

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas.
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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.



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Christina Harward, Angelica Evans, Kateryna Stepanenko, and Frederick W. Kagan

May 4, 2024, 9 pm 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 see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

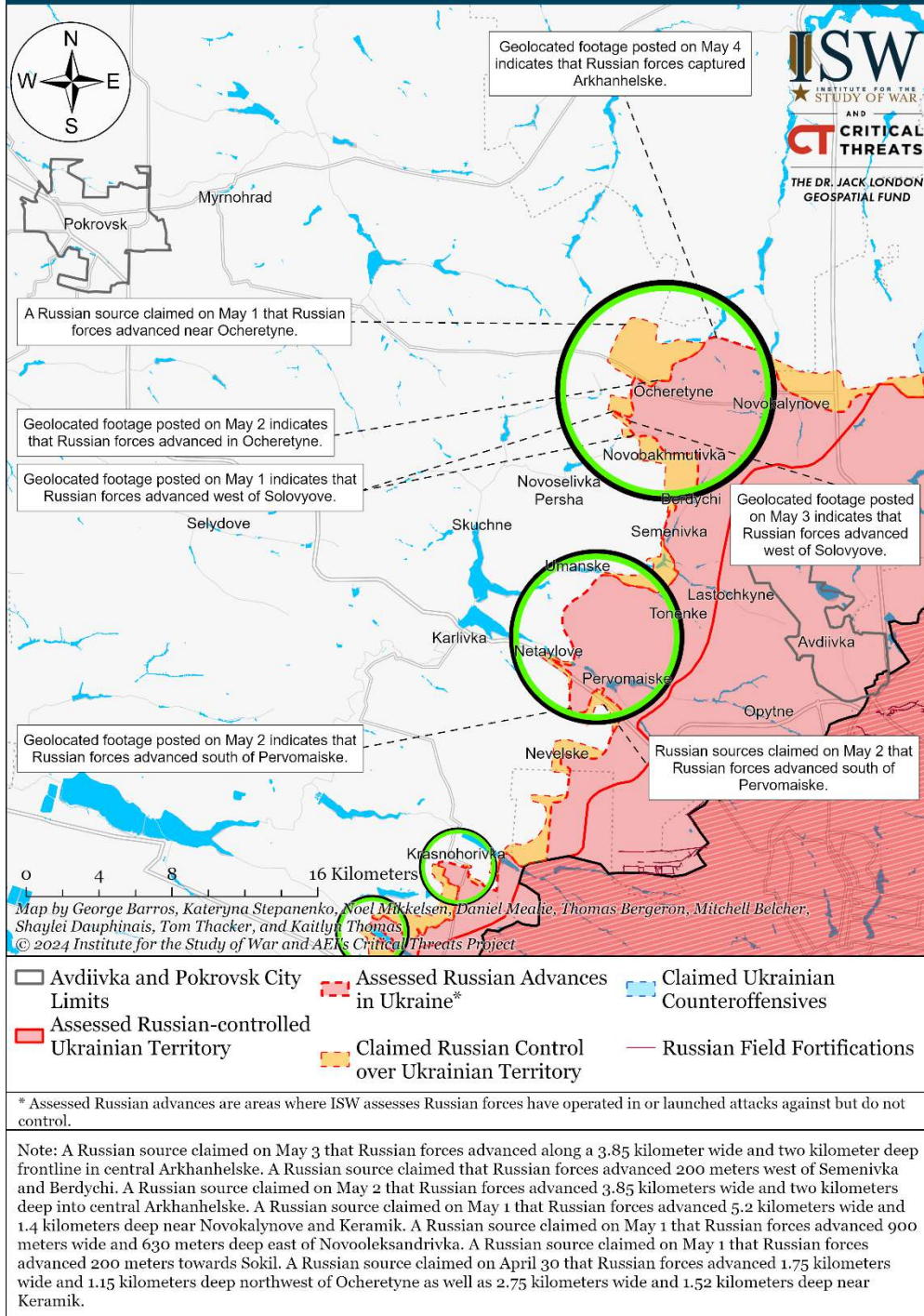
Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 3:20pm ET on May 4. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 5 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian forces made a notable tactical advance northwest of Avdiivka near Arkhanhelske on the night of May 3 to 4, likely following a Ukrainian decision to withdraw from the area on May 3. A Russian milblogger posted footage on May 4 reportedly of elements of the Russian "Lavina" Battalion of the 132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) raising a flag in Arkhanhelske, and ISW geolocated this footage to northern Arkhanhelske.[1] Additional geolocated footage published on May 4 indicates that Russian forces advanced in the eastern outskirts of Arkhanhelske.[2] ISW assesses that the Russian seizure of Arkhanhelske also indicates that Russian forces likely control Keramik and Novokalynove (both southeast of Arkhanhelske). Geolocated footage published on May 3 shows Ukrainian forces withdrawing from northern Arkhanhelske, and Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in the settlement overnight on May 3 to 4 following the Ukrainian withdrawal.[3] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations to seize Arkhanhelske in several stages, with Russian forces advancing from Ocheretyne (northwest of Avdiivka and southwest of Arkhanhelske) a week ago and Russian forces from Keramik (east of Ocheretyne) seizing the settlement on May 3.[4] Ukrainian forces may have decided to trade space for time as they wait for the arrival of US aid to the frontline at scale in the coming weeks – an appropriate decision for an under-resourced force at risk of being outflanked.[5] ISW continues to assess that Russian forces are likely trying to take advantage of the limited time window before the arrival of Western military aid deliveries by intensifying offensive operations and that Russian forces may make further tactical advances in this area in the near future.[6]

