

## Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, May 15, 2023

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May 15, 2023, 6:35pm ET

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

Click [here](#) to 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 1pm ET on May 16. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 16 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.*

Leaked US intelligence accessed by *The Washington Post* indicates that Wagner Group financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin offered to disclose the locations of Russian positions to Ukrainian intelligence in exchange for Bakhmut.[1] *The Washington Post* reported on May 15 that Prigozhin offered the Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) information about Russian troop positions in exchange for a Ukrainian withdrawal from Bakhmut, and two Ukrainian unnamed officials confirmed that Prigozhin had spoken to GUR officials on numerous occasions. GUR officials reportedly rejected Prigozhin's offer because they did not trust Prigozhin, and some documents indicate that Kyiv suspects that the Kremlin is aware of Prigozhin's communication with Ukrainian intelligence. *The Washington Post* reported that Prigozhin urged Ukrainian officials to attack Russian forces and revealed the problems that the Russian forces are facing with morale and ammunition stocks. *The Washington Post* published an interview with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on May 13 about GUR Chief Major General Kyrylo Budanov's interactions with Prigozhin and his operatives in Africa in which Zelensky did not confirm Ukraine's contacts with Prigozhin.[2]

**The reports of Prigozhin's offers to cooperate with Ukrainian intelligence triggered a mixed response within Russia.** Prigozhin originally responded to Zelensky's interview on May 14,

sarcastically stating that he can “confirm this information” because Wagner “has nothing to hide from foreign special services” and that he and Budanov are “still in Africa.”[3] Prigozhin’s later accused *The Washington Post* of spreading fake information and claimed that unnamed figures warned him about the efforts to discredit him using fake information.[4] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov dismissed the allegations on May 15 and stated that, although he cannot comment on the information, it “looks like yet another hoax.”[5] Russian milbloggers – including one of Prigozhin’s enemies, former Russian officer Igor Girkin – claimed that they do not believe that Prigozhin would cooperate with Ukrainian intelligence.[6] State Duma Parliamentarian Viktor Sobolev warned that mobilized servicemen who decide to join the ranks of Wagner private military company (PMC) will face 10 to 15 years in prison because Wagner is an illegal armed formation within Russia.[7] It is unclear if Sobolev’s comments were made in response to the allegations, since Sobolev is an avid critic of Prigozhin and the Wagner forces.[8]

**Prigozhin’s reported efforts to cooperate with Ukrainian intelligence would have been part of his feud with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) rather than an attack on Russian President Vladimir Putin.** ISW assessed on March 12 that Prigozhin is competing with the Russian MoD for Putin’s favor but had unintentionally alarmed Putin with his military-political ambitions.[9] Prigozhin’s reported outreach to Ukrainian intelligence would likely have been part of an effort to win Putin’s favor, in fact, by facilitating a rapid Wagner victory in Bakhmut while harming Russian conventional forces behind the scenes. Prigozhin recently retracted his May 9 comments that indirectly mocked Putin, further indicating that Prigozhin is aware of his dependance on Putin and does not mean to antagonize him.[10]

**The allegations are unlikely to cause the Kremlin to remove Prigozhin in the near term but can contribute to efforts to discredit Prigozhin.** The Kremlin likely suspects or is aware of Prigozhin’s reported communications with Ukrainian intelligence and likely was not blindsided by *The Washington Post* report or the leaked US intelligence documents. Russian officials had reportedly threatened Prigozhin with treason if he were to act on his attempt to blackmail the MoD into providing him more ammunition by threatening to withdraw from Bakhmut. The Kremlin is likely preparing mechanisms to discredit Prigozhin as a traitor.[11] Unnamed Kremlin sources revealed that the Russian Presidential Administration is preparing an information operation to publicly discredit Prigozhin but noted that the Kremlin is unlikely to threaten Prigozhin while Wagner forces are on the frontlines.[12] Prigozhin commands the Wagner forces in Donbas, and his removal would disrupt the Russian lines in Bakhmut – a risk that Putin is unlikely to take. The Kremlin is also unable easily to publicly remove and replace Prigozhin as the de facto head of Wagner because Wagner is an independent company and Prigozhin holds no official position in the Russian government. Removing Prigozhin from his control of Wagner would ironically require asserting direct Kremlin control of the mercenary group from which Putin has been at pains to maintain formal distance.

