

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Mason Clark and George Barros

May 6, 5:00 pm ET

**The Ukrainian counteroffensive north and east of Kharkiv city secured further gains in the last 24 hours and may successfully push Russian forces out of artillery range of Kharkiv in the coming days.** Ukrainian forces captured several settlements north and east of Kharkiv in the last 24 hours, reducing the ability of Russian forces to threaten Ukraine's second-largest city. This Ukrainian operation is developing into a successful, broader counteroffensive—as opposed to the more localized *counterattacks* that Ukrainian forces have conducted throughout the war to secure key terrain and disrupt Russian offensive operations. Ukrainian forces are notably retaking territory along a broad arc around Kharkiv rather than focusing on a narrow thrust, indicating an ability to launch larger-scale offensive operations than we have observed so far in the war (as Ukrainian forces predominantly retook the outskirts of Kyiv following Russian withdrawals rather than in a major counteroffensive). The willingness of Ukrainian forces to concentrate the forces necessary for this scale of offensive operations, rather than deploying these available forces to defenses in eastern Ukraine, additionally indicates the Ukrainian military's confidence in repelling ongoing Russian operations to encircle Ukrainian forces in the Severodonetsk area. While Ukrainian forces are unlikely to directly threaten Russian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to Izyum (as they run further to the east of recent Ukrainian advances), Ukrainian forces may be able to relieve Russian pressure on Kharkiv and possibly threaten to make further advances to the Russian border.

**ISW cannot confirm initial reports of a Ukrainian Neptune anti-ship missile strike on the Russian frigate *Admiral Makarov* on May 6.**<sup>1</sup> Pentagon Spokesperson John Kirby said the United States cannot confirm the reported strike and added “we’ve been looking at this all day.”<sup>2</sup> ISW will update this assessment with further information as it becomes available.

## Key Takeaways

- **The Ukrainian counteroffensive along a broad arc north and east of Kharkiv city took further terrain and will likely push Russian forces out of tube artillery range of the city in the coming days. The ability—and willingness—of the Ukrainian military to concentrate the forces in Kharkiv necessary to conduct this operation indicates Ukrainian confidence in repelling ongoing Russian attacks with their existing forces in the region.**
- **Russian forces did not make any progress on the Izyum axis.**
- **Russian forces likely secured small gains on the outskirts of Severodonetsk in the last 24 hours but are unlikely to successfully surround the town.**
- **Russian forces continued assaults on the Azovstal plant, but ISW cannot confirm any specific advances. Likely widespread civilian resistance to the Russian occupation may additionally be disrupting previously announced Russian plans to conduct a Victory Day exhibition in Mariupol.**
- **There were no significant changes on the southern axis in the last 24 hours and Russian forces continued to reinforce their forward positions.**
- **ISW cannot confirm reports of a Ukrainian anti-ship missile strike on the *Admiral Makarov* at this time.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 6, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Thomas Bergeron  
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\* 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 the structure of its discussion of the primary efforts Russian forces are currently engaging in.** The main Russian effort is concentrated in Eastern Ukraine and includes one subordinate main effort and four supporting efforts. The subordinate main effort is the encirclement of Ukrainian troops in the cauldron formed between the Izyum-Slovyansk highway and the Kreminna-Rubizhne-Popasna frontline in Luhansk. The four supporting efforts are: completing the seizure of Mariupol, retaining pressure on Kharkiv City, holding occupied territory on the Southern Axis, and threatening northeastern Ukraine from Russian and Belarusian territory.

**ISW has updated its assessment of the five primary efforts Russian forces are engaged in at this time:**

- Main effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and four 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;
- Supporting effort 4—Sumy and northeastern Ukraine.

**Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine**

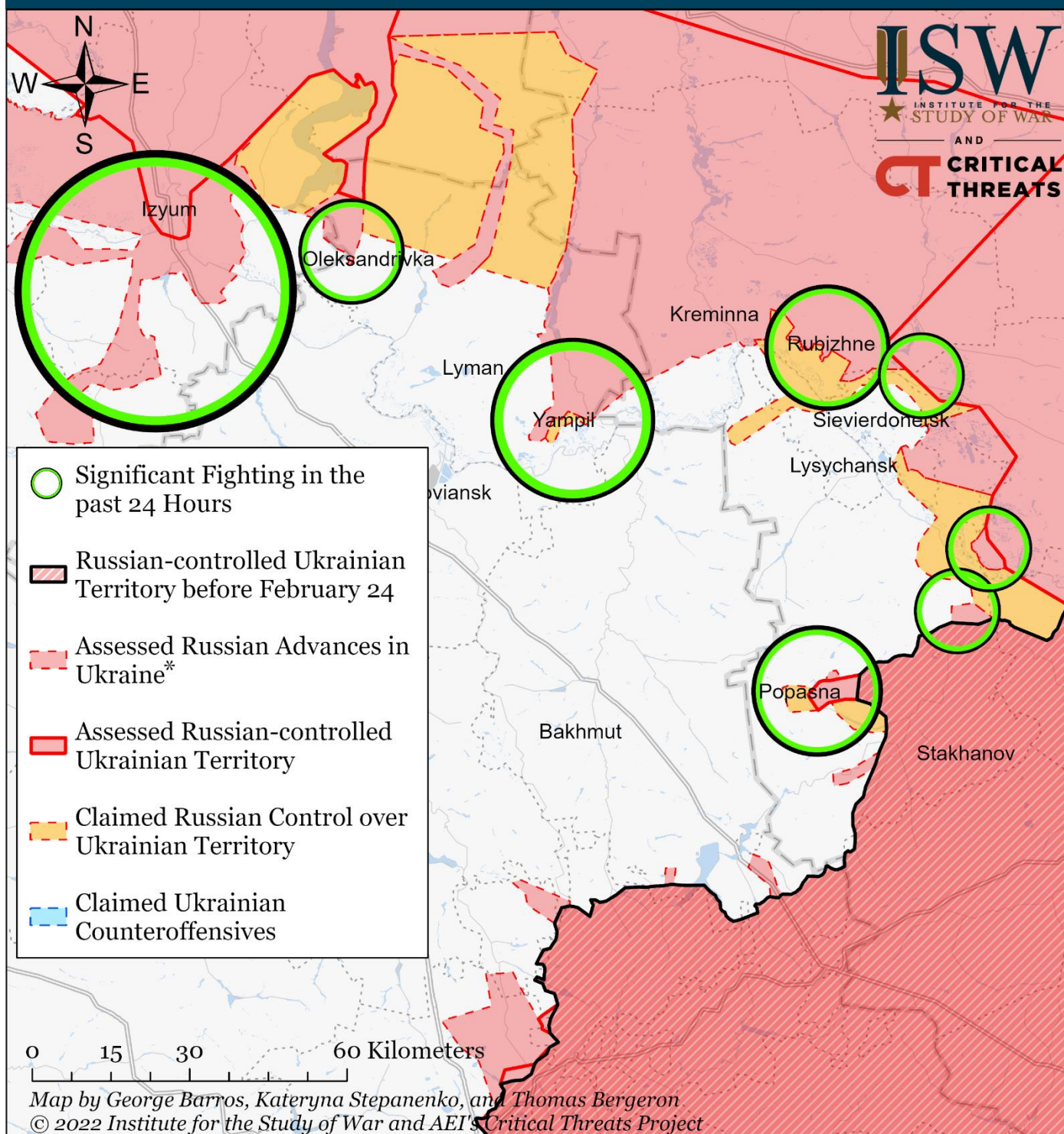
**Subordinate Main Effort—Southern Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk Oblasts (Russian objective: Encircle Ukrainian forces in eastern Ukraine and capture the entirety of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Ukrainian forces continued to repel Russian attacks on the Izyum axis in the last 24 hours, with Kharkiv Oblast civilian leadership reporting that Ukrainian forces inflicted heavy casualties on Russian forces on the outskirts of Barinkove.<sup>3</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces prioritized aerial reconnaissance of Ukrainian positions and are deploying unspecified Eastern Military District units to the Izyum axis.<sup>4</sup> Russian forces around Izyum remain stalled and additional scattered reinforcements are unlikely to enable renewed advances.