Russian forces appear to be choosing to exploit the tactical situation northwest of Avdiivka – a sound military undertaking – but their ultimate objective in this frontline sector remains unclear. Russian forces appear to be choosing to exploit the area where Russian forces are most likely to make tactical gains in the near future, but it is unclear if they will continue to drive north toward Toretsk or return to their previous focus on Pokrovsk to the northwest.[7] Russian forces have already committed roughly a division’s worth of combat power (comprised mainly of four Central Military District [CMD] brigades) to the frontline northwest of Avdiivka and were reportedly continuing to introduce additional forces in this general area.[8] Ukrainian sources have recently reported that Russia committed elements of the 55th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st Combined Arms Army, CMD) to the Novobakhmutivka area (south of Ocheretyne).[9] Russian forces were likely to continue to push northwest of Avdiivka as long as there were opportunities to exploit the tactical situation in the area.

Assessed Control of Terrain Northwest of Avdiivka as of May 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



The Kremlin continues efforts to portray its unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine as something other than what it is while continuing to assert the jurisdiction of Russian federal law over sovereign states. Russian state media reported on May 4 that the

Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) placed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Lieutenant General Oleksandr Pavlyuk, and former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on Russia's wanted list and opened criminal cases against the three Ukrainian leaders.[10] Russian state media noted that the Russian MVD did not specify Zelensky's, Pavlyuk's, or Poroshenko's crimes nor the alleged crimes of the previous Ukrainian officials that Russia placed on its wanted list, including Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov and Ukrainian State Security Service (SBU) Head Vasyl Malyuk. One Russian milblogger expressed hope that the warrant for Zelensky's arrest will prevent Zelensky from visiting countries with an extradition treaty with Russia.[11] The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) called the arrest warrants an act of Russian propaganda.[12] Ukrainian officials have recently warned that the Kremlin is intensifying an existing information operation called "Maidan 3" aimed at creating doubt about the legitimacy of Zelensky's presidency among Ukrainians and that "Maidan 3" will likely peak around late May 2024.[13] The Kremlin's decision to place Zelensky, Pavlyuk, and Poroshenko on Russia's wanted list is likely part of Russia's "Maidan 3" information operation and of the Kremlin's wider efforts to discredit the current and previous pro-Western Ukrainian governments that followed Ukraine's Euromaidan Revolution in 2014 as well as to isolate Ukraine diplomatically.[14]

The Kremlin's decision to place Ukrainian officials on Russia's wanted list is also an aspect of its continued efforts to assert the jurisdiction of Russian federal laws in sovereign European and post-Soviet countries where Russia has no legal jurisdiction. The Russian MVD has previously placed multiple officials from NATO member countries – including Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – on Russia's wanted list for allegedly breaking a variety of Russian federal laws within NATO member countries.[15] ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin's efforts to assert the jurisdiction of Russia's efforts to set informational conditions justifying possible future Russian aggression against NATO states.[16]