**Ukrainian officials acknowledged limited Ukrainian battlefield successes during recent localized counterattacks in and around Bakhmut.** Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on May 15 that the Ukrainian forces made unspecified advances in and around Bakhmut in the past several days. Malyar added that Russian forces are deploying airborne (VDV) forces to defend Bakhmut’s flanks, presumably from other areas of the front.[13] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi characterized the localized Ukrainian counterattacks as the first successes in Ukraine’s overall defense of Bakhmut and noted

that this operation must be perceived as only a partial success.[14] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty stated on May 14 that Ukrainian forces advanced 150-600 meters in various directions in the Bakhmut area and that Russian forces continue efforts to complete the capture of Bakhmut and defend the occupied territories.[15]

**Russian milbloggers uniformly attacked a proposal for “military censorship,” further indicating that the community is highly motivated to defend its privileged position within the Russian information space.** State Duma Deputy Viktor Sobolev proposed on May 15 that military correspondents’ reports about the situation in Ukraine should be subject to “military censorship” and that the lack of censorship has led to the spread of false information and panic.[16] Russian milbloggers widely criticized Sobolev for the supposed illegality and impracticality of the proposal, arguing that “military censorship” would be incongruous with Russia’s need to fill the information space with pro-Russian sources against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine.[17] State Duma Deputy Oleg Matveychev amplified an article by Russian political scientist Pavel Danilin on May 14 accusing the Russian milbloggers of promoting panicky false stories about Russian retreats and problems with the Russian MoD.[18] Danilin suggested that the milbloggers’ actions constitute acts of high treason and stated that “during the Great Patriotic War, those who [sowed] panic ... were put against the wall.”[19] Russian milblogger and Human Rights Council member Alexander “Sasha” Kots refuted Danilin’s points and launched a series of critiques against Matveychev that other milbloggers amplified.[20] Russian milbloggers in both instances highlighted their alleged achievements and the importance of the “patriotic segment of Telegram” in bringing attention to acute problems and moving Russia closer to victory.[21]

Select Russian officials have previously called for the censorship of Telegram and the milbloggers, although ISW assesses that Putin is unlikely to approve such a measure because the Kremlin is attempting to use the wider ultranationalist community’s established networks to recruit volunteers and generate social support for the war.[22] The rapid and unified response from milbloggers suggests that the community perceives itself as a unitary civil society entity, one interested in defending its increasingly singular privilege in being able to criticize the conduct of the Russian war in Ukraine despite its internal factions and disagreements.

**The Russian MoD claimed that it intercepted a Ukrainian Storm Shadow missile for the first time on May 15.[23]** The MoD made this claim on the third day of four days of claimed Ukrainian Storm Shadow strikes against the Russian military assets in Luhansk City, roughly 80-100 kilometers behind the frontline.[24] A Russian milblogger expressed concern that Ukraine’s use of the missile can severely impact the situation on the frontlines because the only way Russian forces can counter the Storm Shadows is to destroy the aircraft carrying the missiles.[25]

**The Kremlin has reportedly banned high-ranking officials from resigning during the war in Ukraine, likely in an attempt to maintain stability within domestic security organs, government bodies, and the Russian military command.** Independent Russian investigative outlet *Vazhnye Isotrii (iStories)* reported on May 15 that a former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer and sources close to an unnamed regional governor and the presidential administration stated that the Kremlin threatened civil servants in security organs and government bodies with criminal prosecution for trying to defy the ban.[26] The Kremlin reportedly instituted the ban because many officials wanted to leave their positions after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, although *iStories’* sources emphasized that the informal and illegal nature of the ban may

allow for exceptions.[27] The Kremlin may be attempting to stop Russian officials from resigning in protest to advance their own objectives. ISW previously reported that former Central Military District (CMD) commander Colonel General Alexander Lapin and Russian Airborne Forces (VDV) commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky reportedly resigned due to intense public criticism and in protest of conditions at the front, respectively.[28] Teplinsky likely used the fallout from his resignation to advocate for a leading military command position in Ukraine, a scenario that the Kremlin may attempt to avoid in the future by applying the reported ban more broadly.[29]

**Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met with French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on May 14 and 15 confirming the provision of more Western military aid.** The Ukrainian and French governments issued a joint statement on May 15 announcing that France will train and equip “several” Ukrainian battalions with “tens” of armored vehicles and light tanks, including the AMX-10RC.[30] The joint statement reiterated that the French government would continue providing political, financial, humanitarian, and military aid to Ukraine “for as long as it takes.” The UK government confirmed on May 15 that Sunak will announce another round of military aid to Ukraine, including the provision of unspecified long-range attack drones with ranges of over 200 kilometers, and will deliver them to Ukraine over the coming months.[31] Sunak announced that the UK will begin developing a program to train Ukrainian pilots to fly F-16 fighter jets and will begin training an initial cohort of pilots over the summer.