Russian forces likely secured small gains on the outskirts of Severodonetsk on May 6. Russian forces continued attacks on Rubizhne and Voevodivka (just north of Severodonetsk) and likely captured Voronove (southeast of Severodonetsk).<sup>5</sup> Local Ukrainian and Russian sources both reported that Russian forces are attacking other unspecified villages on the outskirts of Severodonetsk in a likely attempt to surround the town.<sup>6</sup> Ukrainian forces repelled continuing Russian assaults around Popasna, and Russian forces did not launch any attacks against Avdiivka or Lyman.<sup>7</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported on May 6 that Russian shelling along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine is intended to interdict Ukrainian movements.<sup>8</sup>



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of May 6, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



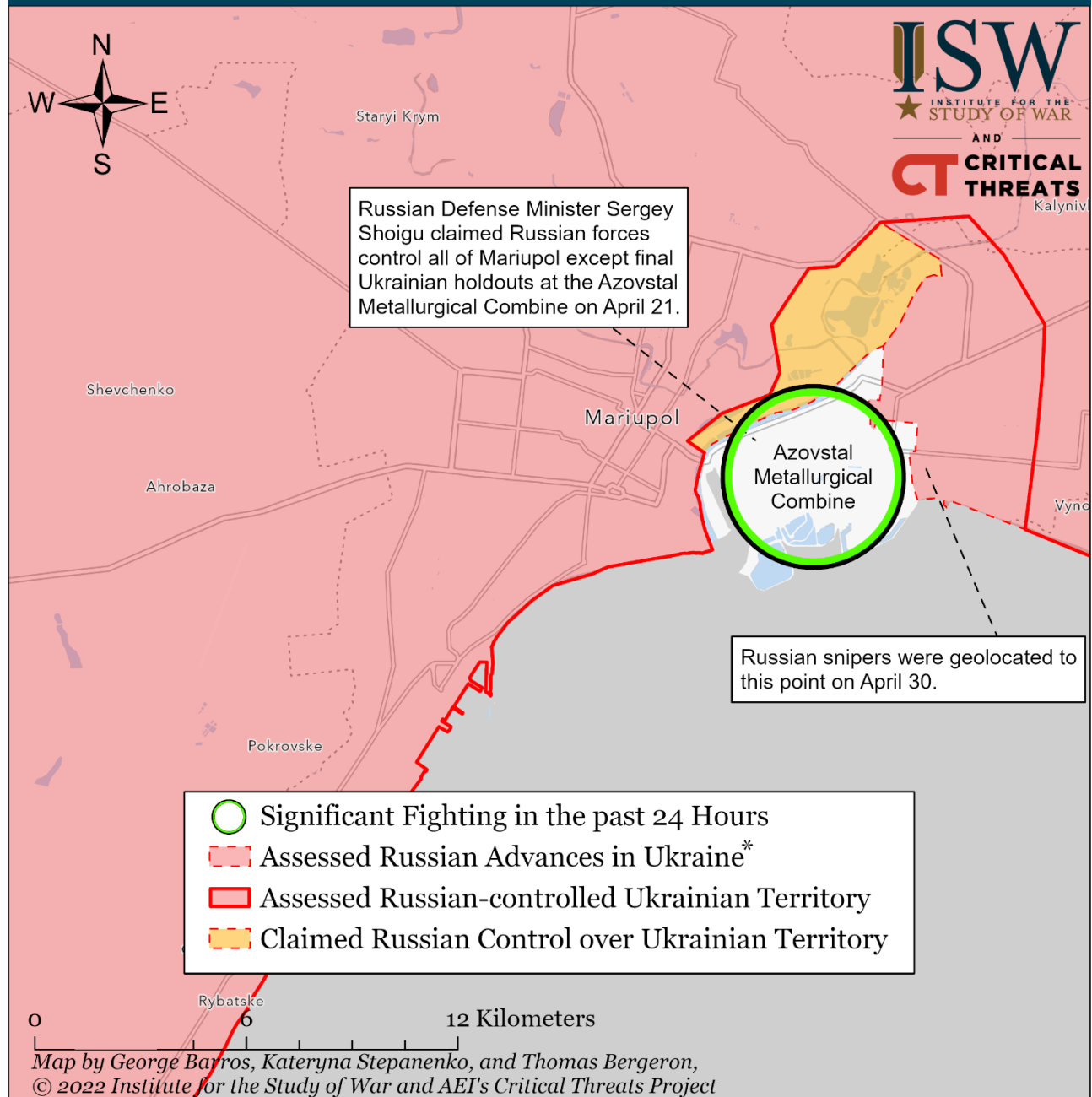
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Russian forces continued assaults on the Azovstal plant on May 6, but ISW cannot confirm any specific advances.<sup>9</sup> Pro-Russian Telegram channels claimed Russian forces captured 100 Ukrainian servicemen attempting to escape Azovstal, though ISW cannot confirm this claim.<sup>10</sup> The Ukrainian Presidential Office announced a new humanitarian corridor opened on May 6, but Russian forces reportedly violated a local ceasefire and launched anti-tank missiles at civilian vehicles evacuating from Azovstal.<sup>11</sup>

