

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, May 16, 2023

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May 16, 2023, 5:30pm 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 16. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 17 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.

Russian forces have likely committed to reinforcing their tactical offensive effort in the Bakhmut area despite Ukraine's apparent focus on limited and localized counterattacks. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin claimed on May 16 that Russian forces have strengthened their forces in the Bakhmut area to stabilize the situation, and a prominent Russian milblogger claimed that four unspecified Russian battalions have deployed to the flanks around Bakhmut to prevent Ukrainian breakthroughs.[1] Russian claims about Russian reinforcements are consistent with Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar's May 15 statement that Russian forces are deploying additional airborne (VDV) forces to defend Bakhmut's flanks, presumably from other areas of the front.[2] Russian forces have continued to make marginal gains within Bakhmut itself as of May 16, and the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to claim that Russian forces around Bakhmut are focused on repelling Ukrainian counterattacks.[3] The Russian MoD claimed on May 16 that elements of the 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps) repelled 10 Ukrainian counterattacks near Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut).[4]

Ukrainian military officials continue to indicate that Ukraine is pursuing much more limited operations in the Bakhmut area than Russian forces, who appear to be committed to Bakhmut as a renewed main effort. Malyar stated on May 16 that while Ukrainian forces have liberated roughly 20 square kilometers of territory in recent days, Russian forces are continuing to make marginal gains within Bakhmut.[5] Ukrainian Eastern Grouping of Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr

Syrskyi stated that Ukrainian forces are continuing to use the concept of “active defense” in conducting counterattacks in unspecified areas near Bakhmut.[6] Ukrainian Eastern Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty reiterated that the main objective of the Ukrainian defensive operation in the Bakhmut area is to exhaust Russian forces in the area.[7] ISW has geolocated footage published on May 16 of Ukrainian positions in southwestern Bakhmut that suggests that Ukrainian forces have recently made limited gains in the city itself.[8] Geolocated footage published on May 16 indicates that Ukrainian forces made marginal gains east of Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut), although ISW has not observed any further Ukrainian gains around Bakhmut as of May 16.[9]

The reported Russian reinforcements to the Bakhmut area suggest that Russian forces are continuing to concentrate offensive capabilities there despite an assessed wider effort to reprioritize operations to prepare for potential Ukrainian counteroffensives.

Russian forces have also recently transferred elements of the 6th Guards Motorized Rifle Division (20th Guards Combined Arms Army, Western Military District) to an unspecified area north of Bakhmut, likely from positions along the Svatove-Kupyansk line.[10] The movement of Russian forces from other sectors of the front to the Bakhmut area is likely a response to persisting Russian concerns about the stability of frontlines in the area amid Wagner Group’s continued degradation in the offensive to capture Bakhmut.[11] These concerns were likely more pronounced in recent days that saw limited Ukrainian gains around Bakhmut and may have prompted further Russian concentration on the tactical offensive effort in the area. The reinforcements are also likely meant to enhance Wagner’s ability to capture the remainder of Bakhmut rapidly and present a Russian tactical victory before possible setbacks during a Ukrainian counteroffensive operation. ISW assesses that the Russian military command likely decided to reprioritize operations and sustainment efforts in recent weeks to prepare for potential Ukrainian counteroffensive operations, although the continued concentration on Bakhmut may suggest that immediate tactical concerns could be undermining the larger effort.[12]

Russia conducted another large-scale drone and missile strike on the night of May 15 to 16. Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces launched six Kh-47 Kinzhal air-launched ballistic missiles from six MiG-31K aircraft at Kyiv, as well as nine Kalibr cruise missiles and 10 land-based S-400 and Iskander-M missiles at other rear areas of Ukraine.[13] Ukrainian air defense shot down all missiles, including all six Kinzhals (repeatedly touted by Russian forces as unstoppable) and nine total drones, including six Shahed-131/136s.[14] It is unclear which systems Ukrainian forces used to shoot down the Kinzhals, but Ukrainian officials previously attributed the defeat of a Kinzhal missile to US-provided Patriot air defense system on May 4.[15] Ukrainian Joint Forces Commander Lieutenant General Serhiy Nayev noted that the missile strike on Kyiv is the eighth in the month of May alone.[16] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) notably claimed that one of the Kinzhals struck a Patriot air defense system in Kyiv.[17] An unidentified US defense official told CNN that the Patriot system has likely suffered damage but has not been destroyed and that the US is still assessing the extent of the damage.[18]

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin attempted to downplay his reported cooperation with Ukrainian intelligence on May 15. Prigozhin responded to a media inquiry about leaked US intelligence report published in *The Washington Post* that revealed that he attempted to disclose positions of Russian conventional forces to Ukrainian intelligence in exchange for Ukraine’s withdrawal from Bakhmut.[19] Prigozhin stated that “in any war exchanges are made, and this is not a secret for the warring parties” in an attempt to downplay his reported connections with the Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR).[20] Prigozhin argued that information about troop positions is “not secretive at all” in modern warfare due to the use of satellite

imagery. Prigozhin also paradoxically attempted to deny the validity of the leaked US intelligence documents, claiming that a junior US officer would have not had access to such secret documents. GUR Spokesperson Andriy Yusov stated that Ukraine will not comment on the leaked document.[21]

The Wagner Group’s continued glorification and normalization of violence is evident in a widely circulated video purportedly showing a killed American volunteer in Bakhmut.

