

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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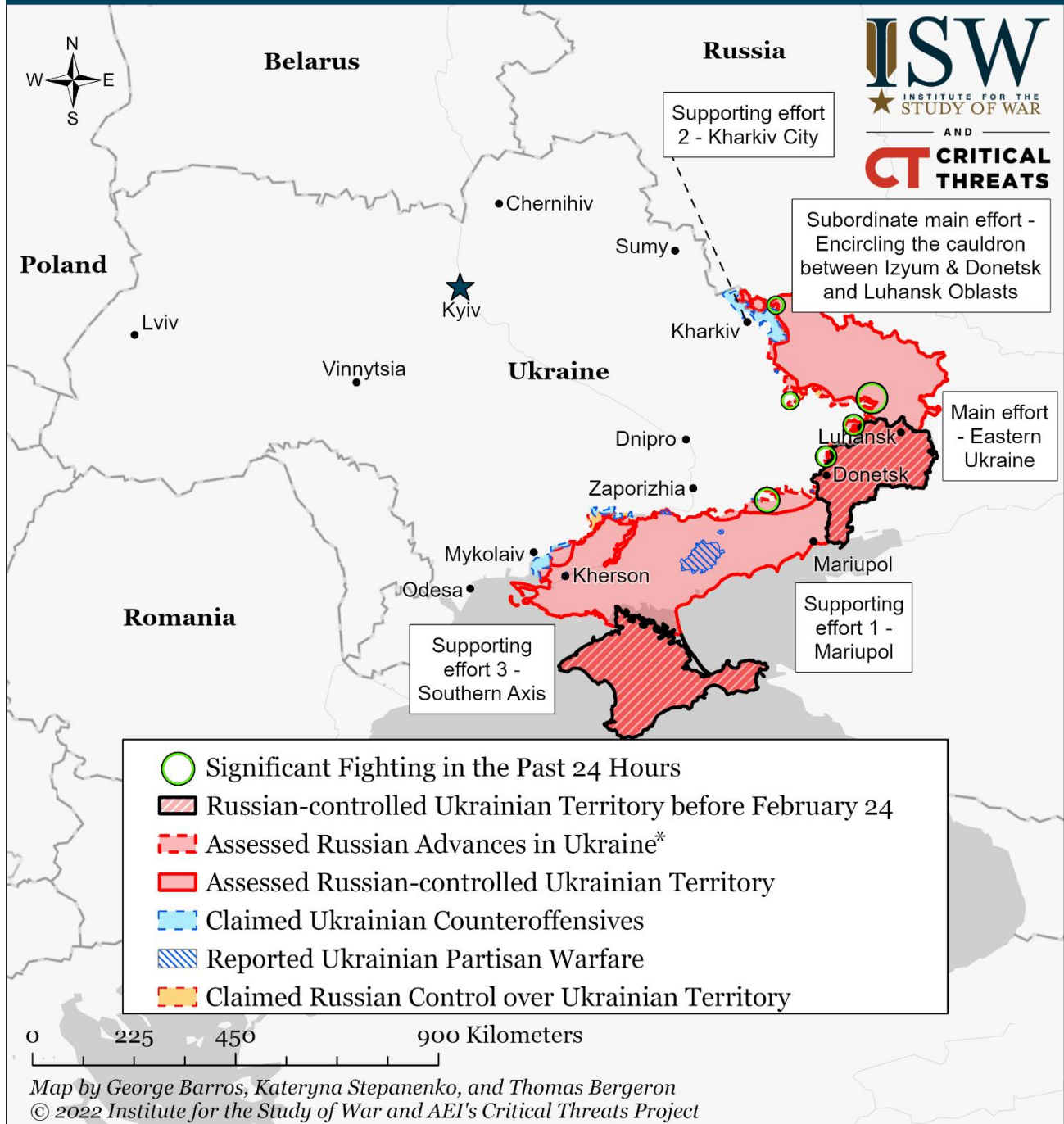
May 22, 4:00 pm ET