## **Key Takeaways**

- **Leaked US intelligence accessed by *The Washington Post* indicates that Wagner Group financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin offered to disclose the locations of Russian positions to Ukrainian intelligence in exchange for Bakhmut.**
- **Ukrainian officials acknowledged limited Ukrainian battlefield successes during recent localized counterattacks in and around Bakhmut.**
- **Russian milbloggers uniformly attacked a proposal for “military censorship,” further indicating that the community is highly motivated to defend its privileged position within the Russian information space.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that it intercepted a Ukrainian Storm Shadow missile for the first time on May 15.**
- **The Kremlin has reportedly banned high-ranking officials from resigning during the war in Ukraine, likely in an attempt to maintain stability within domestic security organs, government bodies, and the Russian military command.**
- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met with French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on May 14 and 15 confirming the provision of more Western military aid.**
- **Russian sources claimed that Russian forces captured Masyutivka, Kharkiv Oblast and established a bridgehead on the west bank of the Oskil River, but ISW has observed no visual confirmation of these claims.**
- **Russian forces continued to launch ground assaults in and around Bakhmut and conducted limited offensive operations near Donetsk City.**
- **Ukrainian intelligence reported that approximately 152,000 Russian military personnel in southern Ukraine continue defensive efforts ahead of a possible Ukrainian counteroffensive.**

- **Russian authorities continue efforts to take advantage of migrant labor and incentivize foreigners into contract military service.**
- **Russian officials and occupation authorities continue to set conditions to forcibly relocate Ukrainians from occupied territories to Russia.**
- **Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko received a briefing from Belarusian generals on May 15 following recent speculation about his possible illness or death.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 15, 2023, 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: The Ukrainian counteroffensive layer displays areas previously assigned to the Russian control, Russian advances, or Russian claims layers where ISW now assesses that Ukrainian forces have 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.

***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 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 Ukraine**

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

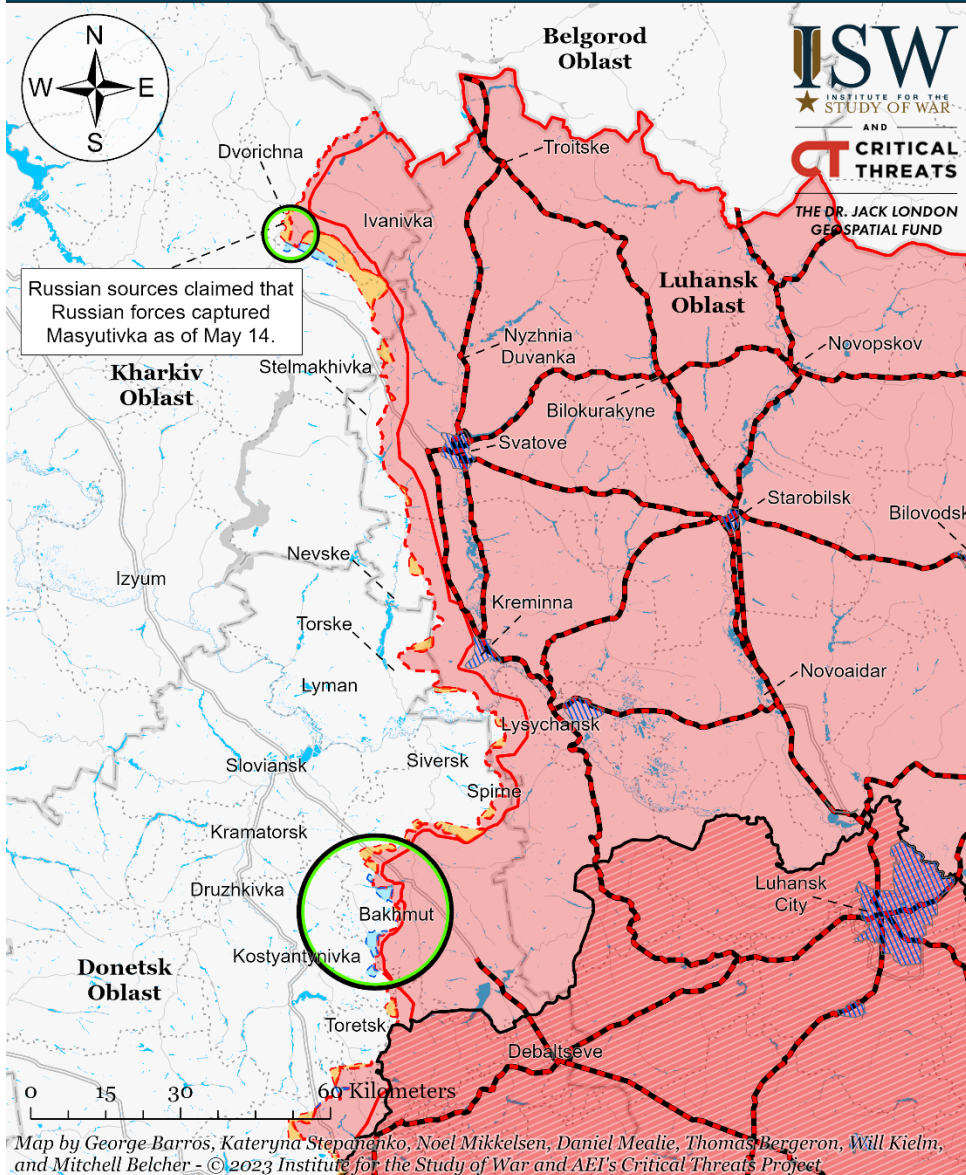
Russian sources claimed that Russian forces captured Masyutivka, Kharkiv Oblast (13km northeast of Kupyansk) and established a bridgehead on the west (right) bank of the Oskil River.[32] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that a Russian assault group captured Masyutivka on May 14 and established a bridgehead on the opposite bank of the Oskil River immediately west of the settlement.[33] Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces conducted a successful raid on Ukrainian positions near Masyutivka and later withdrew, and that reports about the establishment of a Russian bridgehead are unconfirmed.[34] ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation that Russian forces captured Masyutivka or have established positions anywhere on the west (right) bank of the Oskil River. Russian milbloggers argued that the Russian capture of Masyutivka would be tactically insignificant given that Ukrainian forces hold elevated positions in the area and could easily fire on Russian attempts to advance.[35] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on May 15 that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Masyutivka as well as Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk).[36]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued reconnaissance activity in the Kreminna area on May 15. The Russian MoD claimed that elements of the 76th Air Assault Division destroyed two Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups near Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna).[37]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted a missile strike on Russian rear positions in Luhansk City on May 15.[38] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces likely used Storm Shadow cruise missiles in order to target the former Luhansk Higher Military Aviation School, although social media sources claimed that Russian forces currently use the school as a base to train Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) military personnel.[39]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of May 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

