Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, May 2, 2023

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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 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.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu claimed that the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) is increasing its production of precision missiles for use against Ukraine. Shoigu highlighted the state-owned Tactical Missiles Corporation as a model defense enterprise, stating that is successfully beginning mass production of missiles and will develop plans to double its current production output in the near term. [1] Shoigu's focus on precision missile production aligns with a shift in Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD)'s rhetoric focusing on Russia's use of precision missiles to strike military infrastructure targets in Ukrainian rear areas, likely aiming to similarly appear proactive and demonstrative positive Russian actions amid growing concerns in the Russian information space about a potential Ukrainian counteroffensive. [2]

Shoigu likely seeks to deflect intensifying accusations that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) cannot provide sufficient ammunition to Russian forces. Shoigu stated that the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) increased its production pace and output volumes, and claimed that Russian forces have received enough ammunition to date in 2023 to inflict extensive damage on Ukrainian forces. [3] ISW previously reported that the Russian military command is reshuffling the leadership of command organs associated with logistics and force generation efforts after commanders that oppose Gerasimov and the core of the Russian MoD partially regained Russian President Vladimir Putin's favor in late March. [4] Russian milbloggers also began naming specific Russian MoD officials in their accusations of poor supply provisions to Russian forces in this period. [5] Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin continues to claim that the Russian MoD is deliberately setting Wagner mercenaries up for failure in Bakhmut by refusing to provide their requested number of shells, which his commanders claim is leading to high casualties and slow progress on the battlefield. [6] A Wagner serviceman also claimed that he delivered 39 boxes with complaints from Wagner servicemen about lack of ammunition to the Russian State Duma's Defense Committee on May 2. [7]

Russian reactions to a claimed strike against a vehicle carrying Ukrainian Territorial Defense Forces Commander Major General Ihor Tantsyura suggest Russian ultranationalists seek to frame any Russian operations as delaying potential Ukrainian counteroffensive actions. Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin claimed on May 2 that Wagner forces struck a Ukrainian armored vehicle carrying Tantsyura enroute to Bakhmut, and published a video purporting to show the strike. [8] Ukrainian Territorial Defense Forces Spokesperson Denys Zelinskyi denied Prigozhin's claim and stated that "everyone is alive and well." [9] Prigozhin responded that Wagner will continue to operate in the area. [10] Milbloggers widely circulated Prigozhin's claims and framed the strike as an informational victory. [11] A prominent milblogger claimed that Tantsyura received an order to transfer reserves to Bakhmut and prepare Ukrainian forces to conduct counterattacks in the area, likely to frame the Russian strike as

an operationally significant event which delayed potential upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive actions. [12] Russian milbloggers claimed that the Russian strike on Pavlohrad on May 1 impacted a critical Ukrainian logistics and accumulation hub and similarly suggested that the strike would delay Ukrainian counteroffensive operations. [13]

The Kremlin reportedly distributed a new manual instructing Russian state media on how to cover an upcoming potential Ukrainian counteroffensive that, if real, indicates the Kremlin is setting informational conditions both for an effective Russian defense and to mitigate shocks in the Russian information space from Ukrainian successes. Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* reported on May 2 that it attained the manual, which reportedly instructs Russian state media to "not lower the expectations of the announced Ukrainian counteroffensive" Or claim that Ukraine is not ready to conduct a counteroffensive – instead treating the possibility of a Ukrainian offensive as a given 14 The manual instead reportedly stresses that Russian media should focus on Western security assistance and support for Ukraine. [15] Meduza reported that sources close to the Russian presidential administration stated that the coverage aims to allow the Kremlin to announce a military victory in the event of an unsuccessful Ukrainian counteroffensive and establish justifications for a successful counteroffensive by claiming that Russian losses will be understandable because "the entire West has concentrated huge efforts on the front."[16] The alleged document suggests the Kremlin is preparing for – if not expecting – Ukrainian successes and is planning to mitigate demoralization in the Russian information space. This is an important Russian adaptation from previous Ukrainian counteroffensives in Kherson and Kharkiv, which produced dramatic shocks and demoralization in both the Russian military and the Russian information space that the Kremlin likely seeks to mitigate [17]

