

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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May 19, 2024, 5:15pm ET

Click <u>here</u> 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 <u>here</u> 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 <u>here</u> 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 12:15pm ET on May 19. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 20 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted successful drone strikes against Russian military infrastructure and oil refineries in occupied Crimea, Krasnodar Krai, and Leningrad Oblast on the night of May 18 to 19. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces destroyed nine ATACMS missiles over occupied Crimea.[1] A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces launched 12 ATACMS against Sevastopol Bay — nine of which Russian forces shot down near Sevastopol and Belbek airfield, and three of which struck a vessel in Sevastopol port.[2] Footage published on May 19 purportedly shows Russian forces attempting to repel Ukrainian drones over the port in Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Krai, [3] Krasnodar Krai Governor Venyamin Kondratyev claimed that Russian air defense suppressed over 10 drones near Novorossiysk and that falling debris caused fires.[4] Sources in Ukrainian intelligence told Ukrainian outlet Suspilne that Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) and Unmanned Systems Forces conducted successful drone strikes against the Slavyansk oil refinery in Slavyansk-on-Kuban, Krasnodar Krai and against the Kushchyovskaya airfield in Krasnodar Krai where Russian forces station Su-34, Su-25, Su-27, and MiG-29 aircraft used to conduct strikes in Ukraine.[5] The sources stated that the Ukrainian drone strikes damaged several aircraft at the Kushchyovskaya airfield and several distillation columns at the Slavyansk oil refinery. Slavyanskiy Raion Head Roman Sinyagovsky claimed that six drones fell on the Slavyansk oil refinery, and Krasnodar Krai Operational Headquarters reported that Russian air defense suppressed at least 10 drones over Slavyanskiy and Kushchyovskiy raions.[6] Ukrainian forces previously conducted successful drone strikes against the Kushchyovskaya airfield in April 2024 and the Slavyansk oil refinery in March and April 2024.[7] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces also destroyed the Russian Black Sea Fleet's (BSF) Kovrovets Natya-class minesweeper, although it is unclear if Ukrainian forces destroyed the minesweeper near occupied Sevastopol, Crimea, or Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Krai as the BSF has redeployed the majority of its naval assets to Novorossiysk over the past year.[8] Suspilne also reported on May 19 that its sources within

Ukrainian special services stated that Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) caused explosions at an unspecified number of vertical fuel tanks at the Vyborg oil depot in Leningrad Oblast with three explosive devices.[9] Geolocated footage published on May 18 shows a large fire at the oil depot, although Leningrad Oblast Governor Alexander Drozdenko denied reports that drone strikes caused the explosions and claimed that pyrotechnics caused the explosions near the oil depot.[10]

Russian milbloggers appear to be experimenting with different ways to express critical opinions of the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) following the recent appointment of Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov. A prominent Russian milblogger posted a photo on May 18 of an undated document allegedly from the Russian MoD's Head of the Missile and Artillery Weapons Service responding to an appeal about the inaccuracy of Russian artillery.[11] The document claimed that any issues with artillery ammunition are due to Russian servicemen's improper handling of the rounds and demanded that Russian servicemen follow the Russian Chief of the General Staff's previously issued order prohibiting military personnel from disassembling and weighing artillery ammunition. The milblogger then described the alleged issues by using general terms as well various code words, such as names of other countries or places from popular science fiction films, that multiple Russian milbloggers have repeatedly used recently to cautiously discuss issues in the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD).[12] The milblogger claimed that Russian military personnel noticed that artillery systems were performing strangely, subsequently discovered that the amount of gunpowder in the ammunition shells widely varied, and reported the issue to the Russian military command but to no avail. Another Russian milblogger responded and used some of the same code words to criticize the Russian MoD and to express hope that Belousov will make reforms that solve the larger bureaucratic issues in the MoD.[13] A third milblogger, who previously served as a "Storm-Z" unit instructor, however, was direct with his criticisms of the Russian military and claimed that he has previously heard information from Russian servicemen about the inconsistent amounts of gunpowder in some artillery shells.[14] The milblogger claimed that this issue began in Spring 2022 and that the alleged order from the Russian General Staff described in the document indicates that the Russian military leadership has been aware of the issue for some time. The milblogger criticized the Russian military command for not finding a solution and claimed that Russian artillery systems are also suffering from barrel wear (which is very likely given their extremely heavy use).