A Wagner Group-affiliated Telegram channel posted footage on May 16 of Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and former Russian Deputy Minister of Defense for Logistics-turned-Wagner-Group-deputy-commander Colonel General Mikhail Mizintsev showing the documents and body of an American volunteer serving with the Ukrainian military.[22] Prigozhin claimed that he would give the body to US authorities because he likely died a worthy death in war.[23] Prigozhin’s video emphasizes Wagner’s continual promotion of brutality and glorification of war, as the video appeared to showcase Wagner gloating over the death of an American and amplified the graphic nature of his death. ISW previously reported on Wagner’s promotion of violence through the use of widely-shared graphic video footage.[24] A US State Department spokesperson stated that the State Department is “aware of the reports” and “seeking additional information.”[25]

Russia and Iran continue efforts to strengthen bilateral military-economic cooperation.

Iranian state-run news agency IRNA reported on May 16 that Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali announced that Russia and Iran will sign an agreement on the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway line during Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak’s visit to Tehran on May 16 and 17.[26] This agreement will reportedly advance the completion of Iran’s North-South corridor project by completing a 162km link between the Iranian cities of Rasht and Astara and will create a connection between St. Petersburg and the Persian Gulf.[27] The completion of this sector has been a long-standing Iranian line of effort, partially aimed at strengthening Iran’s domestic economy and facilitating sanctions evasion efforts. Both Russia and Iran are taking additional steps to further bilateral military cooperation. The White House reported on May 15 that Russia seeks to buy additional drones from Iran after having used most of the 400 Iranian drones purchased since August 2022 in attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure.[28] Iranian media also reported on May 13 that Iran will receive its first shipment of Russian Su-35 multi-role fighter aircraft in the coming week.[29] Moscow will likely continue to pursue mutually beneficial military-economic programs in order to ensure continued Iranian material support for Russian operations in Ukraine.

The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) proposed a draft regulatory act that would allow FSB officers to conduct searches without a court order, likely to support the Kremlin’s ongoing efforts to strengthen domestic repression.

The draft regulatory legal act would allow FSB officers to conduct operational search activities not associated with an ongoing criminal case without a court order in instances “that are urgent and may lead to the commission of a serious ...crime.”[30] FSB officers would also be allowed to conduct searches without court orders in connection with “events or actions that pose a threat to the state, military, economic, information, or environmental security of Russia.”[31] ISW has previously assessed that the FSB appears to be currently conducting an overhaul of domestic security organs, and the new regulatory act is likely meant to augment these efforts.[32] The Kremlin has recently supported laws strengthening punishments for trespassing at facilities run by certain federal bodies, for the misappropriation of Russian military assets, and for the discreditation of all Russian personnel fighting in Ukraine to expand pretexts for the arrests of Russian citizens and the removal of officials who have fallen out of favor.[33] The FSB’s involvement in ongoing overhauls and the increasingly broad regulations to conduct searches suggest that the Kremlin is preparing for the FSB to be the internal security organ that would conduct a wider domestic crackdown.

Russian forces reportedly shut down another Ukrainian evangelical Christian church in Mariupol likely as part of a wider systematic religious persecution campaign in occupied Ukraine. Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko reported that Russian forces seized the Ukrainian Christian Evangelical Church of the Holy Trinity in Mariupol and are using the church to house 10 to 30 Russian servicemen.[34] ISW reported on April 9 that Protestants suffered two-thirds of all of the reported religious repression events in occupied Mariupol.[35] ISW identified that Russian occupation officials most commonly persecute members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and Protestants, particularly evangelical Baptists.[36]

Key Takeaways

- **Russian forces have likely committed to reinforcing their tactical offensive effort in the Bakhmut area despite Ukraine's apparent focus on limited and localized counterattacks.**
- **The reported Russian reinforcements to the Bakhmut area suggest that Russian forces are continuing to concentrate offensive capabilities there despite an assessed wider effort to reprioritize operations to prepare for potential Ukrainian counteroffensives.**
- **Russia conducted another large-scale drone and missile strike on the night of May 15 to 16.**
- **Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin attempted to downplay his reported cooperation with Ukrainian intelligence on May 15.**
- **The Wagner Group's continued glorification and normalization of violence is evident in a widely circulated video purportedly showing a killed American volunteer in Bakhmut.**
- **Russia and Iran continue efforts to strengthen bilateral military-economic cooperation.**
- **The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) proposed a draft regulatory act that would allow FSB officers to conduct searches without a court order, likely to support the Kremlin's ongoing efforts to strengthen domestic repression.**
- **Russian forces reportedly shut down another Ukrainian evangelical Christian church in Mariupol likely as part of a systematic religious persecution campaign in occupied Ukraine.**
- **Russian forces are reportedly deploying additional manpower and equipment from Belarus to reinforce their positions in Luhansk Oblast.**
- **Russian forces continued unsuccessful offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kremmina line.**
- **Russian forces have made marginal gains within Bakhmut as of May 16 and continued limited ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line.**
- **Russian forces are continuing to panic about maintaining their positions in the east (left) bank Kherson Oblast ahead of anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensives.**
- **The Kremlin continues to pass legislation that provides benefits to participants of the war and their families in order to incentivize military service.**
- **Russian authorities continue efforts to consolidate the economic subordination of occupied areas of Ukraine into the Russian economy.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Will Kielm, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