UN member states, including key Russian partners like China, India, and Brazil, voted to adopt a resolution on April 26 acknowledging Russia as the aggressor in the war in Ukraine. [18] The resolution preamble states that the UN aims to more closely align with the Council of Europe amid "unprecedented challenges now facing Europe following the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and against Georgia prior to that." This resolution is reportedly the first such resolution in which China recognized Russia as the aggressor in the war in Ukraine. [19] Voting in favor of this resolution by itself does not likely reflect the broader opinion of Russian allies towards Russia, however.

Correction: ISW reported on May 1 that US officials assessed that Russian forces have suffered 100,000 casualties – 80,000 wounded and 20,000 dead– in fighting for Bakhmut since January 2023 based on statements from National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby. [20] National Security Council deputy spokesperson Sean Savett later clarified on May 1 that the figures account for Russian casualties throughout Ukraine since January 2023. [21]

Key Takeaways

- Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu claimed that the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) is increasing its production of precision missiles for use against Ukraine.
- Shoigu likely seeks to deflect intensifying accusations that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) cannot provide sufficient ammunition to Russian forces.
- Russian reactions to a claimed strike against Ukrainian Territorial Defense Forces Commander Major General Ihor Tantsyura suggest Russian ultranationalists are attempting to frame any Russian operations as delaying potential Ukrainian counteroffensive actions.

- The Kremlin reportedly distributed a new manual instructing Russian state media on how to cover an upcoming potential Ukrainian counteroffensive that, if real, indicates the Kremlin is setting informational conditions both for an effective Russian defense and to mitigate shocks in the Russian information space from Ukrainian successes.
- UN member states, including key Russian partners like China, India, and Brazil, voted to adopt a resolution on April 26 that acknowledges Russia as the aggressor of the war in Ukraine.
- Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line.
- Russian forces made marginal gains near Bakhmut but did not advance within the city itself.
- Russian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk front, and Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted limited and local counterattacks in the Avdiivka area.
- Ukrainian forces continue to operate on and around islands in the Dnipro River delta in Kherson Oblast.
- Russian government officials are continuing to introduce new social benefits to veterans and their families to incentivize further military recruitment efforts in Russia.
- Likely Ukrainian partisans targeted an unspecified Zaporizhia Oblast occupation Ministry of Internal Affairs deputy head in Melitopol.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 2, 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.

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

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

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on May 2. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Novoselivske (15km northwest of Svatove), Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna), and Bilohorivka (11km south of Kreminna). A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Nevske (18km northwest of Kreminna) and Torske (16km west of Kreminna). Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian and Ukrainian forces engaged in positional battles near Ploshchanka (16km northwest of Kreminna) and the Zhuravka gully (18km west of Kreminna) on May 1. [24]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET **Belgorod** Oblast Udy **THREATS** oxchansk THE DR. JACK LONDON Valuysky GEOSPATIAL FUND Radius of 25 Ternova Raion kilometers Velykyi around Kharkiv Burluk Dvorichna (geodesic Kharkiv distance measurement) Kupiansk Balakliya Starobilsk Nevske Dementiivka Terny Vesele Spirne Dnipropetrovsk Oblast **Donetsk Oblast** Krasnohorivka Marinka 100 Kilometers Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEF's Critical Threats Project Russian-controlled Ukrainian Significant Fighting in the Claimed Russian Control over past 24 Hours Territory before February 24 **Ukrainian Territory** Key Ukrainian Roads Assessed Russian Advances in Claimed Ukrainian Ukraine* Counteroffensives Russian Ground Lines of Communication Assessed Russian-controlled Reported Ukrainian Partisan Ukrainian Territory Warfare * Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks