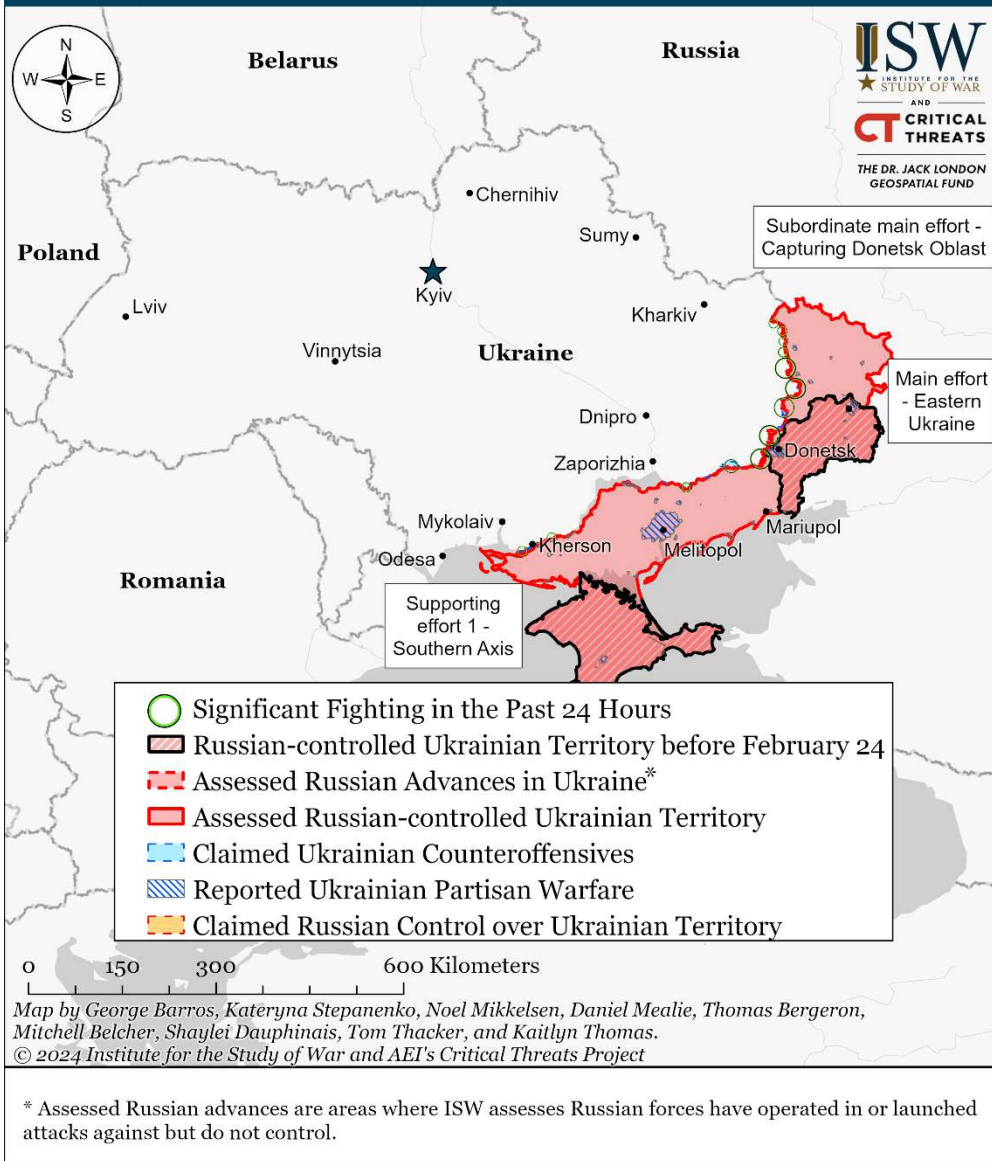
Russian law enforcement conducted a search on May 4 of supporters of imprisoned Russian ultranationalist and former officer Igor Girkin (aka Strelkov) in Tula Oblast, possibly in an attempt to set information conditions to ban the movement in Russia. Russian law enforcement officials, including the Federal Security Service (FSB) officials, reportedly conducted a search of the Russian Strelkov (Girkin) Movement (RDS) branch in Tula Oblast on May 4.[17] The RDS reported that Russian law enforcement officials searched the RDS Tula Oblast branch for members of the all-Russian pro-Ukrainian Russian Volunteer Corps (RDK), who were recently found guilty by a local court of inscribing a "Freedom for Strelkov" slogan on a waste heap in Novomoskovsk, Tula Oblast on April 29.[18] A Russian Telegram channel, which published insider information from law enforcement agencies, reported that Russian law enforcement officials searched at least three RDS members and detained RDS member Alexander Omelchenko. Russian law enforcement officials later released Omelchenko but confiscated his phone. The RDS implied that Russian law enforcement officials are deliberately trying to discredit and ban the movement by claiming that the RDS is affiliated with RDK, which the Russian government has designated as a terrorist organization in Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin notably recently met with Tula Oblast Governor Alexei Dyumin on May 2, but it is unclear if these two events are related.[19]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian forces made a notable tactical advance northwest of Avdiivka near Arkhanhelske on the night of May 3 to 4, likely following a Ukrainian decision to withdraw from the area on May 3.**