* 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

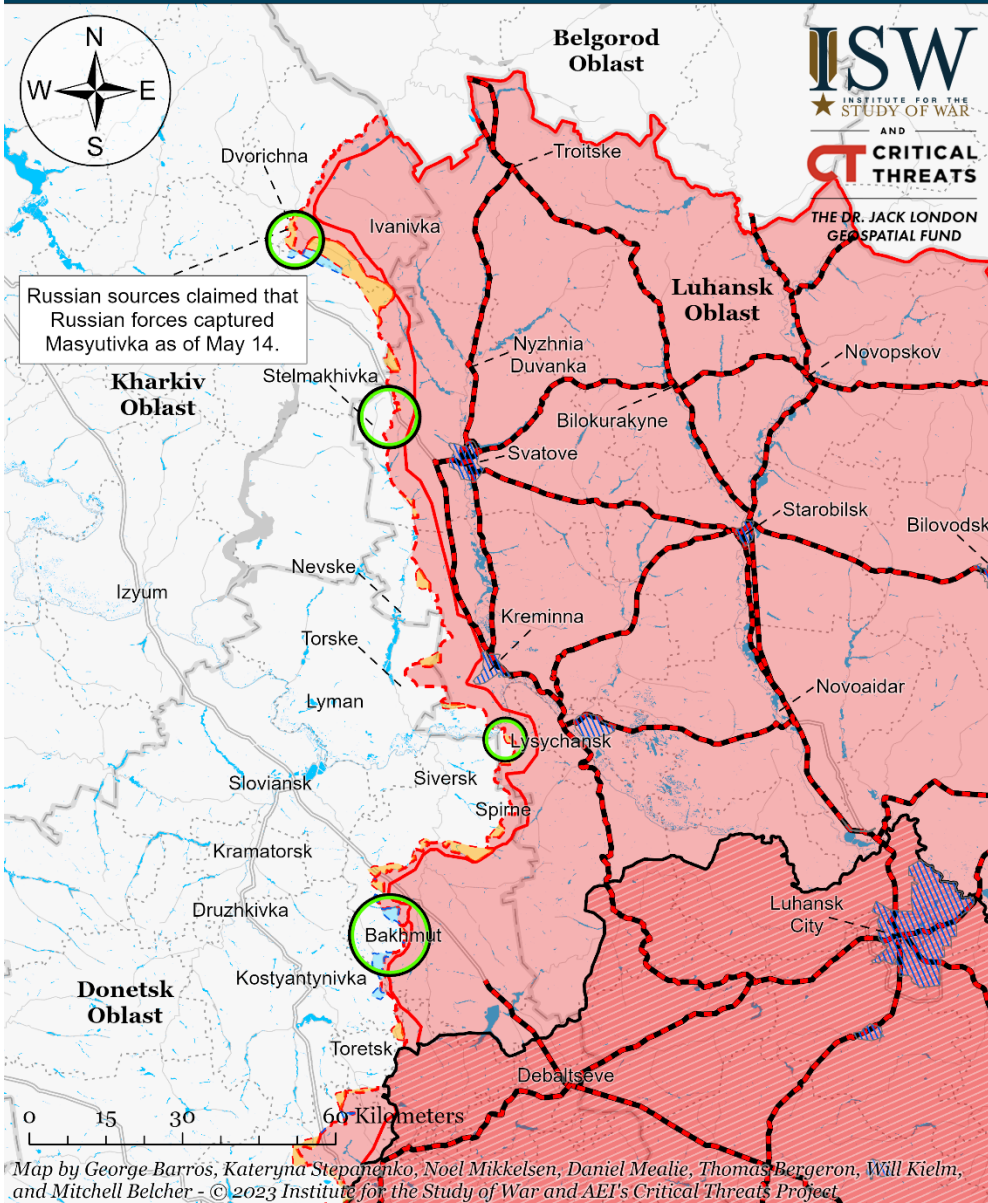
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces continued limited assaults along the Svatove-Kreminna line on May 16. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the vicinity of Masyutivka (about 13km northeast of Kupyansk) and Novoselivske (about 16km northwest of Svatove).[37] Russian milbloggers continued to claim that unspecified elements of the 6th Combined Arms Army (Western Military District) captured Masyutivka and pushed Ukrainian forces across the western bank of the Oskil River on May 15.[38] Geolocated Russian footage published on May 15 showed Russian drones striking Ukrainian positions east of Masyutivka.[39] Former Luhansk Oblast Administration Head Serhiy Haidai stated that Russians have not achieved significant advances in the Kupyansk direction.[40] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked Ukrainian positions in Synkivka (about 7km northeast of Kupyansk).[41]