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

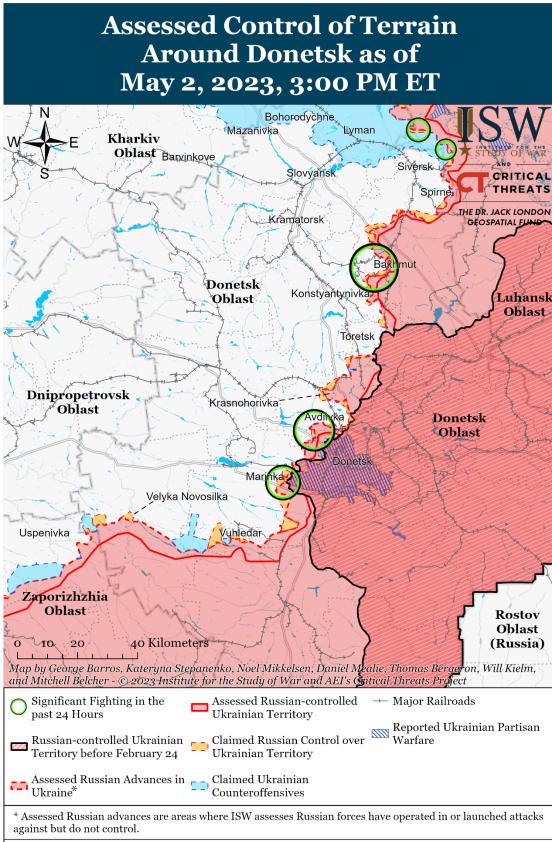
<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian Objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

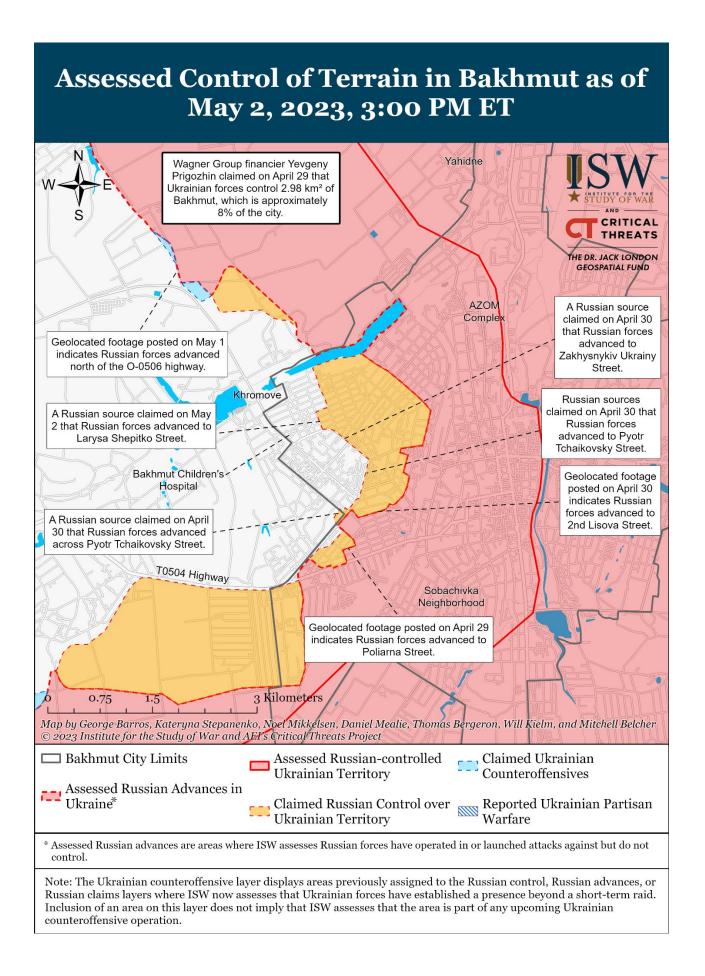
Russian forces made marginal gains near Bakhmut but did not advance within the city itself on May 2. Geolocated footage published on May 1 indicates that Russian forces made marginal gains northeast of the Oo506 highway near Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut).[25] Ukrainian Eastern Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty reported that there were 17 combat clashes in the Bakhmut area.[26] Cherevaty also reported that Ukrainian forces periodically attack Russian positions in Bakhmut when they see opportunities to conduct assaults that would not endanger their troops and noted that Ukrainian counterattacks are part of the Ukrainian mobile defense in Bakhmut.[27] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced further in western and northwestern Bakhmut and conducted assaults in the northern, western, and southern parts of the city.[28] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut) and Predtechyne (14km southwest of Bakhmut).[29] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also conducted assaults near Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) and towards Oleksandro-Shultyne (15km southwest of Bakhmut).[30]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted successful counterattacks in the Avdiivka area on May 2. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking in Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka) and conducted a partially successful counterattack towards Vodayne (8km southwest of Avdiivka).[31] Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked east of Troitske (17km northeast of Avdiivka) and advanced 1.5km in the area.[32] ISW has not observed recent visual evidence of successful Ukrainian counterattacks in the Avdiivka area, however. Ukrainian forces conduct periodic limited localized counterattacks in the Avdiivka area and the claimed Ukrainian advances are likely part of this ongoing pattern.