Note: The Ukrainian counteroffensive layer displays areas previously assigned to the Russian control, Russian advances, or Russian claims layers where ISW now assesses that Ukrainian forces have 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.

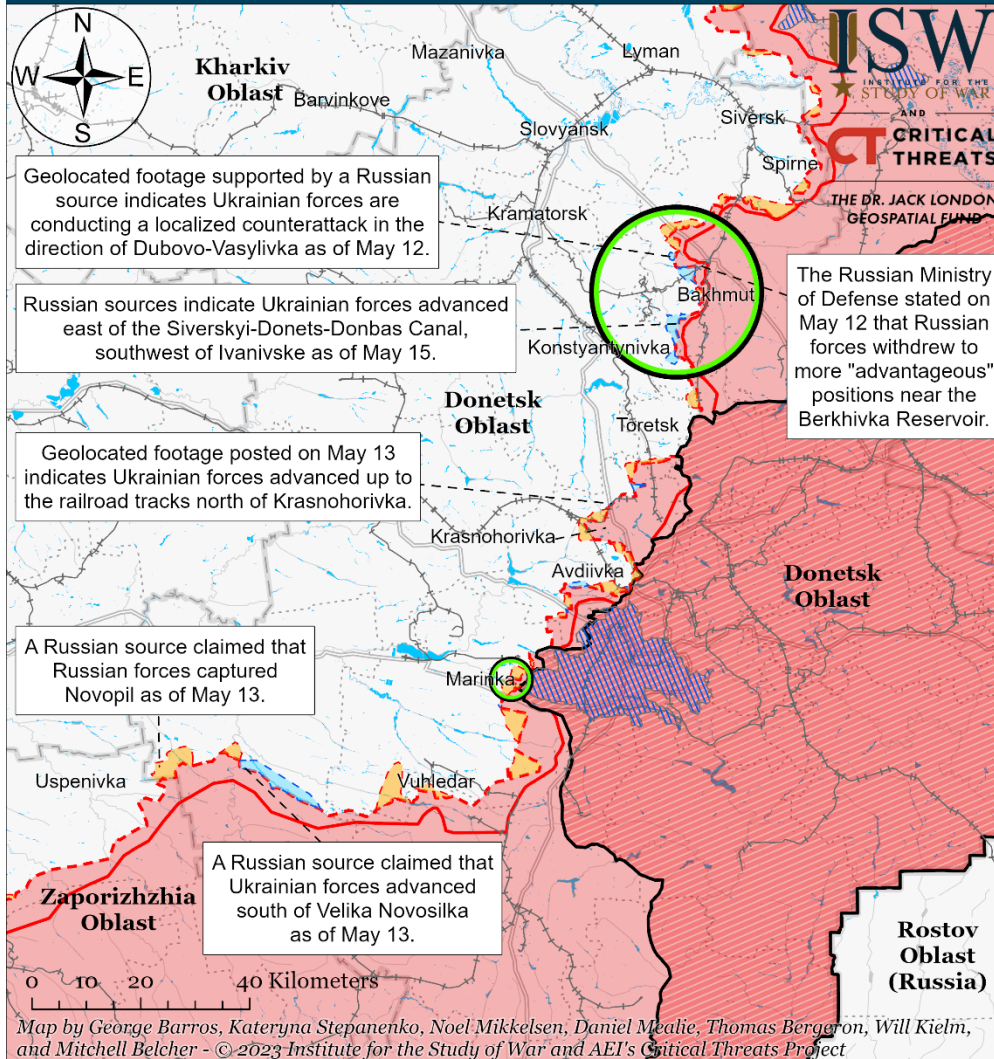


## **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian Objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Russian forces continued ground assaults in Bakhmut and its outskirts on May 15, while Ukrainian forces are continuing defensive operations in the Bakhmut direction. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations within 9km northwest of Bakhmut in the direction of Hryhorivka and Bohdanivka; within 14km southwest of Bakhmut in the direction of Ivanivske and Predtechyne; and in Bakhmut.[40] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty stated that Russian and Ukrainian forces engaged in 30 combat clashes in the Bakhmut direction and that Russian forces shelled Ukrainian positions over 300 times.[41] The Russian MoD claimed that units of the 4th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic Army Corps) are fighting in the vicinity of Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut).[42] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked near Bila Hora ( 13km southwest of Bakhmut), Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), and Hryhorivka (9km northwest of Bakhmut).[43] A Wagner Group-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian units of the 72nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Army Corps) lost positions southwest of Ivanivske and noted that Ukrainian forces are trying to reach the northwestern outskirts of Klishchiivka (about 7km southwest of Bakhmut).[44] Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin claimed that Wagner mercenaries advanced by 130 meters in Bakhmut and that Ukrainian forces only control 1.6 square kilometers of the city.[45] Prigozhin claimed that Wagner forces advanced in southwestern Bakhmut. A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Wagner is focusing on clearing the private residential area in western Bakhmut likely in response to losing positions southwest of the Berkhivs’ke Reservoir.[46] The milblogger claimed that Wagner will attempt to push through the residential area and reach the Bakhmut-Khromove route in the coming days.

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front on May 15. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked Ukrainian positions in the Marinka area (approximately 22km southwest of Donetsk City).[47] Russian milbloggers claimed that the 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Army Corps) is operating in the Nevelske area (18km west of Donetsk City).[48] Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushenko reported that Russian forces are fortifying positions around Mariupol, especially around bridges over the Kalmius and Kalchyk rivers.[49]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of May 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