Russian forces are reportedly deploying additional manpower and equipment from Belarus to reinforce their positions in Luhansk Oblast. Independent monitoring organization The Belarusian Hajun Project reported the deployment of military cargo from Brest Oblast, Belarus, in the direction of Luhansk Oblast on May 14.[42] The Hajun Project reported that the train is transferring about 40 pieces of military equipment and at least 200 servicemen to Gukovo station in Rostov Oblast, Russia, which is about 4km east of occupied Luhansk Oblast. The Ukrainian General Staff and Haidai confirmed that Russian forces began to redeploy additional trained forces from Belarus.[43] Haidai added that most of the arriving personnel are newly-mobilized forces or convicts and are deploying to the Kreminna and Svatove areas.[44]

Russian forces continued unsuccessful offensive operations in the Kreminna-Lyman direction on May 16. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults on Bilohorivka (about 13km south of Kreminna).[45] A Russian milblogger published footage purportedly showing elements of the 20th Combined Arms Army (Western Military District) striking Ukrainian forces with a drone on the road between Terny and Novosadove, both within 17km northwest of Kreminna.[46]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of May 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Will Kiehm, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- 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 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)

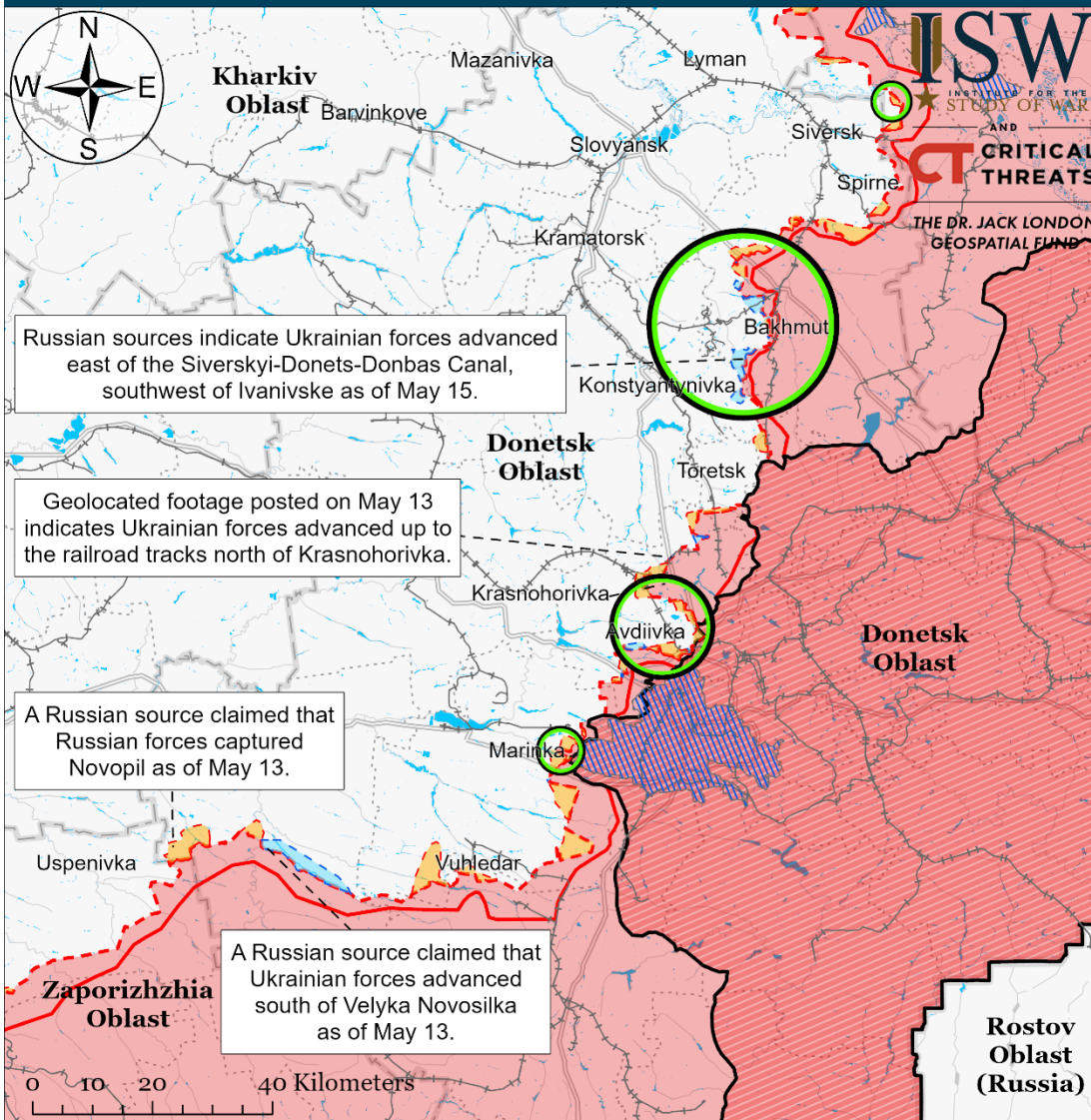
Russian forces have made marginal gains within Bakhmut as of May 16. Geolocated footage published on May 15 indicates that Russian forces likely made marginal gains in southwestern Bakhmut along the road that leads to Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut).[47] Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin claimed on May 15 that Wagner fighters advanced 220m in Bakhmut and that Ukrainian forces currently control 1.59 square kilometers of the city.[48] Russian sources claimed on May 15 and 16 that Wagner fighters have cleared several remaining contested areas in western Bakhmut and control at least half of these areas.[49] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Wagner fighters will likely announce that they have cut the route from Bakhmut to Khromove by May 17.[50] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to regain lost positions near Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) and Hryhorivka (9km northwest of Bakhmut) on May 15 and 16.[51] The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that Russian aviation units destroyed an overpass near Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut), and Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces used the bridge to transfer supplies and reinforcements along the T0504 into Bakhmut.[52] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continued offensive operations in Bakhmut and conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Ivanivske.[53]

