Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, May 4, 2023

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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.

Russia conducted another Shahed-131/136 strike against Ukraine on May 4. Ukrainian military sources reported that Russian forces launched 24 Shahed-131/136s at Ukraine from the direction of Bryansk Oblast and the eastern coast of the Sea of Azov and that Ukrainian air defense destroyed 18 of the drones above northern, central, and southern regions of Ukraine.[1] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command noted that Russian forces launched 15 of the Shaheds at Odesa Oblast, 3 of which struck an educational institution.[2] Russian milbloggers claimed that the drones struck military facilities throughout Ukraine.[3] The Kyiv City Military Administration reported that Russian forces attacked Kyiv overnight with Shaheds and unidentified missiles for the third time in the last four days, noting that Kyiv has not experienced such a high intensity of air attacks since the beginning of 2023.[4]

Russian sources continued to respond to the May 3 drone strike on the Kremlin. The Russian Investigative Committee announced that it opened a criminal case "on the fact of a terrorist attack in connection with an attempt to strike the Kremlin" and further amplified the claim that Kyiv is to blame for the strike.[5] Russian President Vladimir Putin will reportedly hold a Security Council meeting to discuss the incident on May 5.[6] Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev called for the "physical elimination" of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in retaliation for the strike.[7] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov baselessly claimed that the US is behind the attack.[8] Several Russian authorities, including the heads of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Leningrad, and Pskov oblasts introduced bans on drone launches and flights.[9] State Duma Deputy Aleksandr Khinshtein sent an appeal to the Russian Ministry of Transport and Federal Air Transport Agency to introduce a total temporary moratorium on drone use due to the increased threat of drones associated with the "special military operation."[10] Russian media aggregator *Baza*, citing unidentified internal sources, claimed that residents of Moscow suburbs noticed the drones flying at very low altitudes well in advance of the moment of contact with the Kremlin Senate Palace building on May 3 but that authorities ignored their reports as "drone hysteria."[11] Another Russian source amplified this report and noted that if it is true, it demonstrates how impenetrable the Russian bureaucratic apparatus is.[12] The milblogger praised the Kremlin's response as being thoughtful and logical and dismissed other voices in the information space for being irrational and hysterical.[13]

Russian officials are likely using the May 3 drone strike on the Kremlin to expand cancellations of parades for the May 9 Victory Day holiday. Russian sources reported that Russian officials have canceled May 9 parades in 21 cities in Russia and occupied Crimea either without offering official justification or citing security reasons.[14] Russian officials in several cities claimed that they were canceling May 9 events and parades out of concern for participants of the "special military operation."[15] ISW has previously assessed that the Kremlin will use the May 3 strike to cancel May 9 events and augment its informational effort to frame the war in Ukraine as an existential threat to Russia.[16] The Kremlin likely hopes to limit typical May 9 events to conceal the degradation of the Russian military because such events demonstratively showcase advanced Russian military equipment, much of which is either critical to Russian operations in Ukraine or has been destroyed in 14 months of attritional fighting.[17] The Kremlin also likely hopes to curb May 9 events out of fears that celebrations honoring deceased servicemembers could become a potential source of domestic backlash for Russia's high casualty figures in Ukraine. Russian officials have canceled immortal regiment memorial events in recent weeks likely for such reasons.[18]

The Kremlin is reportedly continuing its overhaul of domestic security organs. Russian media aggregator *Baza* reported that Russian authorities expanded prior mass investigations into the Moscow Central District Internal Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) to other district MVD directorates in Moscow.[19] *Baza* reported that Russian authorities detained the Bibirevo Raion's deputy chief of police on allegations of leaking information as well as two other employees at unspecified MVD departments.[20] The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and the MVD Security Service reportedly started mass checks of MVD departments in Moscow due to the "leakage of data from Russian security forces at the request of Ukrainian citizens."[21] The Kremlin appears to be also overhauling elements of the Rosgvardia (Russian National Guard) amid a series of recent arrests and dismissals of prominent Rosgvardia officials.[22] The Kremlin likely intends to use these investigations and arrests to oust officials who have fallen out of favor and to consolidate control of internal security organs.[23] ISW has previously assessed that Russian

authorities may use a series of new laws expanding punishments for discrediting the Russian Armed Forces, the misappropriation of military assets, and trespassing at facilities operated by security organs to support these efforts.[24]

US Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines stated that Russian forces are likely unable to conduct a "significant offensive" in 2023 due to munitions and manpower shortages regardless of the success of the Ukrainian counteroffensive.[25] Haines testified on May 4 to the Senate Armed Services Committee that it will be increasingly challenging for Russia to sustain "even modest offensive operations" if the Kremlin does not initiate mandatory mobilization or obtain third-party ammunition supplies in addition to existing deliveries from Iran and other unspecified countries. Haines stated that Putin has "probably" reduced his short-term goals in Ukraine to consolidate control over occupied territories and is unlikely to consider negotiations with Ukraine. Haines' statements support and expand on ISW's prior assessments that Russian forces are unable to conduct large-scale, simultaneous offensive campaigns on multiple axes.[26]