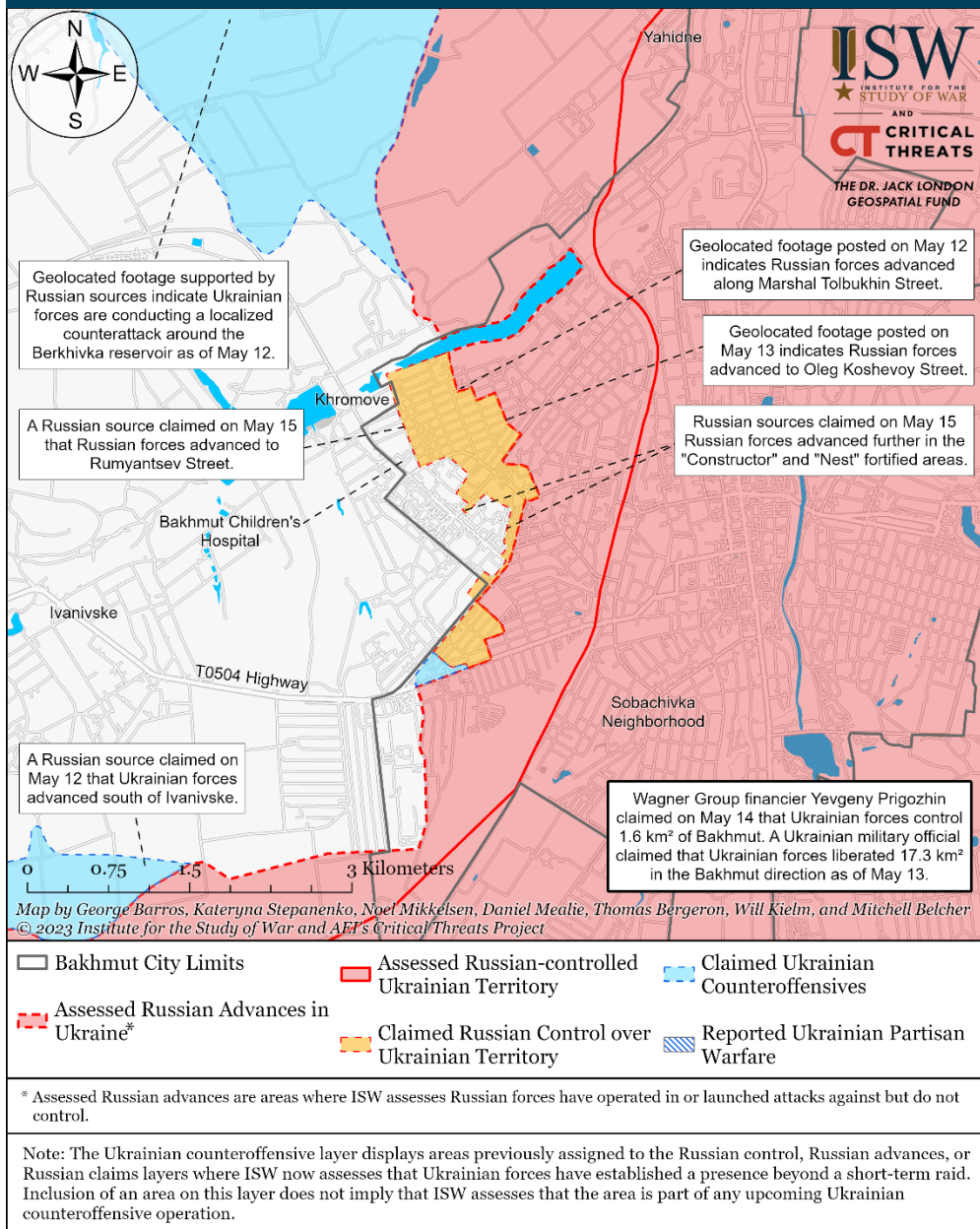


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Major Railroads
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

Note: The Ukrainian counteroffensive layer displays areas previously assigned to the Russian control, Russian advances, or Russian claims layers where ISW now assesses that Ukrainian forces have 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.

## Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of May 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

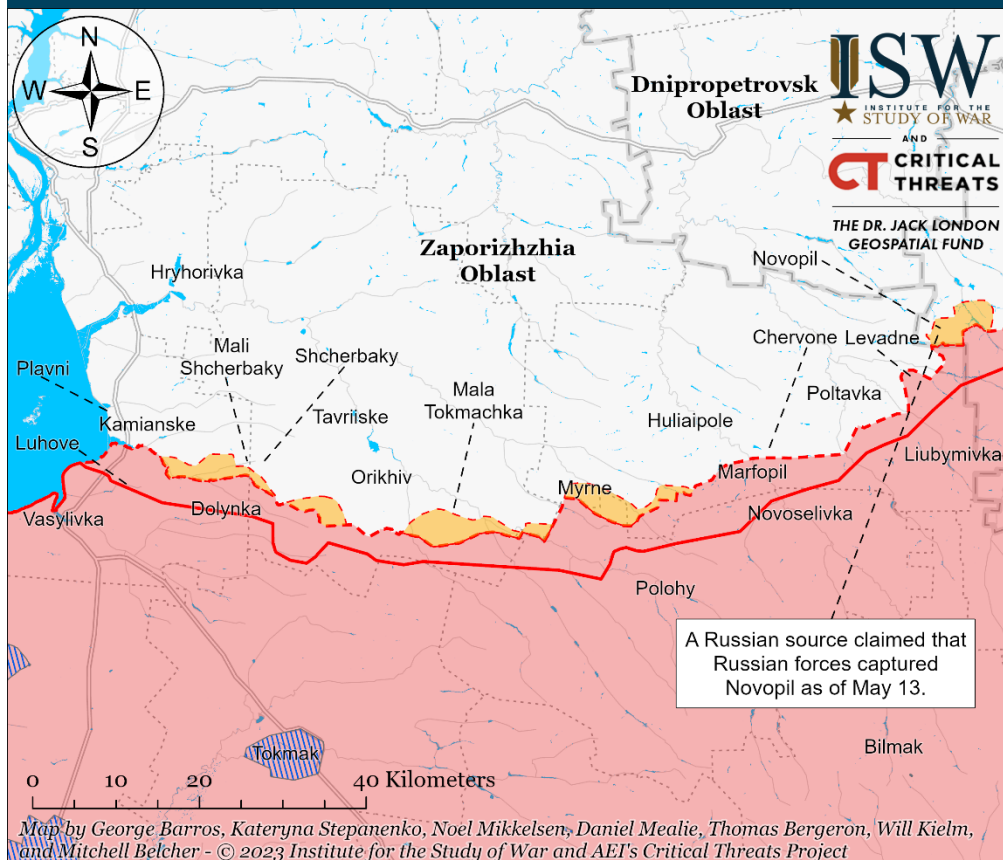
Ukrainian intelligence reported that approximately 152,000 Russian troops in southern Ukraine continue defensive efforts ahead of a possible Ukrainian counteroffensive.[50] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Representative Andriy Chernyak stated on May 15 that Russian forces are not withdrawing from Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts.[51] The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces have deployed an unspecified small

missile ship with eight Kalibr missiles to the Sea of Azov for the first time since the start of the war in order to defend the Kerch Strait Bridge.[52]

A Russian source claimed that Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack in western Zaporizhia Oblast on May 15. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces made incremental advances near Maly Shcherbaky (22km northeast of Vasylivka).[53] ISW is unable to confirm this claim of the attack or advance.