Founder of the Kremlin-linked Rybar Telegram channel, Mikhail Zvinchuk, whom the Kremlin likely co-opted as part of the Kremlin's wider efforts to gain control over the Russia information space, gave an uncharacteristically public interview in which he criticized the Russian MoD and directly connected some of the milbloggers' code words to the Russian MoD on May 18.[15] Although it is unclear if Zvinchuk gave this interview with Kremlin approval or not, the Kremlin's permittance of criticisms by select prominent Russian milbloggers of the Russian MoD could increase public pressure for reforms, would, if implemented, assist Russia's effort Ukraine.[16] that war in

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev threatened Russian internet technology and telecommunications company Yandex because its large language model failed to provide responses that cohere with ongoing Russian information operations. Medvedev criticized Yandex's Alisa voice assistant (ostensibly similar to Amazon's Alexa) on May 19 for being unable to answer questions about the US law approving the

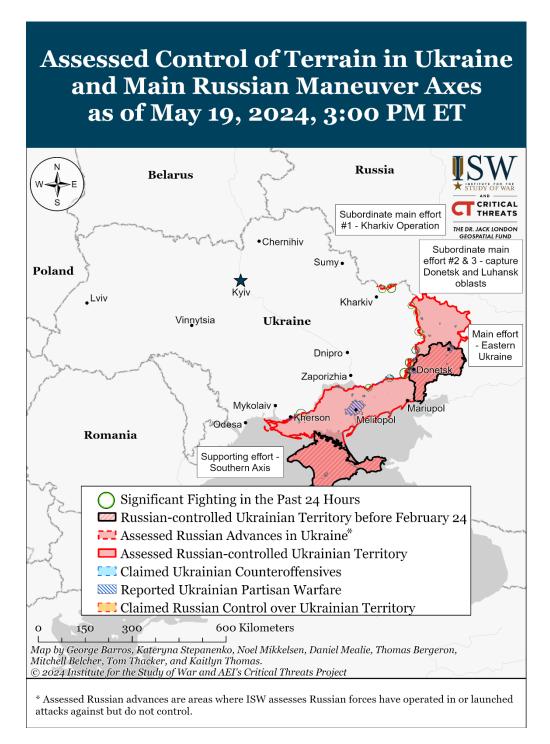
seizure of Russian foreign assets or supposed monuments in Ukraine to Nazi sympathizers. [17] Medvedev asserted that Yandex's artificial intelligence (AI) is a "coward" for failing to provide his desired answers to these questions and suggested that Yandex may be concerned about offending its Western clients. Medvedev suggested that Yandex's supposed unwillingness to provide answers to these questions greatly undermines trust in Yandex's products and could provide grounds for the Russian government to recognize Yandex's services as "incomplete" and even identify Yandex's current managers as "foreign agents." Russian news outlet *RBK* reported that Russian officials have previously submitted complaints against similar large language models for failing to generate sufficiently patriotic responses. [18] Russian officials will likely continue to struggle with shortcomings of large language models that are well known to others with more experience of those systems as the Kremlin continues efforts to solidify its control over the Russian information space.

A St. Petersburg court ruled that Russian authorities can seize over 700 million euros (\$760 million) of assets from three large European banks on May 18 on behalf of a Gazprom subsidiary.[19] The court determined that Russian authorities could seize assets, accounts, property and shares belonging to Deutsche Bank, German Commerzbank, and Italian bank UniCredit after ruling in favor of a suit from Gazprom subsidiary RusChemAlliance.[20] The European banks were among the guarantor lenders under a contract for the construction of a gas processing plant in Russia with German-based engineering company Linde, which involved parties terminated due to Western sanctions following the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[21] The court also ruled that Deutsche Bank cannot sell its subsidiary businesses in Russia without the approval of Russian President Vladimir Putin and stated that the measure is necessary to prevent the bank from "alienating its property in Russia."[22]