**Russian forces made only minimal gains in eastern Ukraine on May 22.** New reporting confirmed that Russian troops previously recaptured Rubizhne in northern Kharkiv Oblast, on May 19. Russian forces are likely committing additional reinforcements to hold their positions on the west bank of the Siverskyi Donets River in northern Kharkiv—rather than withdrawing across the river to use it as a defensive position—to prevent any further Ukrainian advances to the north or the east that could threaten Russian lines of communication to the Izyum axis.<sup>1</sup> Ukrainian sources additionally confirmed previous Russian-claimed advances around Popasna, and Russian forces likely seek to open a new line of advance north from Popasna to complete the encirclement of Severodonetsk while simultaneously driving west toward Bakhmut, though Russian forces are unlikely to be able to fully resource both lines of advance simultaneously.

## Key Takeaways

- **Ukrainian sources confirmed that Russian forces have secured local advances to the north and west of Popasna since at least May 20. Russian forces likely seek to push further west toward Bakhmut and north to support the encirclement of Severodonetsk but remain unlikely to achieve rapid advances.**
- **Russian forces will likely attempt to hold positions west of the Siverskyi Donets River against Ukrainian attacks (rather than retreating across the river) to prevent further Ukrainian advances from threatening Russian lines of communication to Izyum.**
- **Russian occupying forces continued filtration and deportation procedures in and around Mariupol.**
- **Russian forces are likely preparing to resume offensives on the southern axis.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 22, 2022, 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 those 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 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.*

**ISW has updated its assessment of the four primary efforts Russian forces are engaged in at this time. We have stopped coverage of supporting effort 4, “Sumy and northeastern Ukraine,” because it is no longer an active effort:**

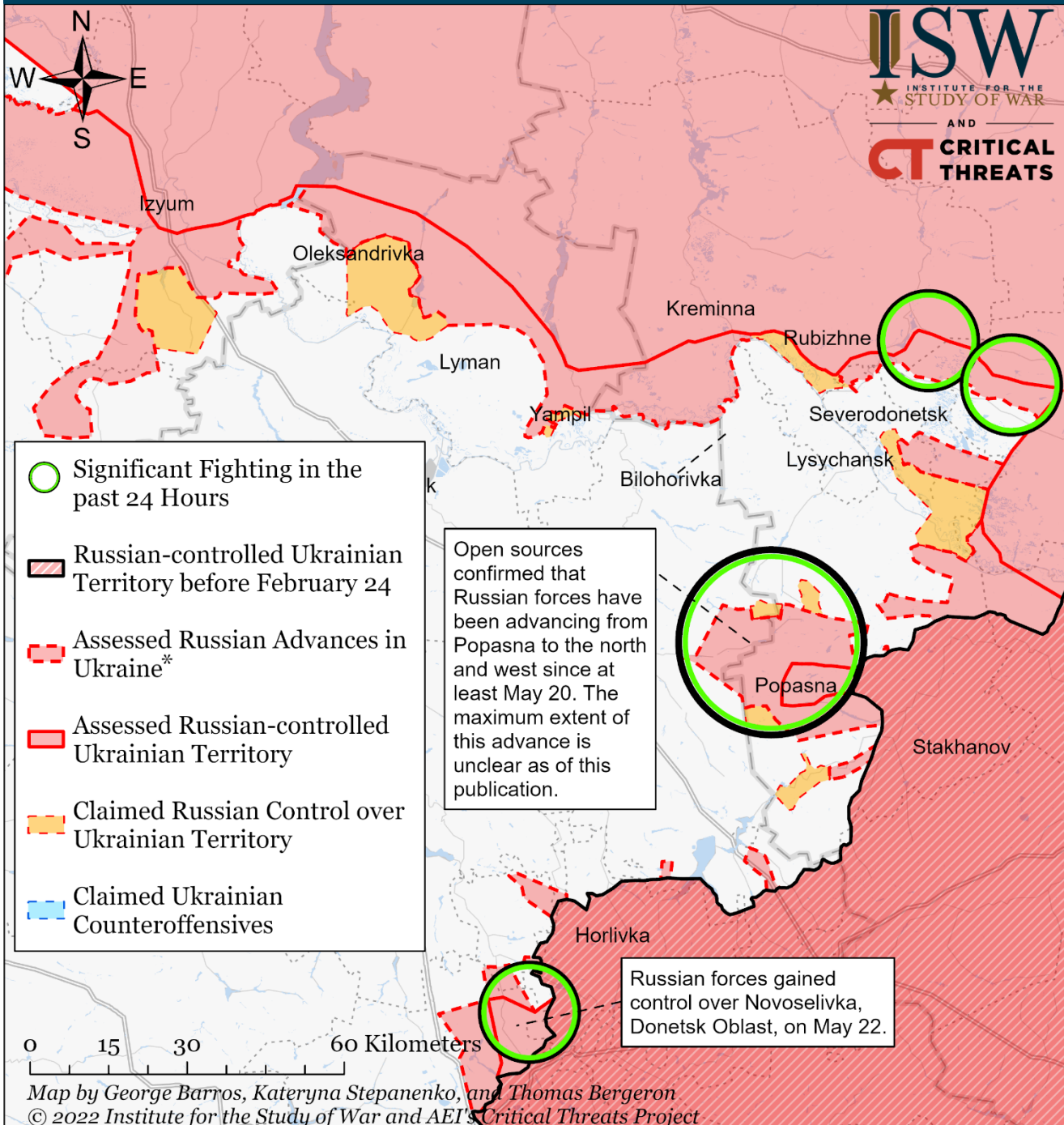
- Main effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and three supporting efforts);
- Subordinate main effort—Encirclement of Ukrainian troops in the cauldron between Izyum and Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts
- Supporting effort 1—Mariupol;
- Supporting effort 2—Kharkiv City;
- Supporting effort 3—Southern axis.