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front on May 16. Geolocated footage published on May 15 indicates that Russian forces likely made marginal advances within Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka).[54] Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin claimed on May 16 that Russian forces are advancing near Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka) and Avdiivka, where Russian forces are allegedly “within walking distance” of the Avdiivka Coke Chemical Plant in the northern outskirts of the settlement.[55] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of recent Russian gains in either of these areas. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Avdiivka and Marinka.[56]

A Russian milblogger claimed on May 16 that Ukrainian forces regained lost positions near Kruta Balka (4km northeast of Avdiivka) along the H-20 (Donetsk City-Kostyatynivka) highway.[57] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of recent Ukrainian gains in the Avdiivka area and continues to assess that reports of Ukrainian counterattacks in the area are a part of an ongoing pattern of limited and localized Ukrainian counterattacks.

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on May 16.[58]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of May 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources indicate Ukrainian forces advanced east of the Siverskyi-Donets-Donbas Canal, southwest of Ivanivske as of May 15.

Geolocated footage posted on May 13 indicates Ukrainian forces advanced up to the railroad tracks north of Krasnohorivka.

A Russian source claimed that Russian forces captured Novopil as of May 13.

A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced south of Velyka Novosilka as of May 13.

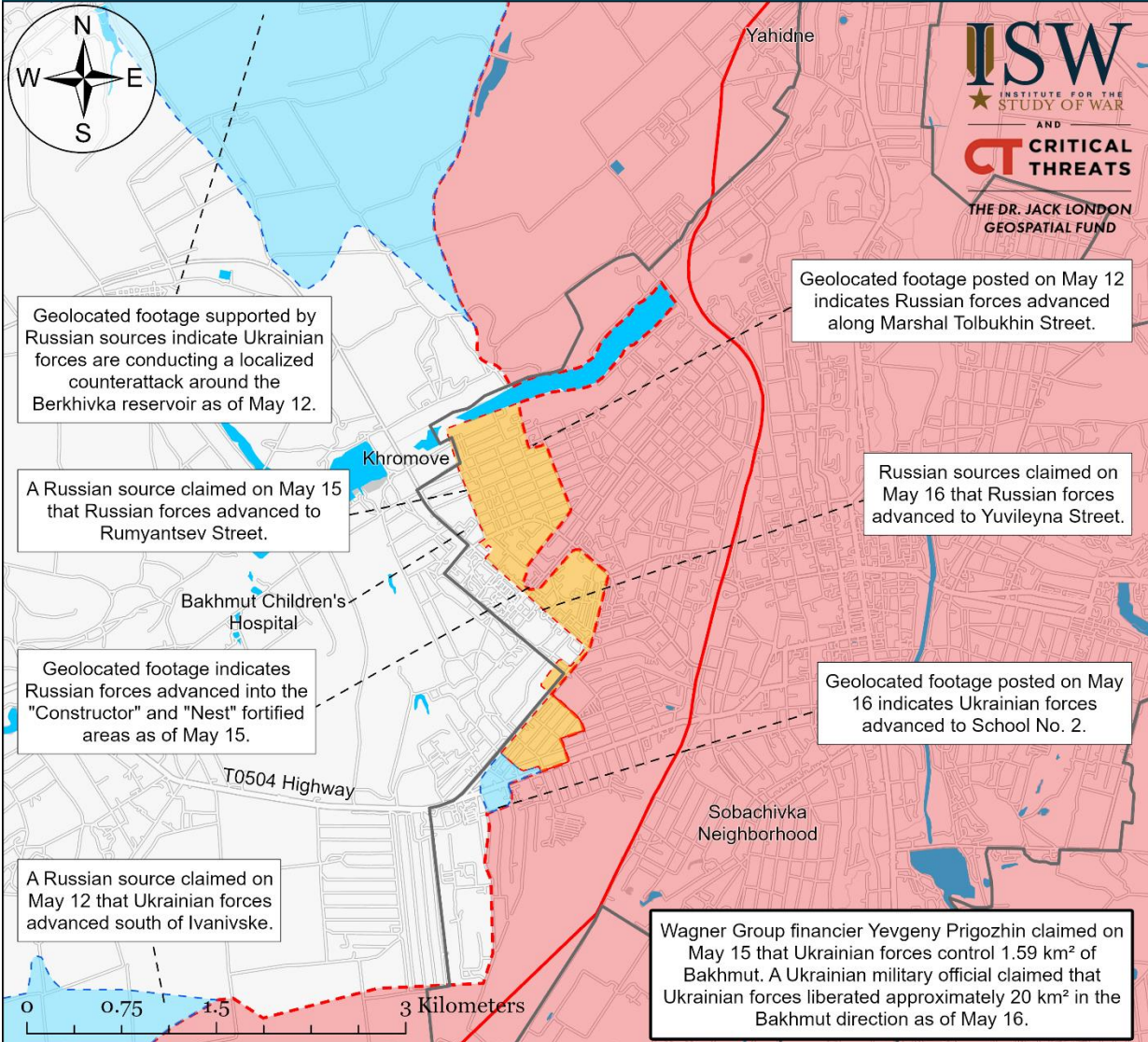
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Will Kielm, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours		Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory		Major Railroads
	Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24		Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory		Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
	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.