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk front on May 2. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Sieverne (7km west of Avdiivka), Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka), and Marinka.[33] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted assaults towards southwestern Avdiivka.[34] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces captured Ukrainian positions south of Kamianka (5km northeast of Avdiivka) on May 1, although ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation of this claim.[35]

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on May 2. [36]





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

Ukrainian forces continue to operate on and around islands in the Dnipro River delta in Kherson Oblast. Geolocated footage posted by a Russian milblogger on May 2 shows Ukrainian forces conducting a raid in the Kherson City port area directly south of Kherson City.[37] This footage is likely part of a continuing Ukrainian presence in the Dnipro River islands, as ISW has previously assessed.[38] The extent and intent of these Ukrainian positions remain unclear, and ISW does not currently assess that Ukrainian activities in and across the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast constitute a counteroffensive effort.

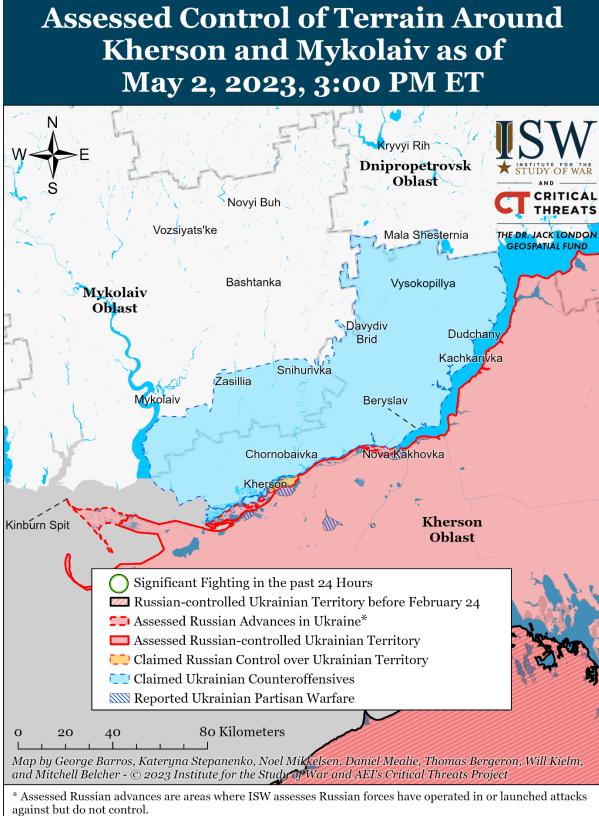
Ukrainian forces continue to strike key Russian logistics nodes in Zaporizhia Oblast. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov accused Ukrainian forces of firing eight HIMARS rockets at Tokmak and striking a railway and residential areas on May 2.[39] Ukrainian forces have consistently targeted nodes such as Tokmak and Melitopol since at least September 2022, as ISW has previously reported, and these strikes are not a deviation from that pattern.[40]