- **The Kremlin continues efforts to portray its unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine as something other than what it is while continuing to assert the jurisdiction of Russian federal law over sovereign states.**
- **The Russian law enforcement conducted a search on May 4 of supporters of imprisoned Russian ultranationalist and former officer Igor Girkin (aka Strelkov) in Tula Oblast, possibly in an attempt to set information conditions to ban the movement in Russia.**
- **Russian forces recently advanced near Avdiivka and Donetsk City and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.**
- **The Kremlin is continuing its ongoing campaign to centralize control over Donetsk People's Republic's (DNR) irregular forces by co-opting DNR commanders and officials.**

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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 Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

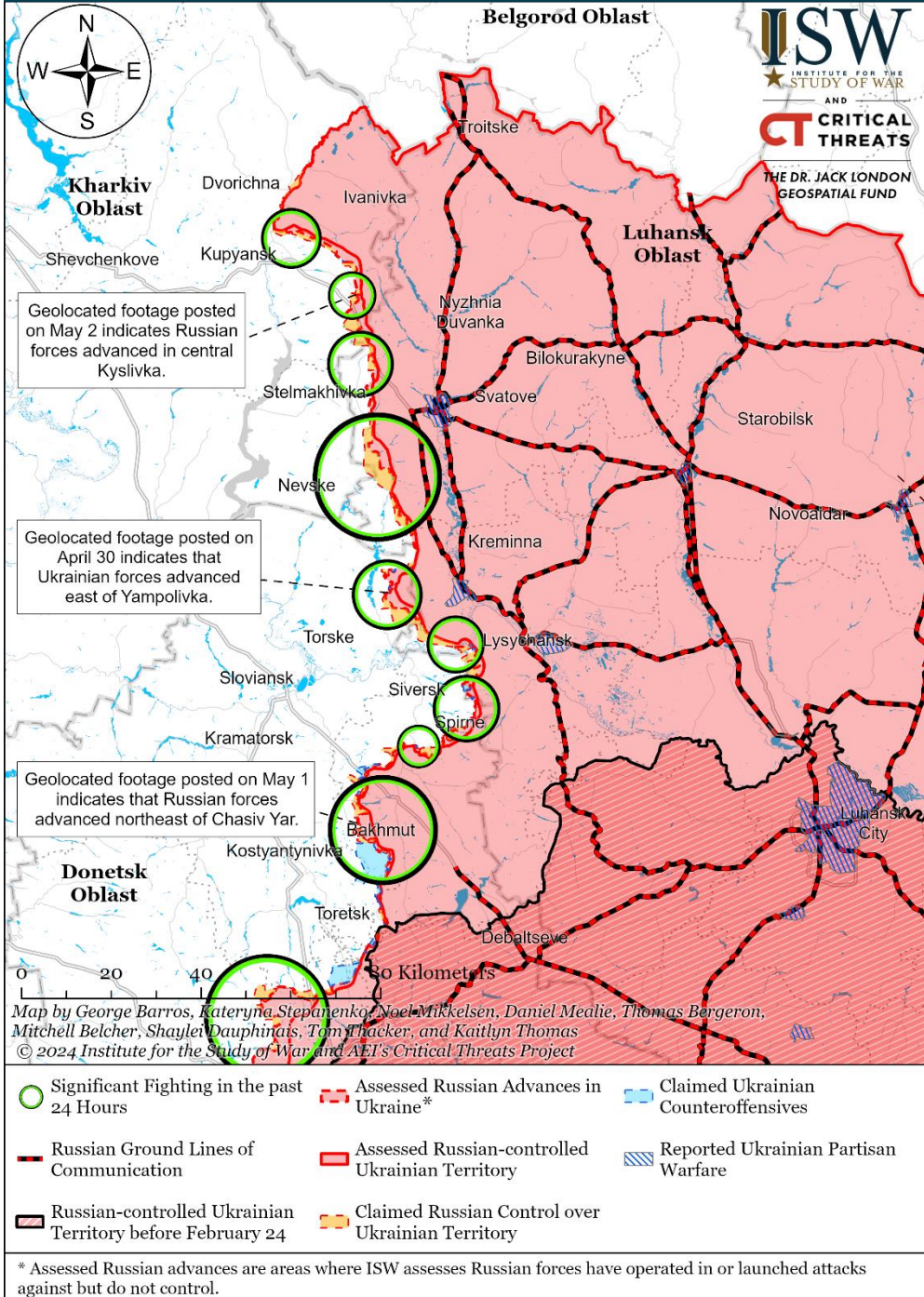
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