Key Takeaways:

- Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted successful drone strikes against Russian military infrastructure and oil refineries in occupied Crimea, Krasnodar Krai, and Leningrad Oblast on the night of May 18 to 19.
- Russian milbloggers appear to be experimenting with different ways to express critical opinions of the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) following the recent appointment of Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov.
- Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev threatened Russian internet technology and telecommunications company Yandex because its large language model failed to provide responses that cohere with ongoing Russian information operations.
- A St. Petersburg court ruled that Russian authorities can seize over 700 million euros (\$760 million) of assets from three large European banks on May 18 on behalf of a Gazprom subsidiary.
- Russian forces recently marginally advanced within Vovchansk and near Chasiv Yar and Donetsk City.

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We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)

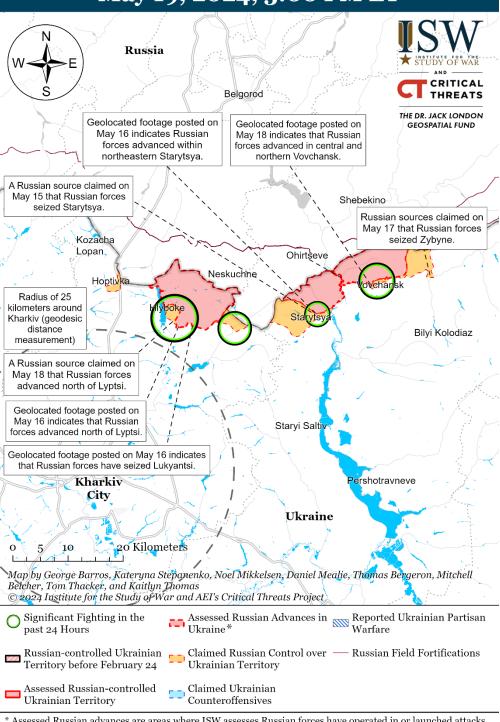
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiy Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- · Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

<u>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)</u>

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Lyptsi (northeast of Kharkiv City) on May 19, but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed on May 19 that Russian forces advanced up to 800 meters deep in an unspecified area in the direction of Lyptsi on May 18, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim. [23] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks south of Hlyboke (north of Lyptsi) and Lukyantsi (northeast of Lyptsi) and that Russian forces continue assaults in the direction of Zelene (northeast of Lyptsi). [24] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and other Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian counterattacks near Lyptsi. [25]

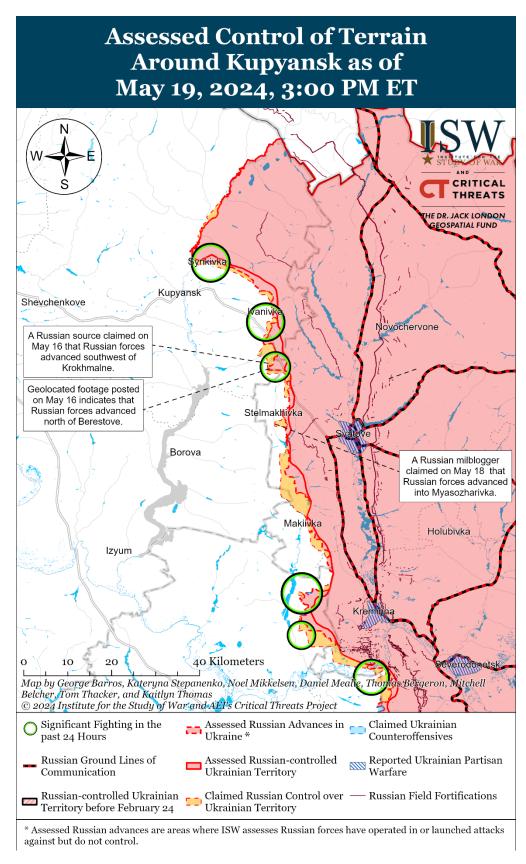
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