Russian forces continued occupation measures but likely face widespread civilian resistance and may not be able to fully secure the city on their intended timetable. Russian forces were observed changing road signs in Mariupol from Ukrainian to Russian on May 5, and Ukrainian officials reported on May 6 that Russian forces are disseminating false information on Ukrainian losses to lower civilian morale.<sup>12</sup> Kremlin spokesperson Dmitri Peskov declined to state if Russian forces would hold a parade in Mariupol on May 9, saying a wide celebration is currently impossible and claiming he could not say “on the behalf of the military if there are any plans” regarding a parade.<sup>13</sup> The continued resistance of Ukrainian forces in the Azovstal plant and likely widespread civilian resistance to the Russian occupation may be disrupting previously announced Russian plans to conduct a Victory Day exhibition in Mariupol.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Mariupol as of May 6, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



The Kremlin declared victory in Mariupol on April 21 after capturing the city besides Ukrainian holdouts in the encircled Azovstal Metallurgical Combine. Russian forces reportedly conducted an assault on the remaining Ukrainian defenders at Azovstal on May 4. Russian war reporters filmed some Russian elements redeploying from Mariupol northward on April 24 and April 25. The Kremlin will spin the (still incomplete) capture of Mariupol into a major victory in Ukraine to compensate for stalled or failed Russian offensives elsewhere.

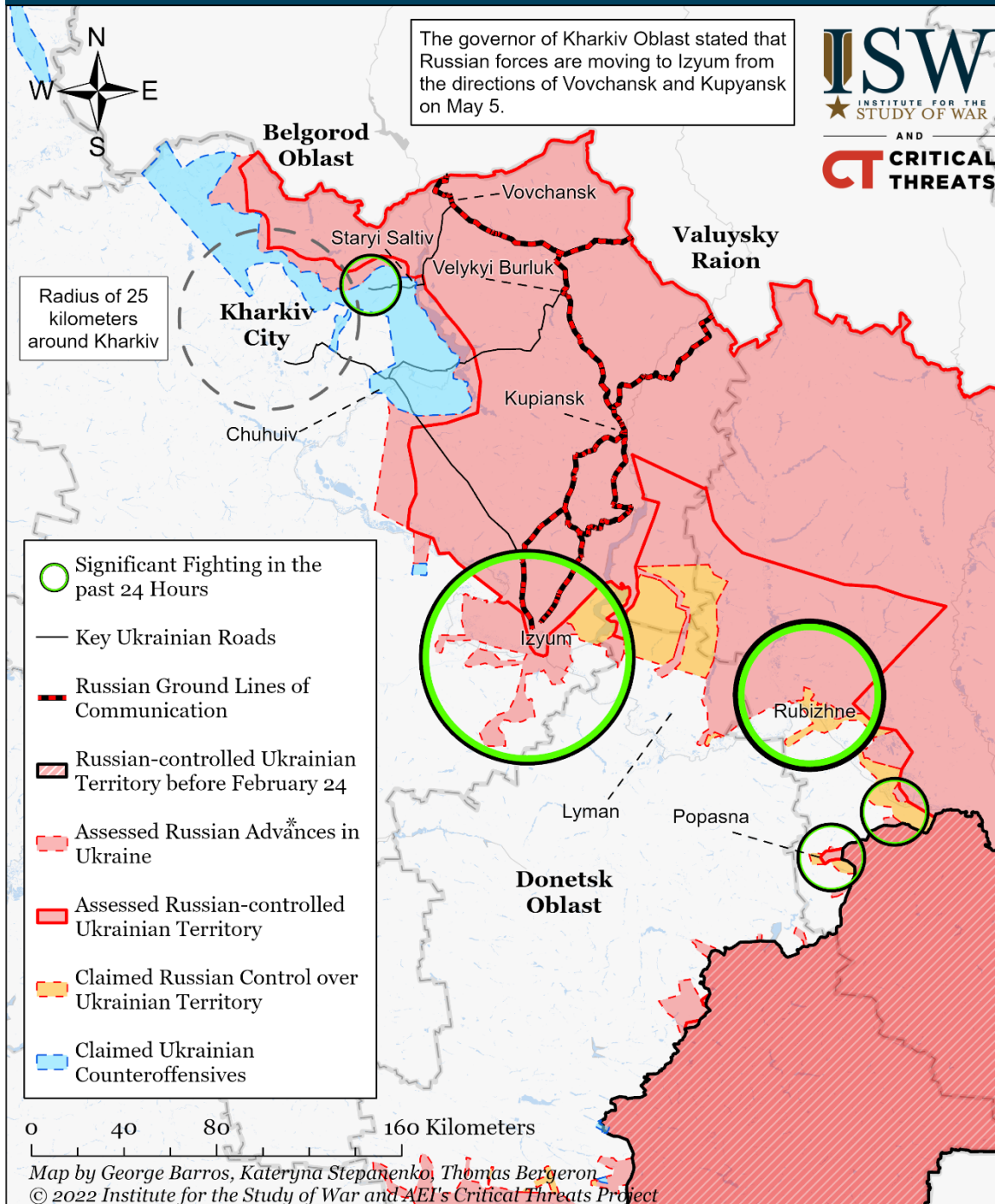
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