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)

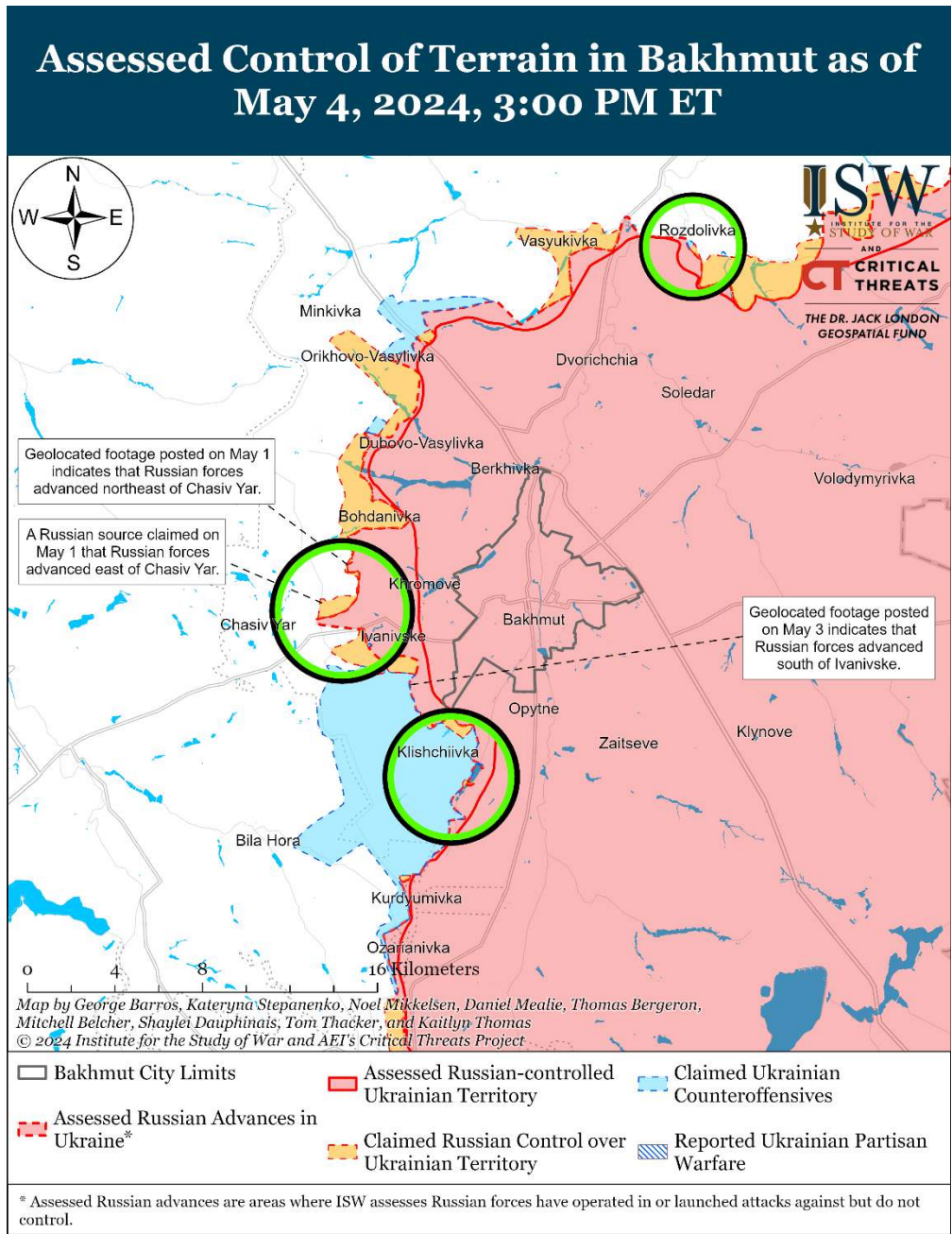
Russian forces continued to launch ground attacks on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on May 4 but did not make confirmed advances. Elements of the Russian 6th Assault Company and “V” Assault Company of the 272nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (47th Tank Division, 1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) claimed on May 4 that they recently seized Kotlyarivka (southeast of Kupyansk).[20] ISW has not observed geolocated visual confirmation of this claim, however. Positional battles continued east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Pishchane, Kyslivka, and Kotlyarivka; northwest of Svatove near Berestove and Stelmakhivka; and west of Svatove near Andriivka.[21] Positional battles also continued southwest of Svatove near Novovodyane, Makiivka, and Nevske; west of Kreminna near Terny and Torske; southwest of Kreminna near Dibrova; and south of Kreminna near Hryhorivka, Serebryanske forest, and Bilohorivka.[22]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of May 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