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 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Bakhmut City Limits
- ▭ 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.

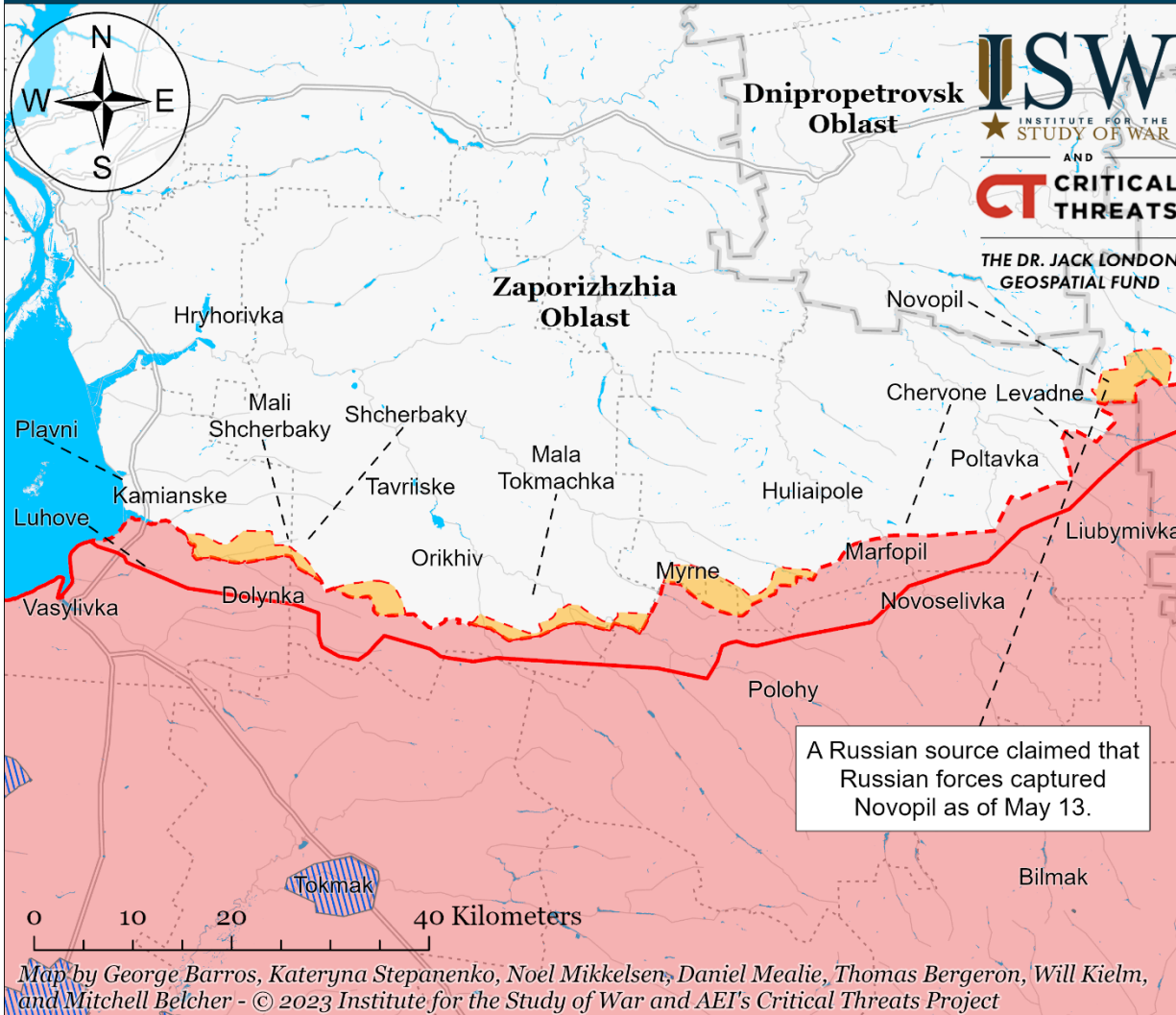
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces are continuing to panic about maintaining their positions in the east (left) bank Kherson Oblast ahead of anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensives. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) published a video on May 15 claiming that Russian airborne (VDV) artillery units are shelling Ukrainian infantry units in forested areas on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast.[59] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that there are "witch hunts" among Russian troops operating in Kherson Oblast because many accuse each other of exposing Russian positions to Ukrainian forces by cooperating with Russian volunteers or reporting about the situation on the ground.[60] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces launched four KAB-500 bombs from four Su-35 fighter aircraft at Beryslav and Kizomys on the west (right) bank of the Dnipro River.[61] Russian forces also shelled the west bank Kherson Oblast 86 times, and reportedly used incendiary munition to target Kherson City.[62]