**Supporting Effort #2—Kharkiv City (Russian objective: Continue to pressure Kharkiv City to fix Ukrainian defenders there and prevent their movement to reinforce defenders on other axes.)**

The Ukrainian counteroffensive north and east of Kharkiv made substantial progress in the last 24 hours and Ukrainian forces may be able to drive Russian forces out of tube artillery range of Kharkiv city itself in the coming days. The Ukrainian General Staff and independent sources reported that Ukrainian forces recaptured Oleksandrivka, Fedorivka, Ukrainka, Shestakovo, Peremoha, Tsirkuny, and part of Cherkasy Tishki from May 5-6.<sup>14</sup> Russian forces continued to shell Ukrainian positions, build up air defenses, and regroup damaged units on the Kharkiv axis.<sup>15</sup> Russian forces likely face the choice of sending additional reinforcements intended for eastern Ukraine to support defensive positions on the outskirts of Kharkiv or lose their ability to both shell the city and screen lines of communication through Kharkiv Oblast.



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 6, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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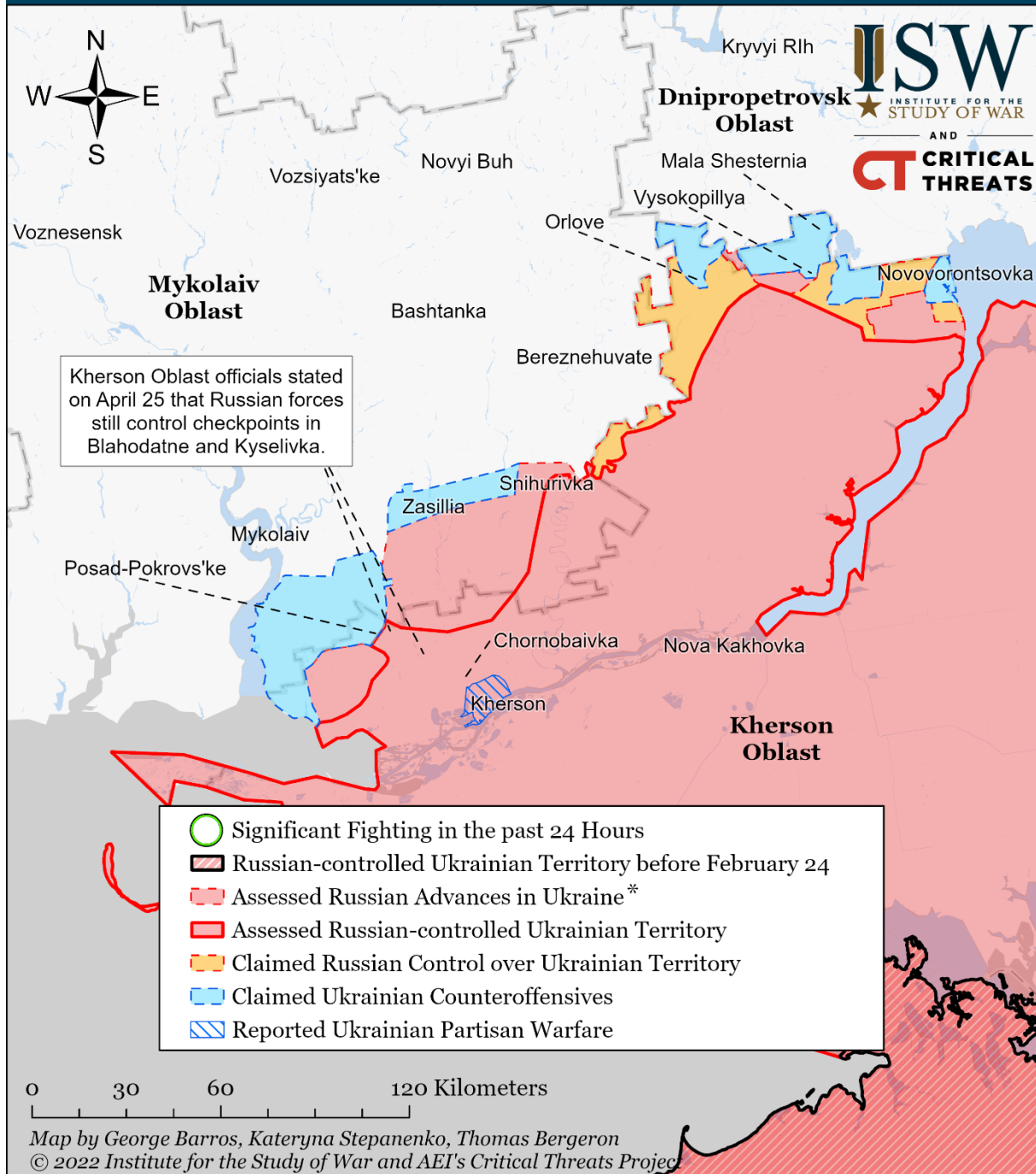
The Ukrainian General Staff and independent sources reported Ukrainian forces recaptured Oleksandrivka, Fedorivka, Ukrainka, Shestakovo, Peremoha, Tsirkuny and part of Cherkasy Tishki from May 5-6. The Ukrainian counteroffensive north and east of Kharkiv made substantial progress in the last 24 hours and Ukrainian forces may be able to drive Russian forces out of tube artillery range of Kharkiv city itself in the coming days.



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

Russian forces in the entire southern axis did not conduct any active operations (halting recent attacks toward Kryvyi Rih and Zaporizhia) in the last 24 hours and continued to reinforce their frontline positions.<sup>16</sup> Russian forces continued to shell Ukrainian positions along the entire southern axis. The Ukrainian General Staff specified that Russian forces are strengthening their air defenses and electronic warfare capabilities in the southern direction.<sup>17</sup> Russian forces may be concentrating on reconnoitering Ukrainian positions and preparing for further offensive operations, as local Ukrainian authorities reported on May 5.<sup>18</sup> Ukrainian forces did not conduct any reported counterattacks toward Kherson in the past 24 hours, and ISW did not collect any additional data to verify claimed Ukrainian advances since May 4.<sup>19</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 6, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