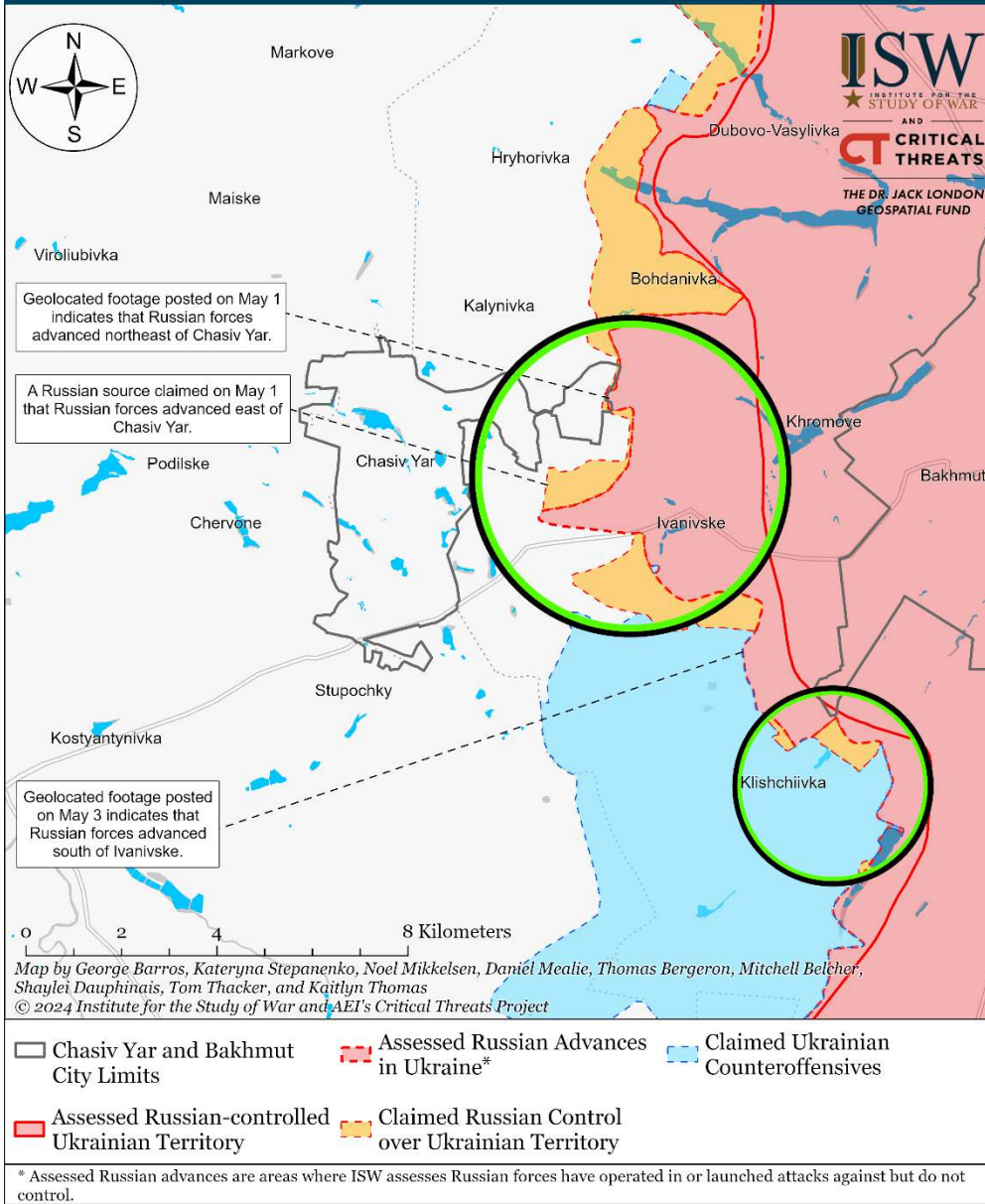
Positional engagements continued in the Siversk direction (northeast of Bakhmut) on May 4, but there were no confirmed changes to this frontline. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked southwest of Siversk near Rozdolivka.[23] Elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) are reportedly operating near Spirne (southeast of Siversk), and elements of the 106th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating near Rozdolivka.[24]