Russian and Ukrainian sources reported explosions in Tokmak on May 16. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov accused Ukrainian forces of shelling Tokmak, while Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov did not specify the reason for the explosion.[63]

Ukrainian state nuclear company Enerhoatom reported that Russian forces are intensifying security measures at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) and are increasing military presence at the facility. Enerhoatom reported that there are over 2,500 Russian servicemen at the ZNPP and noted that the 15-day evacuation from Enerhodar ended after Russian occupation officials returned to the city.[64] Enerhoatom reported that Russian forces are introducing new rules for ZNPP employees such as prohibiting them from using cell phones, banning communication among personnel, and restricting movements on the territory of the ZNPP.[65] Enerhoatom reported that Russian forces are introducing such measures to conceal their use of the ZNPP as a military base.[66]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of May 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

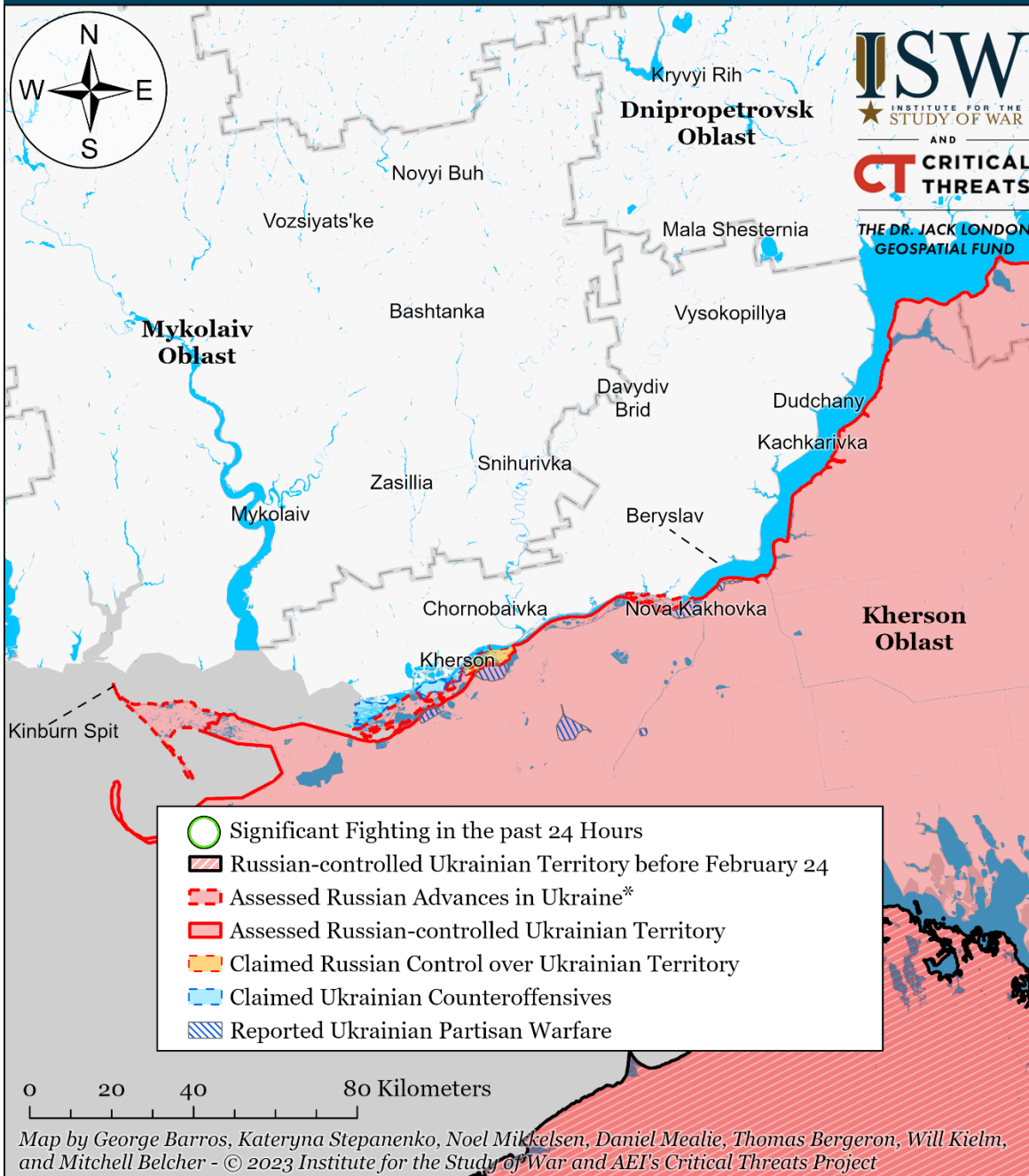


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian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

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

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 Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 16, 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.

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

The Kremlin continues to pass legislation that provides benefits to participants of the war and their families in order to incentivize military service. The Russian State Duma adopted the second and third readings of law which would provide social benefits to participants in the war and their families on May 16.[67] The law allows military personnel and their families to continue to use housing at their former duty station and provides equal rent compensations to all personnel and their families regardless of the serviceman's rank or status. United Russia Secretary Andrey Turchak announced on May 16 that the "special military operation" working group developed 20 regional support measures for participants in the war and their families including priority enrollment of children in after-school education, exemption from kindergarten fees, and transport tax benefits.[68]

The Kremlin continues efforts to mobilize Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) in order to replenish destroyed equipment. Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov claimed that Russia produced more tanks in the first quarter of 2023 than in all of 2022 and that the total volume of production of military products will increase by four times in 2023.[69] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russia's sole tank factory UralVagonZavod is producing an upgraded version of the T-72 that will go to the front "soon." [70] ISW has previously reported that Russia's DIB is not likely able to produce enough tanks at a rate fast enough to replace destroyed tanks.[71]