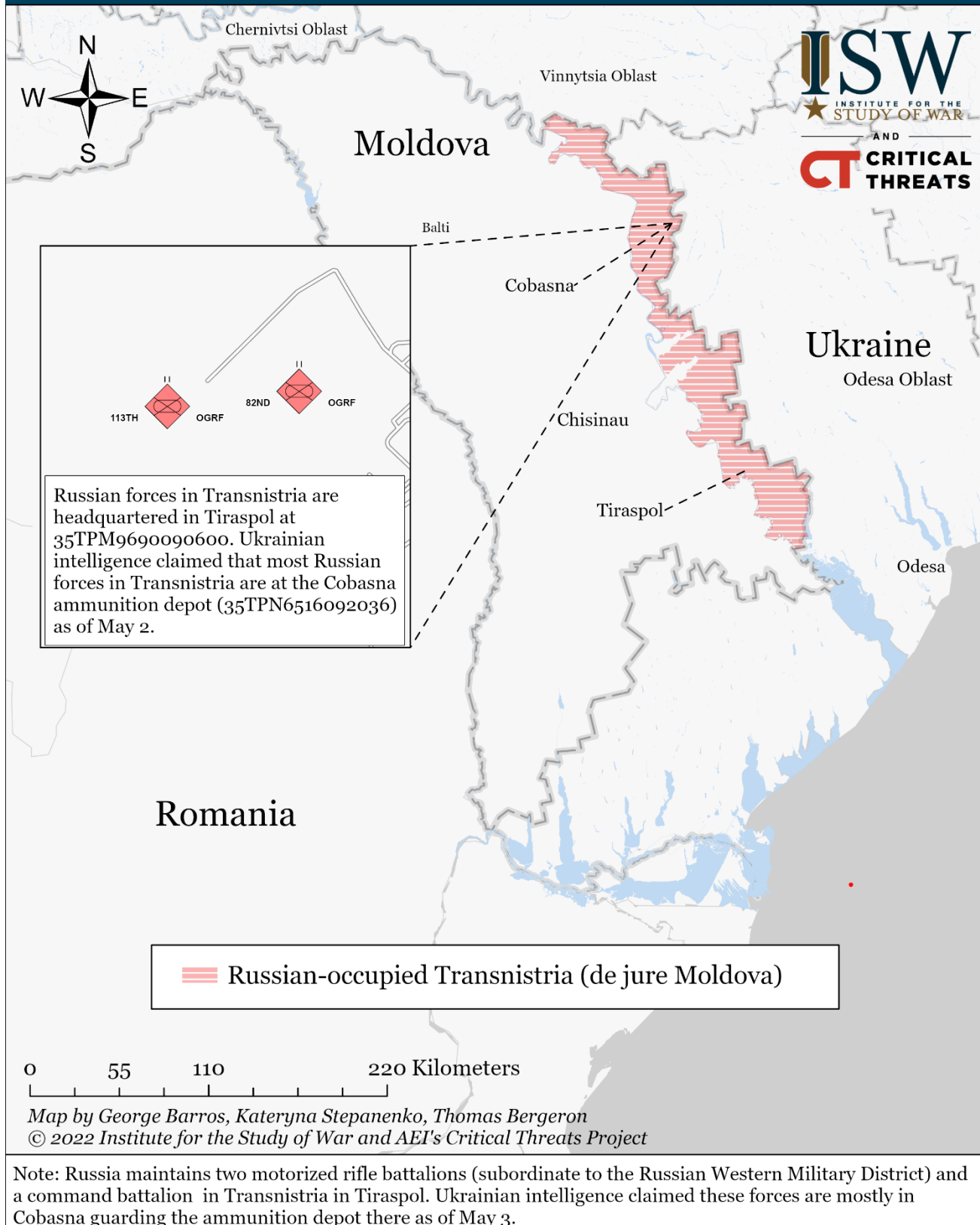


\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: Ukraine's General Staff reported on May 5 that Ukrainian forces regained control over several unspecified settlements on the border of Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts. Ukrainian forces also announced regaining control over four unspecified villages along the Kherson-Mykolaiv border on May 3. This is insufficient evidence and information to update our maps at this time. ISW will update our map once open sources name the liberated settlements.

The Ukrainian General Staff and Operational Command South reported that Russian forces continue to provoke tensions in Transnistria and seek ways to provoke an escalation, including by spreading false allegations of Ukrainians shooting into Transnistria.<sup>20</sup>

# Moldova Situational Map as of May 6, 2022, 3:00 PM ET





## **Supporting Effort #4—Sumy and Northeastern Ukraine: (Russian objective: Withdraw combat power in good order for redeployment to eastern Ukraine)**

There were no significant events on this axis in the past 24 hours.