Ukrainian and Russian forces continued to fight near Chasiv Yar on May 4, but there were no confirmed changes to this frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced between Ivanivske (east of Chasiv Yar) and Klishchiivka (southeast of Chasiv Yar), but ISW has not observed

visual confirmation of this claim.[25] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian control over Hryhorivka and Kalynivka (both north of Chasiv Yar) and counterattacks in their vicinity are preventing Russian forces from advancing north of Chasiv Yar.[26] The deputy commander of a Ukrainian brigade operating near Chasiv Yar stated that Russian forces are trying to bypass Chasiv Yar from Bohdanivka (northeast of Chasiv Yar) and Ivanivske while also trying to attack the settlement head on.[27] Fighting continued northwest of Chasiv Yar near Bohdanivka; north of Chasiv Yar near Kalynivka; near the Novyi Microraion (southeastern Chasiv Yar); east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske; and southeast of Chasiv Yar near Andriivka and Klishchiivka.[28] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that newly committed additional elements of the Russian 331st VDV Regiment (98th VDV Division) are operating between Chasiv Yar and the T0504 (Bakhmut-Kostyantynivka) highway; forward elements of the 217th VDV Regiment (98th VDV Division) and Russian Volunteer Corps are operating in the forest area northeast of the Kanal Microraion (easternmost Chasiv Yar); and other elements of the 217th VDV Regiment are trying to advance towards Kalynivka from Bohdanivka.[29] Mashovets stated that elements of the 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are struggling to support the left flank of the 98th VDV Division's tactical strike group (likely referring to the area near Ivanivske), which is complicating the division's advance south of Chasiv Yar. Mashovets stated that elements of the 11th Separate VDV Brigade are operating south of Ivanivske; elements of the 88th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd LNR AC) returned to the battlefield after reconstitution and are operating east of Klishchiivka; and elements of the 83rd Separate VDV Brigade are operating near Klishchiivka and Andriivka. Elements of the Russian 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th AC, Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar.[30]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Chasiv Yar as of May 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