Ukrainian forces continue striking areas along critical logistics lines in southern Ukraine. Russian sources, including Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov, accused the Ukrainian forces of using HIMARS to strike Melitopol, Tokmak, and Molochansk (between Melitopol and Tokmak on the T0401 highway), and of using Grad MLRS and other weapons to strike Vasylivka and Polohy.[54] The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported that Ukrainian forces conducted three airstrikes against Russian air defense systems and force concentrations in Skadovsk Raion, Kherson Oblast.[55]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of May 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



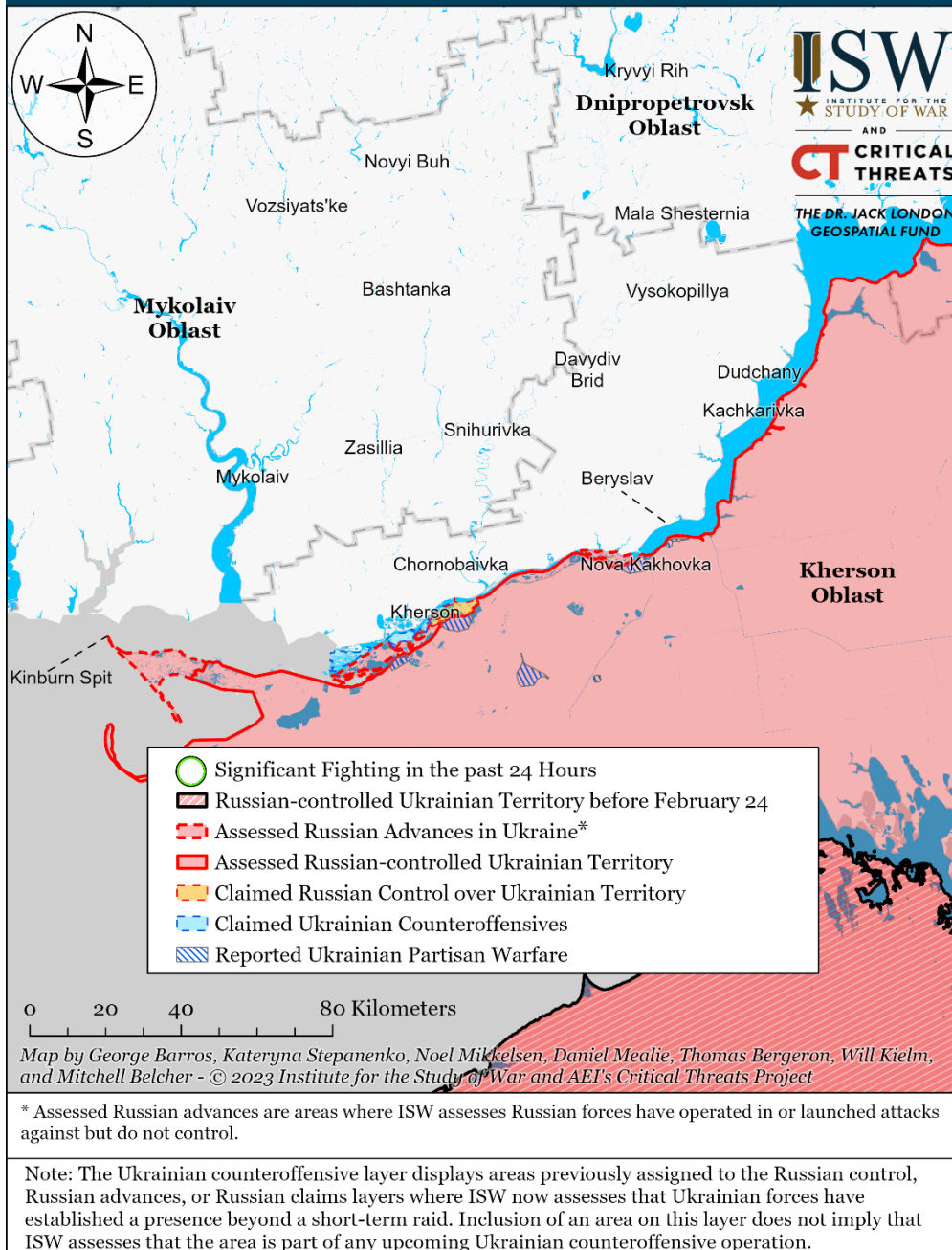
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

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# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian authorities continue efforts to incentivize migrants into contract military service.[56] Russian President Vladimir Putin approved an amendment to a bill on May 15 decreasing the military service

requirement for a simplified path to Russian citizenship from five years including six months in combat to one year.[57] Putin originally signed the bill into law on September 30, 2022, just after the announcement of partial mobilization.[58] Reducing the terms of this original decree less than a year after signing it demonstrates the Kremlin's desperation to recruit volunteers and avoid partial or general mobilization. The Russian MoD amplified an advertisement for contract service with the Russian forces, stating that recruits only need to be 18 and have completed a general education to be eligible.[59] The advertisement promised a one-time payment of 195,000 rubles (roughly \$2,441) and monthly salaries of 204,00 rubles (roughly \$2,553) for service in Ukraine. ISW previously assessed that Russian officials disproportionally focus recruitment efforts on migrant communities in Russia.[60]