### **Immediate items to watch**

- Russian forces will likely continue to merge offensive efforts southward of Izyum with westward advances from Donetsk in order to encircle Ukrainian troops in southern Kharkiv Oblast and Western Donetsk.
- Russia may change the status of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, possibly by merging them into a single "Donbas Republic" and/or by annexing them directly to Russia.
- Russian forces have apparently decided to seize the Azovstal plant through ground assault and will likely continue operations accordingly.
- Ukrainian counteroffensives around Kharkiv City may unhinge Russian positions northeast of the city, possibly forcing the Russians to choose between reinforcing those positions or abandoning them if the Ukrainians continue to press their counter-attack.
- Russian forces may be preparing to conduct renewed offensive operations to capture the entirety of Kherson Oblast in the coming days.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://dumskaya.net/news/u-zmeinogo-gorit-rossiyskiy-fregat-164010/?fbclid=IwAR2grwXn-Ev3ZB9Lu-K9LS6MOuYRIw1lgZwXv7WpxLRHa9ZmpJPk-0IWPEY> ; <https://twitter.com/mhmck/status/1522532475725099011>;  
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<https://twitter.com/OAlexanderDK/status/1522549702692155393>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/1522641408334704642?s=20&t=OkoyG4n8P0zhjFSW-6XkUA>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://t.me/syneubov/3109>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310376874608731>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>;  
<https://twitter.com/BLANK8888800/status/1522519764039778306>; <https://twitter.com/L13CO/status/1522497077791449088>;  
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[https://twitter.com/tw\\_khosiev/status/1522465921603969024](https://twitter.com/tw_khosiev/status/1522465921603969024);

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>; <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2372>;  
<https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2375>; <https://t.me/millnr/8387>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>;  
<https://twitter.com/Militarylandnet/status/1522483552499208192?cxt=HHwWgMC4sa-u-aAqAAAA> ;  
<https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1522325760807251969>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310376874608731>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310376874608731>; <https://t.me/mariupolrada/9528>;  
<https://twitter.com/IntelCrab/status/1522263733908783106?cxt=HHwWhIC-oZ-zlaAqAAAA>;

<sup>10</sup> [https://t.me/rlz\\_the\\_kraken/49752](https://t.me/rlz_the_kraken/49752).

<sup>11</sup> <https://t.me/mariupolnow/9382>; <https://t.me/mariupolnow/9381>; <https://t.me/mariupolrada/9532>;  
<https://t.me/mariupolrada/9529>; <https://t.me/polkazov/4465>; <https://t.me/polkazov/4464>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://t.me/mariupolrada/9527>; <https://t.me/mariupolnow/9366>; <https://t.me/andriyshTime/692>.

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-05-06-22/h\\_c6c5ac75c9bfaaf7dbca3319bd3e6719](https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-05-06-22/h_c6c5ac75c9bfaaf7dbca3319bd3e6719);  
<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/kremlin-says-time-celebrating-victory-day-mariupol-will-come-2022-05-06/>;  
<https://t.me/andriyshTime/697>; <https://t.me/andriyshTime/684>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>; [https://t.me/istories\\_media/1148](https://t.me/istories_media/1148) ;  
<https://twitter.com/Jamir194358/status/1522630889703882753>; [https://twitter.com/sitizen\\_toxi/status/1522636630292668420](https://twitter.com/sitizen_toxi/status/1522636630292668420);  
[https://twitter.com/sitizen\\_toxi/status/1522636438638059524](https://twitter.com/sitizen_toxi/status/1522636438638059524);  
[https://twitter.com/kharkiv\\_warnews/status/1522615474856640517](https://twitter.com/kharkiv_warnews/status/1522615474856640517).

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310376874608731>; <https://t.me/synergubov/3109>;  
<https://t.me/synergubov/3109>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310376874608731>;  
<https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1522517729865048066?cxt=HHwWhIC5zeDziKEqAAAA>; [https://t.me/zoda\\_gov\\_ua/7431](https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/7431);  
<https://t.me/dnipropetrovskODA/856>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310376874608731>.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-campaign-assessment-may-5>.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-campaign-assessment-may-5>;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-4>.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/310792804567138>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1670798429985595>.