### **Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine**

**Subordinate Main Effort—Southern Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk Oblasts (Russian objective: Encircle Ukrainian forces in Eastern Ukraine and capture the entirety of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Russian forces continued to prepare to resume offensive operations southeast of Izyum but did not make any confirmed advances on May 22.<sup>2</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Russian forces around Izyum are creating conditions to resume offensive actions toward Slovyansk.<sup>3</sup> Russian troops shelled frontline settlements to the southeast and southwest of Izyum, indicating continued Russian plans to move southward from Izyum toward the Donetsk Oblast administrative border.<sup>4</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of May 22, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Open sources confirmed that Russian forces have been advancing from Popasna to the north and west since at least May 20. The maximum extent of this advance is unclear as of this publication.

Russian forces gained control over Novoselivka, Donetsk Oblast, on May 22.

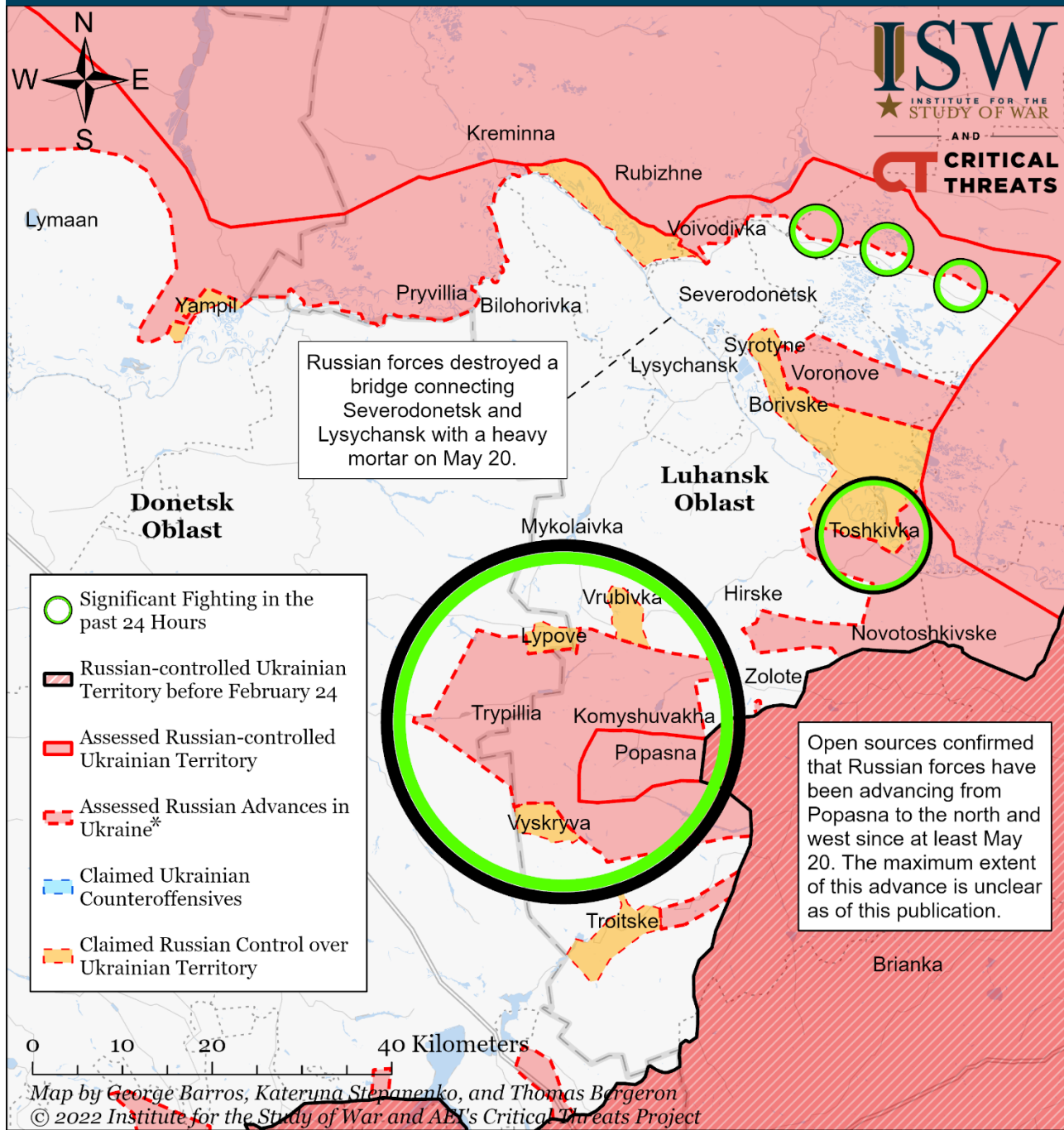
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: We refined our frontlines in Severodonetsk on May 22 based on observing new information. We slightly recessed assessed Russian control given that the Ukrainian General Staff stated on May 22 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults against Oskolonivka, Oleksandrivka, Purdivka, Shchedryshcheve, and Smolyaninove, indicating that Ukrainian forces control these areas.