Russian casualties in the war continue to disproportionately affect poorer Russian regions and the younger generation. Russian opposition news outlet *Mobilization News* reported that poorer regions of Russia such as the Tuva, Buryatia, and Altay republics had the highest percentages of deaths of men aged 19 to 49.[72] *Mobilization News* noted that the top 10 regions with the highest death toll also include Magadan Oblast, Transbaikalia Krai, North Ossetia, Pskov, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Sakhalin Oblast, and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast.[73] Statistics from Russia's Federal State Statistic Service (Rosstat) also show that half of the men aged 20 to 24 who died in 2022 died because of the war.[74]

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)

A Ukrainian source indicated that the May 15 attack on a senior occupation official in Luhansk City may have been conducted by actors within the Russian occupation administration as opposed to a partisan attack. Ukrainian Severodonetsk City Administration Head Oleksandr Stryuk noted that the May 15 explosion targeting Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Ministry of Internal Affairs head Igor Kornet looks like an internal conflict among occupation elements. ISW reported on May 15 that the attack may have been carried out by Ukrainian actors.[75]

Russian authorities continue efforts to consolidate the economic subordination of occupied areas of Ukraine into the Russian economy. Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov stated in an interview with Russian state media source *TASS* that Russia is taking active steps to "restore" industrial enterprises in occupied areas of Ukraine and has installed "Industrial Development Funds" in all four occupied oblasts.[76] Manturov claimed that over 700 industrial enterprises and 1,000 industries are already operating in occupied Ukraine.[77] Manturov also highlighted Russian efforts to create a free-economic zone (FEZ) in occupied areas and claimed

that all enterprises in these areas will be fully incorporated into the Russian cooperation and marketing chain by 2026.[78]

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.

See Luhansk Oblast section.

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.

[1] <https://t.me/rybar/47148> ; <https://tass dot ru/armiya-i-opk/17756017>

[2] <https://t.me/annamaliar/738> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-15-2023>

[3] <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1658187791967084557?s=20> ;
https://twitter.com/SerDer_Daniels/status/1658167806318239752?s=20 ;
https://twitter.com/auditor_ya/status/1658182558889246720?s=20 ;
https://t.me/mod_russia/26608

[4] https://t.me/mod_russia/26608

[5] <https://t.me/annamaliar/750>

[6] <https://t.me/osirskiy/70> ; <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=903110684118550>

[7] <https://armyinform dot com.ua/2023/05/15/nashi-vijska-prodovzhuyut-prosuvatys-u-bahmuti-sergij-cherevatyj/>

[8] https://www.facebook.com/reel/1402278133675854/?s=single_unit

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