Russia and India reportedly suspended efforts to trade in rupees. Reuters reported on May 4 that Russia and India suspended months of negotiations because Moscow does not want to accumulate over \$40 billion in rupees by the end of 2023. Russia reportedly views rupees as not convertible.[27] An unnamed Indian government official stated Russia would prefer to settle bilateral trade with India in Chinese yuan or another currency and that Russia is increasingly trading in United Arab Emirate dirhams. The suspended negotiations likely concern India's payment to Russia for spare parts and two S-400 air defense systems.[28]

Key Takeaways

- Russia conducted another Shahed-131/136 strike against Ukraine on May 4.
- Russian officials are likely using the May 3 drone strike on the Kremlin to expand cancellations of parades for the May 9 Victory Day holiday.
- The Kremlin is reportedly continuing its overhaul of domestic security organs.
- US Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines stated that Russian forces are likely unable to conduct a "significant offensive" in 2023 due to munitions and manpower shortages regardless of the success of the Ukrainian counteroffensive.
- Russia and India reportedly suspended efforts to trade in rupees.
- Russian sources claimed that Russian forces made territorial gains south of Kreminna.
- · Ukrainian forces likely conducted a limited counterattack southwest of Bakhmut.
- Russian forces continued ground attacks in and around Bakhmut and along the Avdiivka–Donetsk City line.
- Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian forces in Zaporizhia Oblast.
- The Kremlin is attempting to increase the production quotas of military supplies despite reportedly lacking the necessary manpower.
- Russian occupation authorities continue to announce new security measures in an effort to prevent partisan attacks in occupied territories.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 4, 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

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

Russian forces continued defensive operations in the Kupyansk direction on May 4. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled six Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups northeast, east, and southeast of Kupyansk.[29] Geolocated footage posted on May 3 shows elements of the 6th Combined Arms Army (Western Military District) shelling Ukrainian positions about 11km northeast of Kupyansk.[30] A Russian milblogger claimed that mutual artillery shelling and reconnaissance efforts continued along the line of contact on the Kupyansk front on May 3 and 4.[31]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces made territorial gains south of Kreminna on May 4. A Russian milblogger claimed on May 4 that Chechen "Sever-Akhmat" (part of the 78th Special Purpose Motorized Rifle Regiment, 42nd Guards Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) broke through Ukrainian defenses in the "Zakhidna" filtration plant in southeastern Bilohorivka (10km south of Kreminna).[32] Another milblogger posted footage claiming to show fighting in the Bilohorivka industrial zone and claimed that "Sever-Akhmat" commander Apti Alaudinov reported that Chechen troops unblocked certain supply routes into Bilohorivka.[33] Russian sources additionally claimed that a T-90M tank of the Luhansk People's Republic 2nd Army Corps is advancing towards Siversk from Bilohorivka.[34] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations in the direction of Bilohorivka on May 4.[35] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian troops continued ground attacks and positional battles along the Svatove-Kreminna line.[36]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET **Belgorod** Udy **Oblast** Volchansk THE DR. JACK LONDON Valuysky Radius of 25 Ternova GEOSPATIAL FUND Raion kilometers Velykyi around Kharkiv Burluk (geodesic Kharkiv Dvorichna distance City measurement) Kupiansk Balakliya Starobilsk Nevske Dementiivka Izyum Terny Vesele Spirne Dnipropetrovsk **Oblast Donetsk Oblast** Krasnohorivka Marinka. 100 Kilometers 25 50 Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Will Kielm, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AET's Critical Threats Project Russian-controlled Ukrainian Claimed Russian Control over Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours Territory before February 24 Ukrainian Territory Key Ukrainian Roads Assessed Russian Advances in Claimed Ukrainian Ukraine* Counteroffensives Russian Ground Lines of

Ukrainian Territory

Assessed Russian-controlled

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.