Russian forces continued ground assaults around Severodonetsk but did not make any confirmed advances in this area on May 22.<sup>5</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops conducted unsuccessful offensive operations around Oskolonivka, Purdivka, Schedryshcheve, and Smolyianinove, all settlements to the east of Severodonetsk.<sup>6</sup> These offensive operations are likely meant to encircle Severodonetsk from the east, supporting previous advances towards the city from the north (via Rubizhne), west (via Bilohorivka), and south (via Popasna). Ukrainian sources additionally confirmed Russian claims that ISW was previously unable to verify that Russian troops have secured limited advances north and west of Popasna since at least May 20.<sup>7</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff confirmed that fighting is ongoing in the area of Toshkivka, Komyshuvakha, Trypillya, and Vasylivka—all settlements around Popasna where Russian sources claimed to have broken through Ukrainian defenses on May 21, though ISW cannot confirm if Russian forces have fully captured any of these locations.<sup>8</sup> Geolocated combat footage from Volodymirivka, just west of Popasna, further corroborates these claims.<sup>9</sup> Russian forces attacking out of Popasna in several directions likely seek to both complete the encirclement of Severodonetsk from the south and push westward in Donetsk Oblast toward Bakhmut via Trypillya, Lypove, and Vasylivka.<sup>10</sup>