^{*} Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

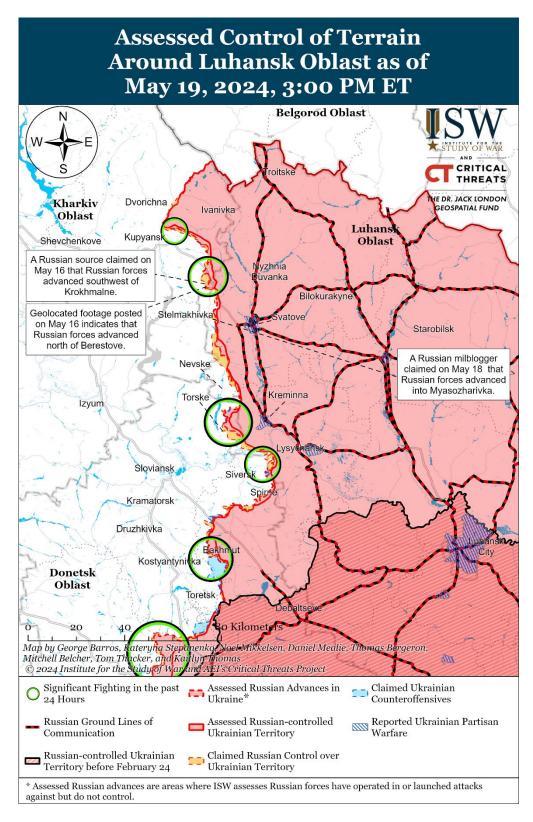
Note: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on May 17 that the maximum extent of Russian advances into Kharkiv Oblast was 10 kilometers. A Russian source claimed on May 17 that Russian forces advanced between 300 and 600 meters toward Lyptsi. Russian sources claimed on May 16 that Russian forces advanced 2.89 kilometers wide and one kilometer deep in Vovchansk.

Russian forces recently made confirmed advances within Vovchansk (northeast of Kharkiv City) and continued offensive operations in the area on May 19. Geolocated footage published on May 19 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced within northeastern Vovchansk. [26] Geolocated footage published on May 19 indicates that Russian forces have advanced along Haharina Street within northwestern Vovchansk and that Russian infantry recently marginally advanced to the southern (left) bank of the Vovcha River under the now destroyed bridge on Haharina Street. [27] ISW has not observed Russian forces operating vehicles on the southern bank of the Vovcha River in Vovchansk nor Russian forces maintaining more than an individual limited position on the southern bank. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Starytsya and Buhruvatka (both southwest of Vovchansk), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims. [28] Russian forces also continued ground attacks near Starytsya and in the direction of Prylipka (both southwest of Vovchansk) and near Tykhe (east of Vovchansk). [29]



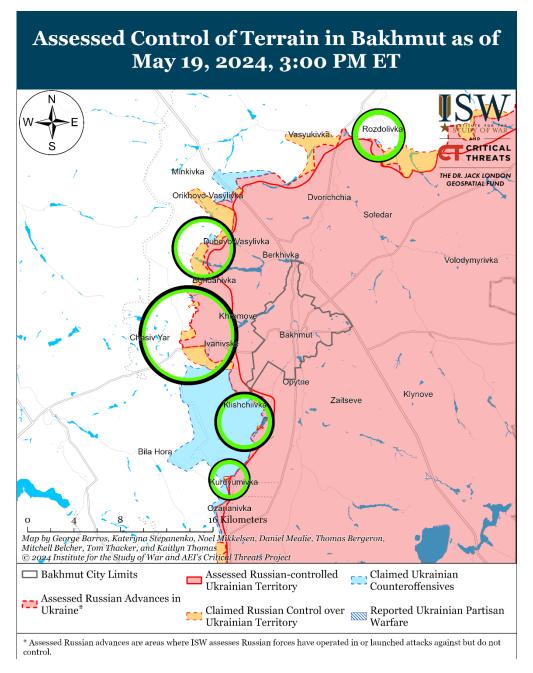
<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on May 19, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to a kilometer in width and 1.75 kilometers in depth near Berestove (northwest of Svatove). [30] A Russian milblogger claimed on May 18 that Russian forces entered Myasozharivka (west of Svatove) and entrenched themselves within the settlement. [31] Russian forces continued offensive operations northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; northwest of Svatove near Ivanivka, Berestove, Kyslivka, Stepova Novoselivka, and Stelmakhivka; southwest of Svatove near Novosadove; west of Kreminna near Torske, and south of Kreminna near Hryhorivka and Bilohorivka. [32]