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

Russian officials and occupation authorities continue to set conditions to forcibly relocate Ukrainians from occupied territories to Russia and consolidate legislative control over the area. The Russian State Duma Committee on State Building and Legislation recommended amendments to the legislation on martial law that include a clause authorizing the forced and controlled movement of citizens from territory with martial law to territory without martial law.[61] The amendments, if adopted, would give additional legal justification for Russian officials to forcibly relocate Ukrainians in occupied territories to Russia. The amendments also impose a punishment of up to 30 days in jail for violating martial law restrictions.[62] The amendments allow the postponement of regional elections in territories under martial law for 30 days, indicating that Russian officials and occupation authorities may fear the informational consequences of publicly preparing to run September regional elections in areas which Russia may lose during a future Ukrainian counteroffensive.[63]

Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin announced on May 15 that occupied Donetsk Oblast will open 153 summer camps for 16,000 children on June 1.[64] Pushilin also stated that camps in unspecified Russian regions will host 8,300 children from occupied Donetsk Oblast during the summer.[65]

Likely Ukrainian actors attempted to assassinate a senior occupation official in Luhansk City on May 15. Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) authorities claimed that unspecified actors used an unspecified explosive device in an attempt to kill acting head of the LNR Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) Igor Kornet at a barber shop in Luhansk City.[66] Kornet has served as head of the LNR MVD since 2014.[67] LNR authorities claimed the attack killed one and wounded seven others, including Kornet.[68]

**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.)**

**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.**

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko received a briefing from Belarusian generals on May 15 following recent speculation about his possible illness or death.[69] Lukashenko announced on May 15 that Belarusian forces are on high alert due to the four aircraft crash in Bryansk Oblast.[70] Lukashenko claimed that unspecified but presumably Ukrainian actors shot down the aircraft.

The Belarusian Ministry of Defense reported on May 15 that unspecified Belarusian maneuver elements conducted a company tactical exercise as part of the ongoing combat readiness check.[71]

**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://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/05/14/prigozhin-wagner-ukraine-leaked-documents/>
  - [2] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/05/13/zelensky-washington-post-interview-transcript/>
  - [3] [https://t.me/concordgroup\\_official/966](https://t.me/concordgroup_official/966)
  - [4] [https://t.me/concordgroup\\_official/968](https://t.me/concordgroup_official/968) ; [https://t.me/concordgroup\\_official/970](https://t.me/concordgroup_official/970) ; [https://t.me/concordgroup\\_official/969](https://t.me/concordgroup_official/969)
  - [5] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/05/15/yevgeniy-prigozhin-russia-ukraine-wagner/>
  - [6] <https://t.me/strelkovii/4837>; [https://t.me/boris\\_rozhin/85795](https://t.me/boris_rozhin/85795)
  - [7] <https://ura dot news/news/1052649638>
  - [8] <https://ura dot news/news/1052647066?ysclid=lhoqki4nim224467941>
  - [9] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-12-2023>
  - [10] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-11-2023>
  - [11] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-9-2023>
  - [12] <https://meduza dot io/feature/2023/05/10/esli-tak-poydet-i-dalshe-siloviki-eto-prekratyat>
  - [13] <https://t.me/annamaliar/738>
  - [14] <https://t.me/annamaliar/739>; <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/1930>
  - [15] <https://armyinform dot com.ua/2023/05/14/vorog-ne-maye-snaryadnogo-golodu-na-bahmutskom-ukraїniamku-natomist-ye-suttyeva-problema-z-zhyvoyu-syloyu-sergij-cherevatyj/>
  - [16] <https://newizv dot ru/news/2023-05-14/deputat-gosdumy-viktor-sobolev-prizval-vvesti-voennuyu-tsenzuru-dlya-voenkorov-407210> ; <https://t.me/readovkanews/58870>

[17] <https://t.me/rybar/47059> ; <https://t.me/MedvedevVesti/14096> ; <https://t.me/rybar/47068> ; <https://t.me/korobkovtv/13749> ; <https://t.me/rybar/47063> ; [https://t.me/dva\\_majors/15082](https://t.me/dva_majors/15082) ; <https://t.me/vysokygovorit/11598> ; <https://t.me/ZurabMakiev/418> ; <https://t.me/sashakots/39764>

[18] <https://matveychev-oleg.livejournal.com/15497174.html>

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[20] <https://t.me/sashakots/39759> ; <https://t.me/sashakots/39765> ; <https://t.me/sashakots/39762> ; <https://t.me/MedvedevVesti/14121> ; <https://t.me/ZurabMakiev/418> ; <https://t.me/sashakots/39764> ; <https://t.me/vysokygovorit/11598>

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