Russian forces continued artillery attacks around Lyman on May 22 but did not make any confirmed ground advances in the area.<sup>11</sup> Militia forces of the Donetsk People's Republic claimed that they took control of Novoselivka, a village in southern Donetsk Oblast.<sup>12</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Severodonetsk as of May 22, 2022, 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: We refined our frontlines in Severodonetsk on May 22 based on observing new information. We slightly recessed assessed Russian control given that the Ukrainian General Staff stated on May 22 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults against Oskolonivka, Oleksandrivka, Purdivka, Shchedryshcheve, and Smolyaninove, indicating that Ukrainian forces control these areas. We removed Russian claims behind these Ukrainian lines that are likely exaggerated. We will continue refining our maps as we observe and reconcile more data.

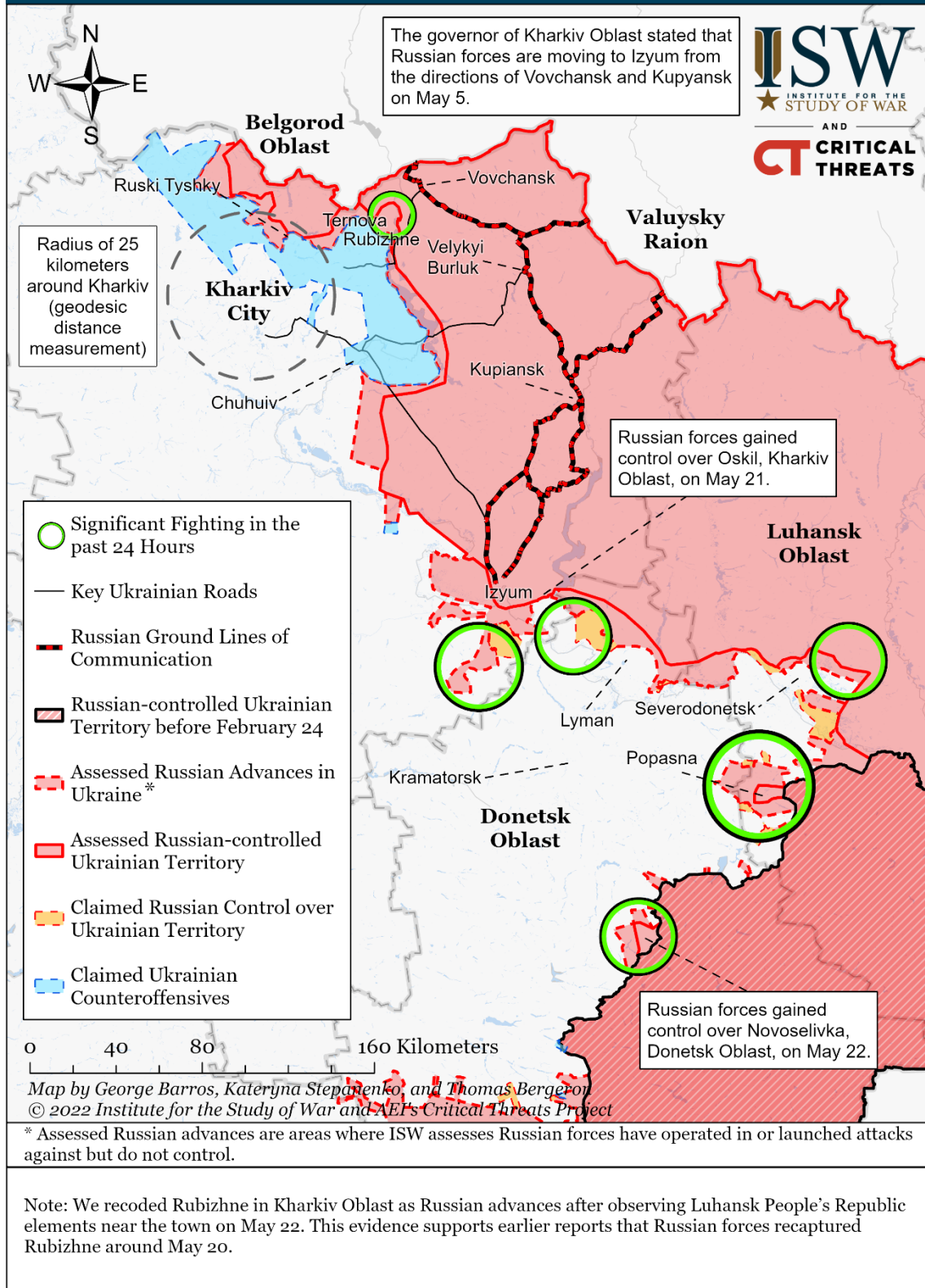
### **Supporting Effort #1—Mariupol (Russian objective: Capture Mariupol and reduce the Ukrainian defenders)**

