorities deported the children due to shelling in the area and removed them from Krasnochereske using armored vehicles.[51] A milblogger who apparently consulted with Kuznetsova claimed that the effort was jointly coordinated by Russian military personnel deployed along the Svatove-Kreminna line, the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), and the United Russia Party.[52] Kuznetsova's and the milblogger's statements confirm that certain Russian military elements are facilitating the deportation of Ukrainians to Russia.

Russian occupation authorities continue to use allegations of Ukrainian military activity to justify repressions against residents of occupied areas. Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Head Leonid Pasechnik stated that the occupation administration in occupied Luhansk Oblast is temporarily suspending the operation of mobile internet due to "intensified shelling" by Ukrainian forces.[53] Such a measure will complicate communication and information sharing in occupied areas, thus increasing local reliance on the occupation administration. The Kharkiv Oblast occupation administration, which oversees a miniscule part of northeastern Kharkiv Oblast that remains under Russian control, called on residents to leave the area due to increased shelling.[54] The Kharkiv Oblast occupation administration may use the justification of alleged Ukrainian shelling to remove residents further into Russian controlled territory or to Russia.[55] ISW has previously reported on the efforts of Russian occupation administrations throughout Ukraine to use "evacuations" to forcibly remove Ukrainians from their homes.[56]

<u>Significant activity in Belarus (ISW assesses that a Russian or Belarusian attack into northern Ukraine in early 2023 is extraordinarily unlikely and has thus restructured this section of the update. It will no longer include counter-indicators for such an offensive.)</u>

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus, but these are not indicators that Russian and Belarusian forces are preparing for an imminent attack on Ukraine from Belarus. ISW will revise this text and its assessment if it observes any unambiguous indicators that Russia or Belarus is preparing to attack northern Ukraine.

Belarus' national legal registrar reported on May 12 that Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko ratified an intergovernmental agreement with Russia on May 5 that implements an unspecified program on bilateral military-technical cooperation until 2025.[57] Lukashenko also ratified an agreement with Russia on the management of spent nuclear fuel on May 5.[58] The agreement reportedly stipulates that Belarus is to send its spent nuclear fuel to Russia for further processing.[59]

The Belarusian Ministry of Defense reported on May 13 that Belarusian special forces elements continue conducting combat readiness checks and combat training.[60]

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.

[4] https://t.me/budnisvo/839; https://t.me/basurin_e/1609; https://t.me/wargonzo/12489

^[1] https://t.me/wargonzo/12493

^[2] https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoesoVaHVbHYjxnxeBy2L... ; https://t.m e/osirskiy/68

^[3] https://lviv dot media/viyna/72048-u-zsu-rozpovili-skilki-kilometriv-zvilnili-pidbahmutom/; https://varta1.com dot ua/news/u-zsu-povidomili-skilki-kilometriv-zvilnili-pidbahmutom_364946.html; https://t.me/Tsaplienko/31662

^[5] https://t.me/rybar/46975

^[6] https://t.me/rybar/46975

^[7] https://t.me/concordgroup_official/950

^[8] https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0esoVaHVbHYjxnxeBy2L... https://www .facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0esoVaHVbHYjxnxeBy2L...

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 $^[11] https://twitter.com/loogunda/status/1657335300144627715?s=20; https://twitter.com/blinzka /status/1657343129647759362?s=20; https://twitter.com/hochu_dodomu/status/16573202870991 42145?s=20; https://twitter.com/kharkiv_warnews/status/1657322257864073217?s=20; https://t witter.com/auditor_ya/status/1657350505553707010?s=20; https://twitter.com/auditor_ya/status/1657365387439161344?s=20; https://t.me/klintsy_32/9464; https://twitter.com/auditor_ya/status/1657365598580400128?s=20; https://twitter.com/michaelh992/status/1657346491428511747?s=2 0; https://twitter.com/gfusfus/status/1657372624610115584?s=20; https://t.me/klintsy_32/9449; https://t.me/klintsy_32/9489; https://twitter.com/albafella1/status/1657351173626642432?s=20; https://twitter.com/azbintl/status/1657379002925842432?s=20$

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^[16] https://t.me/mod_russia/26542

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[19] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65558070

[20] https://t.me/rybar/46988 ; https://t.me/epoddubny/15926 ; https://t.me/epoddubny/15928 [21] https://t.me/rybar/46988

[22] https://ria dot ru/20230513/ekonomika-1871508432.html

[23] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/85626

[24] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/85626

[25] https://isw.pub/UkrWar020223; https://isw.pub/UkrWar012023

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[29] https://t.me/motolkohelp/29825; https://t.me/motolkohelp/29826

[30] https://www.newsweek.com/rumors-swirl-about-putin-ally-lukashenkos-

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[33] https://t.me/wargonzo/12493

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[35] https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoesoVaHVbHYjxnxeBy2L...; https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoQzACdCpAhh4tCfGvNrn...

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[37] https://t.me/concordgroup_official/952

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