Reported Ukrainian Partisan

Warfare

Communication

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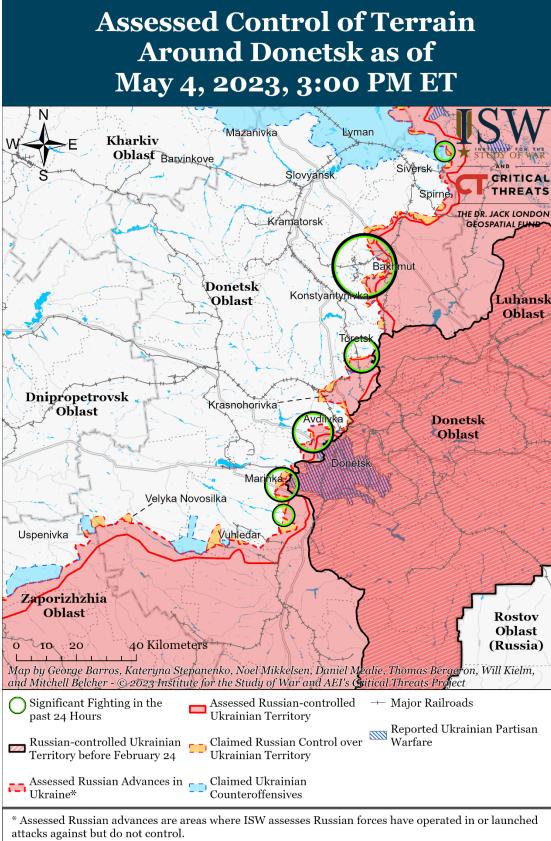
<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian Objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces did not make any confirmed gains in or around Bakhmut on May 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive actions near Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), Markove (14km northwest of Bakhmut), and Niu York (30km southwest of Bakhmut).[37] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces captured two unspecified blocks in the western part of Bakhmut.[38] Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin claimed on May 3 that Wagner forces advanced 230m in Bakhmut and that Ukrainian forces currently control 2.64 square kilometers of the city.[39] Russian milbloggers claimed on May 3 and 4 that Wagner fighters advanced in western Bakhmut, although ISW has yet to observe visual confirmation of further Russian advances in the city.[40] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also conducted assaults on the outskirts of Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut) and towards Predtechyne (14km southwest of Bakhmut).[41]

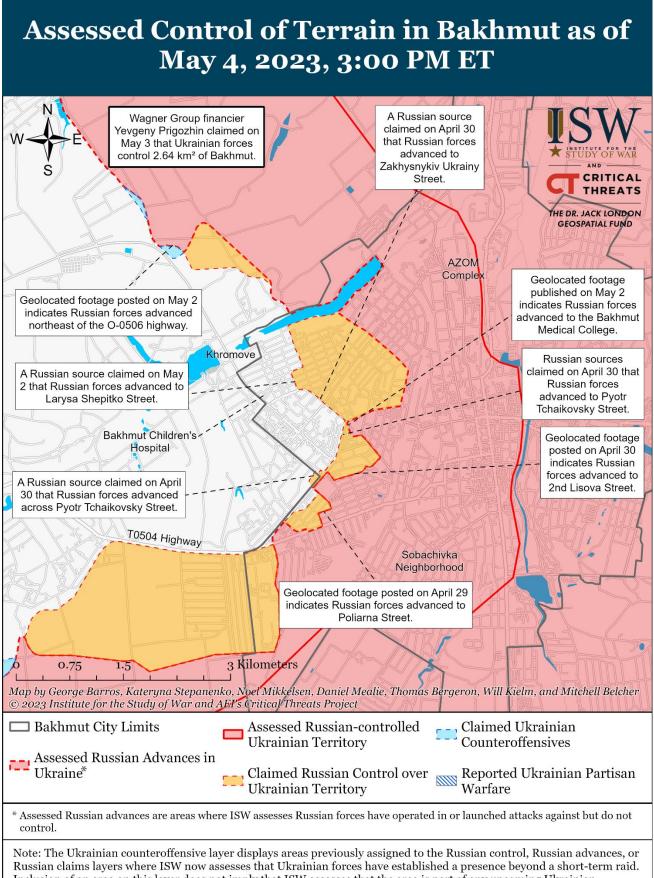
Ukrainian forces likely conducted a limited counterattack southwest of Bakhmut. Geolocated footage published on May 3 indicates that Ukrainian forces likely counterattacked northwest of Kurdyumivka (14km southwest of Bakhmut) and made marginal advances in the area.[42] The limited nature of the likely Ukrainian advances suggests that the counterattack was a localized tactical operation.

Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk front on May 4. Geolocated footage published on May 4 indicates that Russian forces made marginal gains west of Novobakhmutivka (13km northeast of Avdiivka). [43] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka), and Novomykhailivka (36km southwest of Avdiivka). [44] Ukrainian Tavriisk Defense Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhii Telyatskyi reported that Russian forces conducted 24 assaults on Ukrainian positions along the Avdiivka-Donetsk front and that Russian forces are continuing to use highly attritional assault tactics in the area. [45] A Russian milblogger amplified footage on May 4 purporting to show "Storm-Z" assault detachments operating in Marinka, and ISW has previously assessed that these reported irregular formations likely engage in highly attritional offensive operations. [46] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces out of positions on the outskirts of Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka) and advanced in western Marinka. [47] The milblogger also claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Staromykhailivka (19km southwest of Avdiivka), possibly a part of a likely ongoing pattern of limited and localized Ukrainian counterattacks along this section of the frontline. [48]

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on May 4.[49] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted a reconnaissance-in-force operation near Pavlivka (27km southwest of Donetsk City).[50] The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are more actively probing Russian positions in the area and called on Russian sources not to prematurely concluded that such activity represents the start of Ukrainian counteroffensive operations.[51]



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.