Russian forces continued clearing the territory of the Azovstal Steel Plant on May 22.<sup>13</sup> Occupation forces in Mariupol continued carrying out strict filtration and deportation procedures. The Territorial Defense Headquarters of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) claimed that 313 people, including 55 children, were deported from Mariupol to a filtration camp in Bezymmene.<sup>14</sup> Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushenko claimed that 70 people, including 12 children, were forcibly deported to Russia from Mariupol via the Nikolske filtration camp, although ISW cannot independently verify this claim.<sup>15</sup> Andryushchenko additionally stated that the occupation administration has tightened movement controls through the city of Mariupol, which is consistent with ISW's earlier assessments that the information environment in Mariupol will become increasingly restricted in the coming weeks.<sup>16</sup>

### **Supporting Effort #2—Kharkiv City (Russian objective: Withdraw forces to the north and defend ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to Izyum)**

Russian forces focused on maintaining their positions north of Kharkiv City and shelled Ukrainian positions on May 22.<sup>17</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that elements of the Russian 6th Combined Arms Army and Baltic Fleet are fighting to prevent Ukrainian troops from reaching the international border.<sup>18</sup> The Internal Ministry of the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) additionally stated that its personnel are operating in the towns of Kozacha Lopan and Rubizhne (the Rubizhne in Kharkiv Oblast, not Luhansk Oblast), confirming ISW's previous assessment that Russian forces retook some territory on May 19 that was previously captured by Ukrainian forces.<sup>19</sup> Russian forces continued to inflict artillery damage on settlements around Kharkiv City.<sup>20</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 22, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