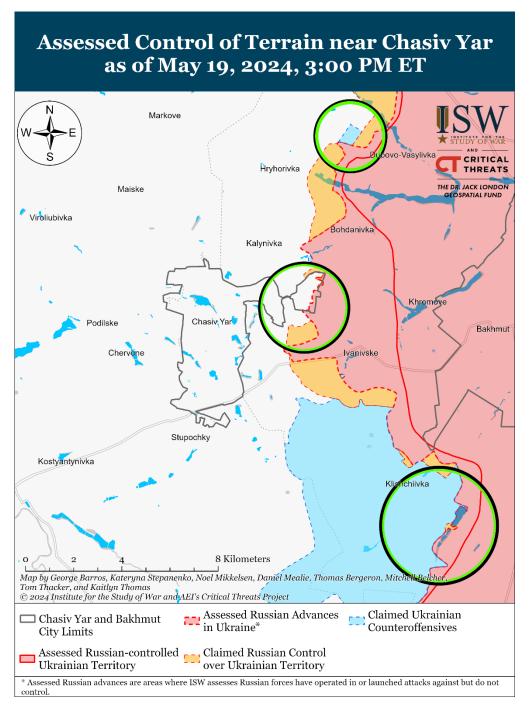
<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces significantly increased their activity in the Siversk direction (northeast of Bakhmut) and attacked near Verkhnokamyanske (east of Siversk), Rozdolivka (south of Siversk), and Ivano-Darivka (southeast of Siversk).[33]



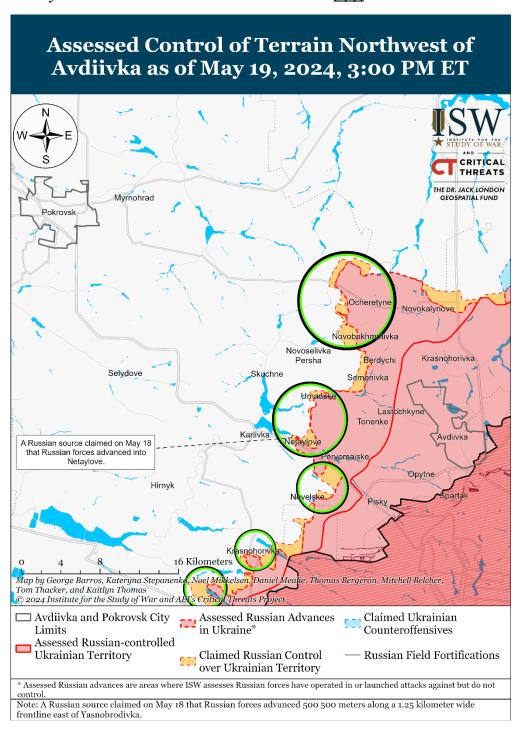
Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Chasiv Yar during recent mechanized assaults amid continued fighting in the area on May 19. Geolocated footage published on May 18 indicates that Russian forces advanced during mechanized assaults on May 17 and 18 within and southeast of the Kanal Microraion (easternmost Chasiv Yar). [34] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced within the Kanal Microraion on May 19. [35] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced near the Novyi Microraion (eastern Chasiv Yar) and from Ivanivske (east of Chasiv Yar), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims. [36] Fighting continued north of Chasiv Yar near Vasylivka and Kalynivka; near the Novyi and Kanal microraions (eastern Chasiv Yar); east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske; southeast of Chasiv Yar near Klishchiivka, Andriivka, and Kurdyumivka; and south of Chasiv Yar near Shumy. [37] Elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating near the Novyi and Kanal microraions; elements of the Russian 58th Spetsnaz Battalion (1st Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Army Corps (AC)) and the 17th Artillery Brigade (3rd Army Corps) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar; and elements of the Russian 4th Motorized Rifle

Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] AC) and Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz are reportedly operating south of Chasiv Yar.[38]



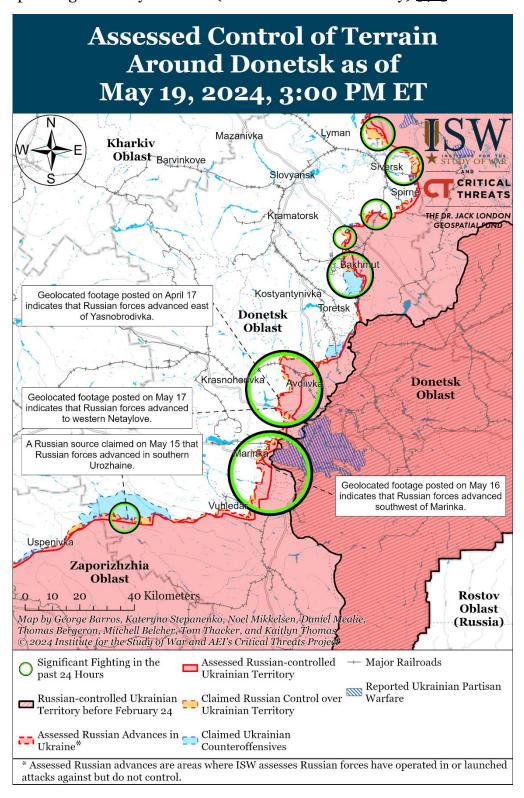
Russian forces continued offensive operations near Avdiivka on May 19, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced within Netaylove (southwest of Avdiivka), northwest of Umanske (west of Avdiivka), and towards Novooleksandrivka (northwest of Avdiivka), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[39] Russian sources noted that the tempo of Russian advanced near Ocheretyne (northwest of Avdiivka) has slowed recently.[40] Fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novokalynove, Novooleksandrivka, Yevhenivka, Solovyove, Novoselivka Persha, and Novopokrovske; west of Avdiivka near Umanske; and southwest of Avdiivka near Netaylove.[41] Elements of the Russian "Atlant"

Battalion are reportedly operating near Ocheretyne. [42] A Russian milblogger claimed that drone operators of the 98th VDV Division are striking Ukrainian equipment near Sokil. [43] ISW has not observed other Russian sources claiming that elements of the 98th VDV Division are operating in the Avdiivka direction, and multiple sources have repeatedly indicated that the 98th VDV Division is heavily committed to the Chasiv Yar direction. [44]

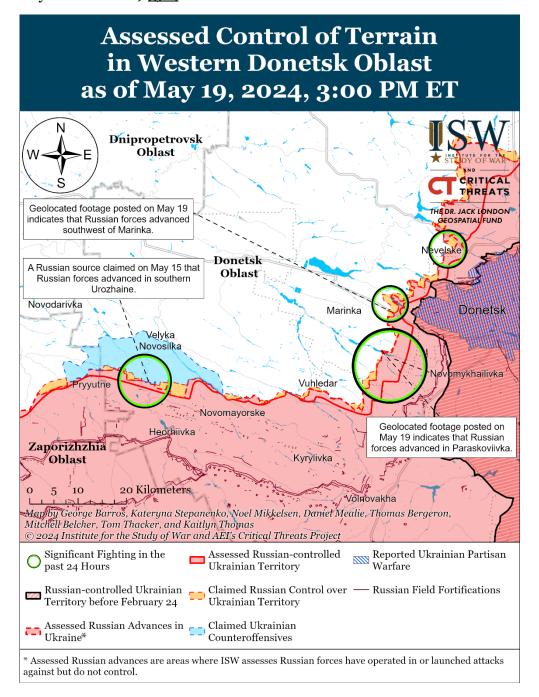


Russian forces recently advanced west and southwest of Donetsk City amid continued fighting in the area on May 19. Geolocated footage published on May 19 indicates that Russian forces advanced southwest of Marinka (west of Donetsk City) and in eastern Paraskoviivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[45] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced near Marinka and