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

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian reconnaissance-in-force attempts in Zaporizhia Oblast. Footage published on May 3 purportedly shows elements of the 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division) and the 291st Artillery Brigade of the 58th Combined Arms Army of the Southern Military District repelling Ukrainian reconnaissance-in-force operations near Orikhiv.[52] A milblogger claimed that elements of the 22nd Spetsnaz Brigade repelled an attack by a group of 15 Ukrainian soldiers near Orikhiv.[53] Multiple Russian sources claimed that the Ukrainian operations were localized actions and not the start of the counteroffensive.[54] A Russian news aggregator even retracted its May 3 claim about the start of a Ukrainian counteroffensive and claimed on May 4 that Ukrainian forces conducted a reconnaissance-in-force operation instead.[55] Russian sources have routinely claimed that Ukrainian forces conduct operations near Orikhiv in March and April 2023.[56]

Russian forces continue to endanger the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) ahead of a Ukrainian counteroffensive. Ukrainian State Nuclear Inspection reported on May 3 that the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) mission to the ZNPP notified the inspection about Russian increased accumulation of Russian military equipment, weapons, and explosives on the territory of the 4th power unit of the ZNPP.[57] Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov denied Ukrainian reports and claimed that the IAEA mission did not make any announcements.[58] Rogov accused Ukraine of setting conditions to conduct provocations against the ZNPP.[59] Russia's increasing deployment of military equipment to the ZNPP, if true, may indicate that Russian forces are increasingly concerned over their ability to maintain control over the ZNPP during the planned Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of May 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 4, 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)

The Kremlin is attempting to increase the production quotas of military supplies despite reportedly lacking the necessary manpower. Russian milbloggers amplified a report from Kurganmashzavod plant, which claimed that the company produced more armored vehicles in 2023 than in 2019.[60] Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* reported that Russian factories are failing to increase the volume of weapons production to satisfy state orders due to labor shortages and the lack of Western components necessary for weapons production.[61] *Verstka* also reported that Russian factories are failing to properly compensate workers and are deducting funds for support of the Russian war effort from their salaries.

Ukrainian officials reported that the number of voluntary surrenders among Russian personnel to Ukrainian forces increased since March. The Head of the Ukrainian "I Want to Live" project, Vitaliy Matviienko, stated that 3,200 Russians surrendered in April, a 10 percent increase over March's numbers. [62] Matviienko stated that the project received in total 16,000 surrender requests from Russian servicemen and noted that 32 million Russians have visited the project's website to date. The head of the Ukrainian sociological study of Russian prisoners, Andriy Skotsyk, stated that 40 percent of 400 Russian servicemen voluntarily surrendered. [63] Skotsyk noted that nearly 55 percent of the respondents were motivated to fight in Ukraine to improve their livelihoods in Russia, while nearly 36 percent expressed commitment to fighting due to trust in Russian propaganda or support for Russian President Vladimir Putin. The study found that 50 percent of Russian prisoners of war revealed that the Russian military command expected its units to remain in their positions in the event of a retreat, and only 17 percent stated that they were fully equipped with proper ammunition. ISW cannot independently verify the results of this study.

Social media footage showed that a Russian Bastion anti-shipping missile system crashed when driving to a Victory Day rehearsal ceremony in St. Petersburg on May 4.[64] A Russian milblogger also reported that the Russian military removed T-64A Soviet tanks from storage.[65]

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

Russian occupation authorities continue to announce plans to conduct further medical examinations of Ukrainian children in occupied territories, likely to facilitate the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia under the guise of rehabilitation. Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo stated on May 3 that 36 doctors from four unspecified Russian regions will arrive in occupied Kherson Oblast to begin medical examinations on May 10.[66] ISW reported on May 3 that occupied Kherson Oblast Ministry of Health had announced that doctors from Crimea and Russia intend to conduct medical examinations on 4,336 children in occupied Kherson Oblast.[67]

Russian occupation authorities continue to announce new security measures in an effort to prevent partisan attacks in occupied territories. Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo stated on May 3 that his administration will implement additional checkpoints to prevent acts of sabotage and emphasized that occupied Kherson Oblast remains under martial law.[68]

<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.

Nothing significant to report.

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.

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