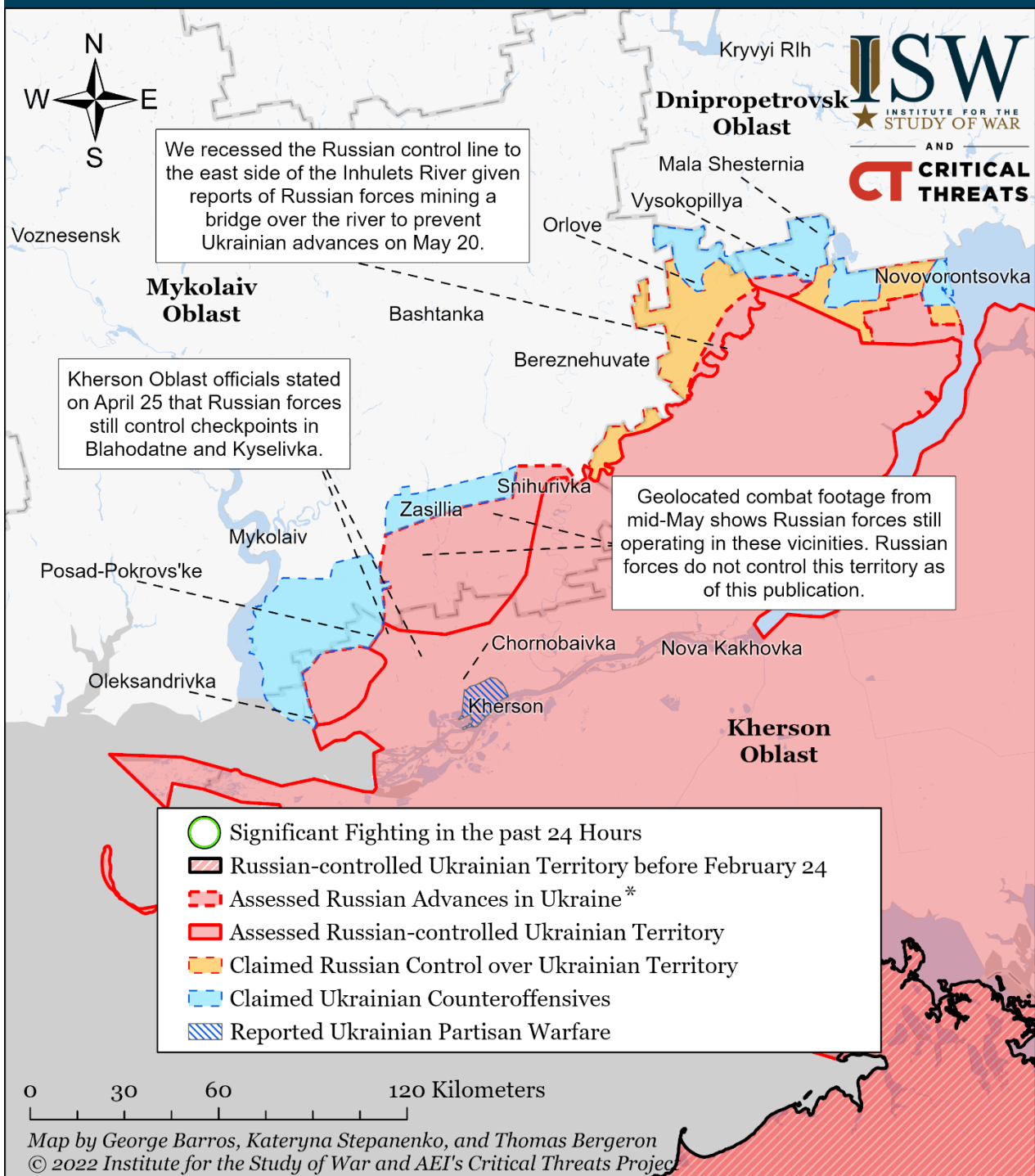




**Supporting Effort #3—Southern Axis (Objective: Defend Kherson against Ukrainian counterattacks)**

Russian forces likely continued preparations for renewed offensives on the southern axis on May 22. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops on this axis are focusing on building secondary lines of defense, strengthening air defense systems, conducting reconnaissance, and shelling Ukrainian positions, all of which indicates they are setting conditions for subsequent offensive actions.<sup>21</sup> Russian forces continued rocket and artillery strikes on Zaporizhia, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, and Mykolaiv Oblasts.<sup>22</sup> The Ukrainian Resistance Center additionally reported instances of Ukrainian partisan activity targeting collaboration officials and Russian artillery systems in Enerhodar and Melitopol, indicating continued and organized Ukrainian resistance in occupied areas of Ukraine.<sup>23</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 22, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



We recessed the Russian control line to the east side of the Inhulets River given reports of Russian forces mining a bridge over the river to prevent Ukrainian advances on May 20.

Kherson Oblast officials stated on April 25 that Russian forces still control checkpoints in Blahodatne and Kyselivka.

Geolocated combat footage from mid-May shows Russian forces still operating in these vicinities. Russian forces do not control this territory as of this publication.

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

Note: Ukraine's Operational Command South stated on May 20 that Russian forces in the southern direction have not conducted active offensive operations for a long time. This claim is consistent with the lack of observed Russian offensive operations in this area for several weeks.

## Immediate items to watch

- Russian forces are likely reinforcing their grouping north of Kharkiv City to prevent further advances of the Ukrainian counteroffensive toward the Russian border. Russian forces may commit elements of the 1st Tank Army to northern Kharkiv in the near future.
- The Russians will continue efforts to encircle Severodonetsk and Lysychansk at least from the south, possibly by focusing on cutting off the last highway connecting Severodonetsk-Lysychansk with the rest of Ukraine.
- Russian forces in Mariupol will likely shift their focus to occupational control of the city as the siege of Azovstal has concluded.
- Russian forces are likely preparing for Ukrainian counteroffensives and settling in for protracted operations in southern Ukraine.