Paraskoviivka.[46] Fighting continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka; southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda, Paraskoviivka, and Novomykhailivka; and southeast of Vuhledar near Volodymyrivka.[47] Elements of the Russian 238th Artillery Brigade (8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District) are reportedly operating near Krasnohorivka, and elements of the 200th Artillery Brigade (29th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Yelyzavetivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[48]

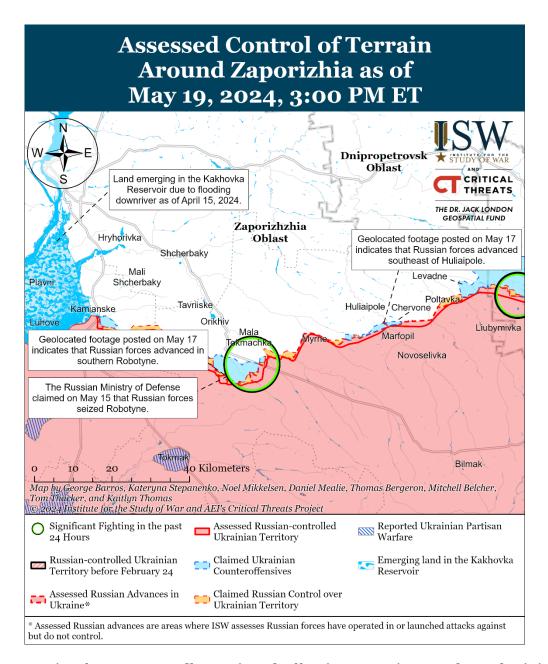


Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on May 19. Positional engagements continued south of Velyka Novosilka near Staromayorske and Urozhaine and southeast of Velyka Novosilka near Novomayorske.[49] Elements of the Russian 11th Air Force and Air Defense Army (Russian Aerospace Forces [VSK] and EMD) are reportedly operating near Makarivka (south of Velyka Novosilka).[50]