Russian sources accused Ukrainian forces of targeting Crimea with drone strikes on May 1. Russian occupation authorities claimed that Russian forces shot down two Ukrainian drones targeting Yevpatoria on May 1.[41] Improving weather conditions are likely allowing Ukrainian and Russian forces to use drones more frequently in southern Ukraine.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of May 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian government officials are introducing new social benefits for veterans and their families to incentivize further military recruitment efforts in Russia. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin signed an order on May 2 allowing combat participants to receive free retraining and undergo additional professional education in most popular specialties. [42] Mishustin added that employers will receive subsides for employing veterans of the invasion of Ukraine. [43] Secretary General of the United Russia party Andrey Turchak claimed that the "special military operation" working group submitted a bill to the Russian State Duma that would allow relatives of soldiers who died prior to July 14, 2022, to receive compulsory state insurance payments. [44] Turchak noted that only relatives of servicemen who died after July 14, 2022 currently receive these insurance payments. The Kremlin likely did not introduce payments to families of the servicemen who died during the initial stage of the war to conceal casualties. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin visited Moscow-based contract servicemen at the Avangard and Patriot training centers to answer questions about military service in Ukraine - also likely in an attempt to incentivize further recruitment. [45]

The Kremlin and the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) are failing to transport the bodies of deceased Russian servicemen and are attempting to conceal military failures in Ukraine. Relatives of Orenburg mobilized servicemen appealed to Russian President Vladimir Putin about the lack of information about their loved ones on the frontlines and Russia's failure to retrieve and transport servicemen's bodies from trenches. [46] Relatives of the servicemen within the Russian 101st Regiment revealed that the regiment suffered heavy losses and noted that many mobilized men are physically and mentally exhausted following seven months of combat. [47] A Russian opposition outlet also reported that the Russian MoD deliberately concealed reports of casualties among Sverdlovsk Oblast mobilized servicemen from a Ukrainian strike on the Chervonopopivka Culture House on October 24, 2022. [48] A Russian milblogger acknowledged that the 10th Guards Separate Special Purpose Brigade (which operated in the Izyum, Mykolaiv Oblast-Kryvyi Rih, and Kherson directions) lost many professional servicemen in the beginning of the war. [49]

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

Likely Ukrainian partisans targeted an unnamed deputy head of the Zaporizhia Oblast Occupation Ministry of Internal Affairs in Melitopol on May 2.[50] Russian and Ukrainian sources reported that claimed saboteurs conducted an improvised explosive device (IED) attack against the official at his home, which severely injured the official.[51] The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast claimed that it detained three saboteurs allegedly responsible for both the May 2 attack and the assassination of occupation police chief Colonel Alexander Mishchenko in Melitopol on April 27.[52] A Russian milblogger complained in response to the attack that Russian authorities and society need to take a greater role in cracking down against these attacks in occupied Melitopol.[53]

Russian authorities continue to scale back May 9 Victory Day celebrations likely in order to obfuscate the scale of Russian casualties in Ukraine. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov claimed that Russia has ongoing safety concerns about Victory Day celebrations and is taking unspecified measures to mitigate such threats. [54] Saratov Oblast Governor Roman Busargin announced the cancellation of the solemn parade and fireworks for Victory Day due to unspecified safety concerns. [55] The Russian Children's and Youth Center (Rosdetscenter) claimed that it would hold the Immortal Regiment celebration - which showcases deceased Russian military personnel - as a children's extracurricular activity in schools on May 4, despite prior cancellation of the live, centralized celebration. [56]

<u>Significant activity in Belarus</u> (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 held a Belarusian Security Council meeting to discuss border security and protection measures on May 2.[57] Lukashenko reiterated longstanding rhetoric in which he framed an alleged Western military buildup near Belarusian borders as provocative.

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://telegra dot ph/Vstupitelnoe-slovo-Ministra-oborony-Rossijskoj-Federacii-generala-armii-Sergeya-SHojgu-na-tematicheskom-selektornom-soveshchanii-05-02; https://t.me/mod_russia/26116

[2] https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-1-2023

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[52] https://t.me/vrogov/9116; https://t.me/readovkanews/57985
[53] https://t.me/notes_veterans/9222
[54] https://www.kommersant.dot.ru/doc/5966797
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