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<sup>1</sup> [https://t.me/mvdlnr\\_official/835](https://t.me/mvdlnr_official/835)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322807526698999>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322404033406015>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322807526698999>

<sup>4</sup> <https://t.me/synegubov/3241>; [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/16011](https://t.me/mod_russia/16011)

<sup>5</sup> <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2799>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322807526698999>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322404033406015>; <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2787>;

<https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2794>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322404033406015>; <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2787>;

<https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2794>

<sup>7</sup> <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1528367930756431874> ; <https://t.me/milinfoive/83768>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322807526698999>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322404033406015>

<sup>8</sup> <https://t.me/swodki/99656>; <https://t.me/swodki/99529>; <https://t.me/swodki/99515>; [https://riafan dot ru/23447841-\\_tsvetok\\_popasnoi\\_rossiiskie\\_sili\\_prodvigayutsya\\_na\\_severnom\\_i\\_zapadnom\\_napravleniyah](https://riafan.dot.ru/23447841-_tsvetok_popasnoi_rossiiskie_sili_prodvigayutsya_na_severnom_i_zapadnom_napravleniyah)

<sup>9</sup> <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1528367930756431874>; <https://t.me/swodki/99656>; <https://t.me/swodki/99529>;

<https://t.me/swodki/99515>; [https://riafan dot ru/23447841-\\_tsvetok\\_popasnoi\\_rossiiskie\\_sili\\_prodvigayutsya\\_na\\_severnom\\_i\\_zapadnom\\_napravleniyah](https://riafan.dot.ru/23447841-_tsvetok_popasnoi_rossiiskie_sili_prodvigayutsya_na_severnom_i_zapadnom_napravleniyah)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322404033406015>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322807526698999>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322807526698999>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322404033406015>

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<sup>12</sup> [https://t.me/nm\\_dnr/8033](https://t.me/nm_dnr/8033); <https://t.me/swodki/10t1097>; <https://topwar.ru/196638-vojska-rossii-i-dnr-osvobodili-novoselovku-i-vyshli-na-okrainy-pgt-novgorodskoe-ranee-pereimenovannogo-ukrainoj-v-nju-jork.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://t.me/swodki/101101>; <https://t.me/swodki/101100>

<sup>14</sup> <https://t.me/readovkanews/34586>

<sup>15</sup> <https://t.me/andriyshTime/1010>

<sup>16</sup> <https://t.me/andriyshTime/1007>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-21>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322807526698999>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322404033406015>; <https://t.me/synegubov/3241>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322404033406015>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-19>;  
[https://t.me/mvdlnr\\_official/840](https://t.me/mvdlnr_official/840); [https://t.me/mvdlnr\\_official/835](https://t.me/mvdlnr_official/835)

<sup>20</sup> <https://t.me/synegubov/3241>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322807526698999>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=708210536966354>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322807526698999>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322404033406015>

<sup>22</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/100064555155257/posts/pfbid023zhM6vGW6VtV3My3Lg3idE4DFLa5mXzk1Tv3HYD9XV48UyF37S8q9gX2YDTyHmQl/?d=n>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/322404033406015>;  
[https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/8077](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/8077); [https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/8073](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/8073); <https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/997>;  
[https://t.me/mod\\_russia/16011](https://t.me/mod_russia/16011); <https://t.me/epoddubny/10823>

<sup>23</sup> <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/05/22/v-okupovanomu-energodari-pidirvaly-samoprogozoshenogo-miskogo-golovu/>; <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/energodar-nevidomi-pidirvali-pid-jizd-u-yakomu-zhive-kolaborant-andriy-shevchik-novini-ukrajini-50244199.html>; <https://t.me/entime2022/394>; <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/05/22/zsu-razom-iz-partyzanamy-u-zaporizhzi-znyshhyly-kilka-vorozhyh-artylerskyh-system-ta-radiolokaczijni-stancziyi/>; [https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/8077](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/8077)