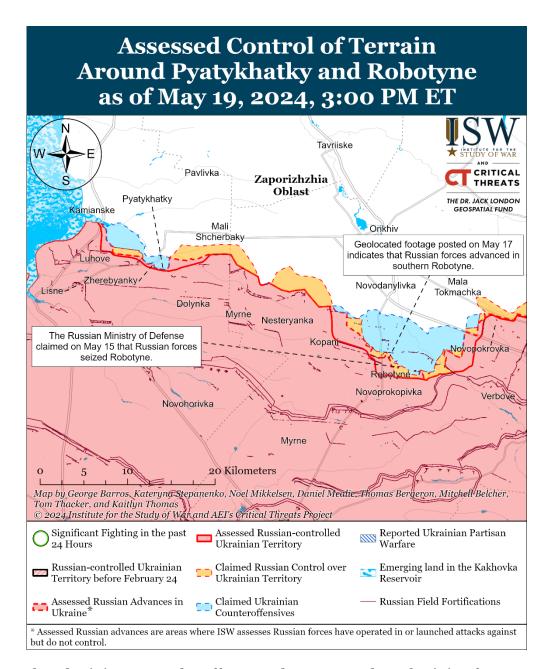


<u>Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

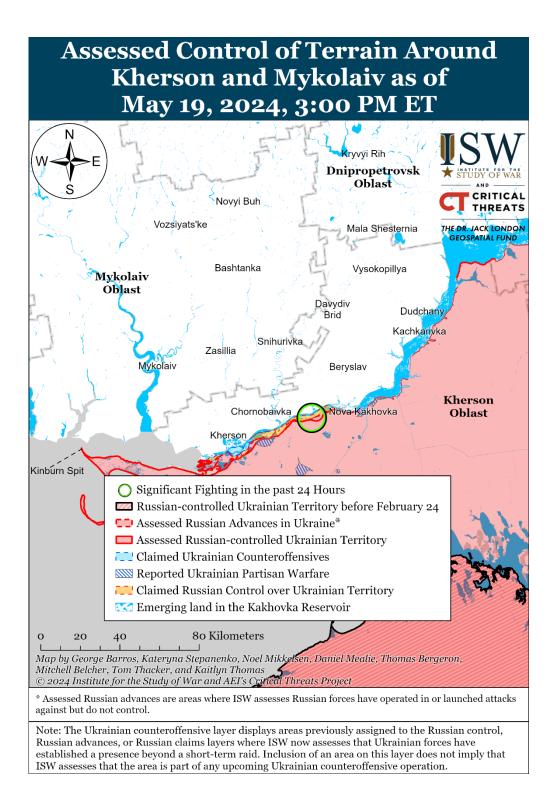
A Russian milblogger claimed on May 19 that Russian forces recently advanced up to two kilometers towards Hulyaipole.[51] ISW observed geolocated footage on May 18 indicating that Russian forces recently advanced roughly 1.5 kilometers southeast of Hulyaipole.[52]



Russian forces reportedly continued offensive operations to clear Ukrainian forces from Robotyne on May 19.[53] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized an unspecified Ukrainian position northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne).[54] Elements of the Russian 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Robotyne.[55]



The Ukrainian General Staff reported on May 19 that Ukrainian forces repelled several Russian attacks near Krynky in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast.[56]



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

Ukrainian Air Force Commander Mykola Oleshchuk reported that Russian forces launched 37 Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai and Kursk Oblast on the night of May 18 to 19 and Ukrainian forces destroyed all the drones over Kyiv, Odesa, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Cherkasy, and Kherson oblasts.[57] Kharkiv Oblast Prosecutor's Office Spokesperson Dmytro Chubenko reported that Russian forces struck a recreation center in Kharkiv City with two Iskander-M ballistic missiles.[58] Kharkiv Oblast Military Administration Head Oleh Synehubov

reported that Russian forces conducted two separate strikes against the recreation center roughly 20 minutes apart, possibly to kill first responders who arrived at the scene after the first strike.[59] The Russian strike reportedly wounded at least 27 people and killed six people, including a pregnant woman.[60] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky expressed condolences to the victims' families and reiterated that two Patriot air defense systems would fundamentally improve Ukraine's air defense capabilities around Kharkiv City.[61]

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

Nothing significant to report.

<u>Russian Technological Adaptations</u> (Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)

The press service of Russia's National Technology Initiative (NTI) told Russian state news outlet *RIA Novosti* on May 18 that NTI has developed a method to 3-D print anti-bullet and anti-fragmentation body armor with an unspecified polymer that can be integrated into military uniforms. [62] NTI official Igor Bederov noted that China has a similar production method for certain types of body armor.

<u>Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts</u> (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)

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

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

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

Russian Information	<u>Operations</u>	and	Narratives
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Kremlin officials continue to promote established Kremlin information operations alleging that the West is trying to destabilize Georgia. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova claimed on May 19 that the West has recently failed to destabilize the political situation in Georgia like they did in Ukraine, likely referencing a longstanding Kremlin information operation falsely alleging that Ukraine's Euromaidan Revolution in 2014 was an externally organized and funded Western coup.[63] Ruling Georgian Dream party members recently promoted similar information operations to accuse the West of orchestrating protests against Georgia's "foreign agent" law in order to overthrow the Georgian government.[64] Kremlin officials and Georgian Dream actors likely intend to purposefully derail long-term Georgian efforts for Euro-Atlantic integration, which play into continued Russian hybrid operations to divide, destabilize, and weaken Georgia.[65]

<u>Significant activity in Belarus</u> (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

Nothing significant to report.

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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[1] https://t.me/mod_russia/38885
[2] https://t.me/rybar/60201
[3]
        https://t.me/WarArchive_ua/15033
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[14] https://t.me/philologist_zov/985
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[18] https://www.rbc dot ru/politics/19/05/2024/6649cc009a794757a17df201
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