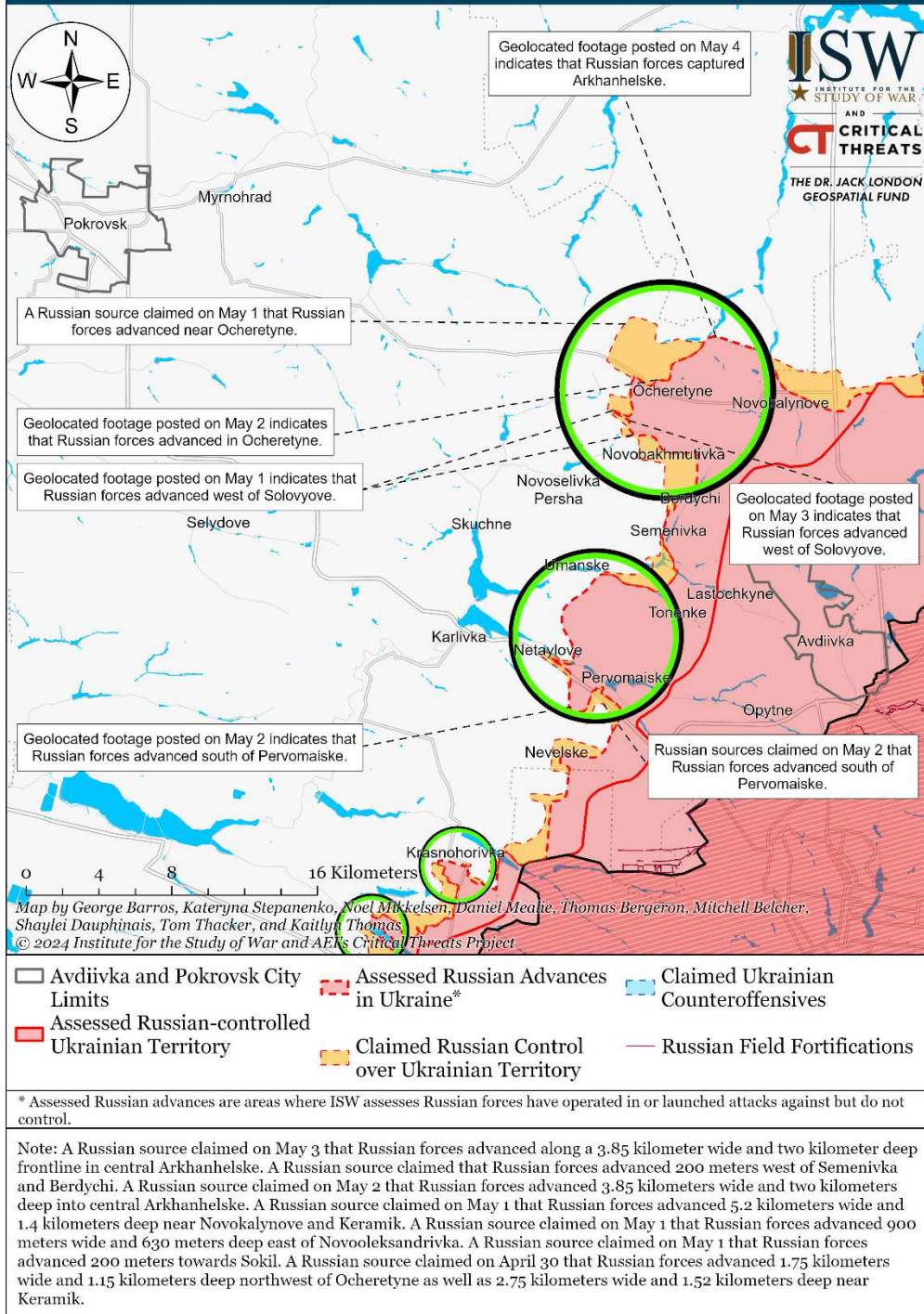


See topline text for updates on the situation northwest of Avdiivka near Ocheretyne.

Russian forces continued ground attacks west and southwest of Avdiivka on May 4, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in central Nevelske (southwest of Avdiivka), advanced 250 meters deep in Netaylove (southwest of Avdiivka), and advanced up to 1.41 kilometers wide and 1.45 kilometers deep south of Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka).[31] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also advanced northwest of Avdiivka near Berdychi and Semenivka and west of Avdiivka near

Umanske.[32] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these Russian claims, however. Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC) and the 27th Motorized Rifle Division (2nd CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) are operating west of Berdychi, Semenivka, and Orlivka (all northwest of Avdiivka) and that elements of the 55th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, CMD) reinforced other elements of the 27th Motorized Rifle Division on the Solovyove-Sokil and Novobakhmutivka-Novopokrovske lines (all northwest of Avdiivka) and advanced south of Novobakhmutivka.[33]

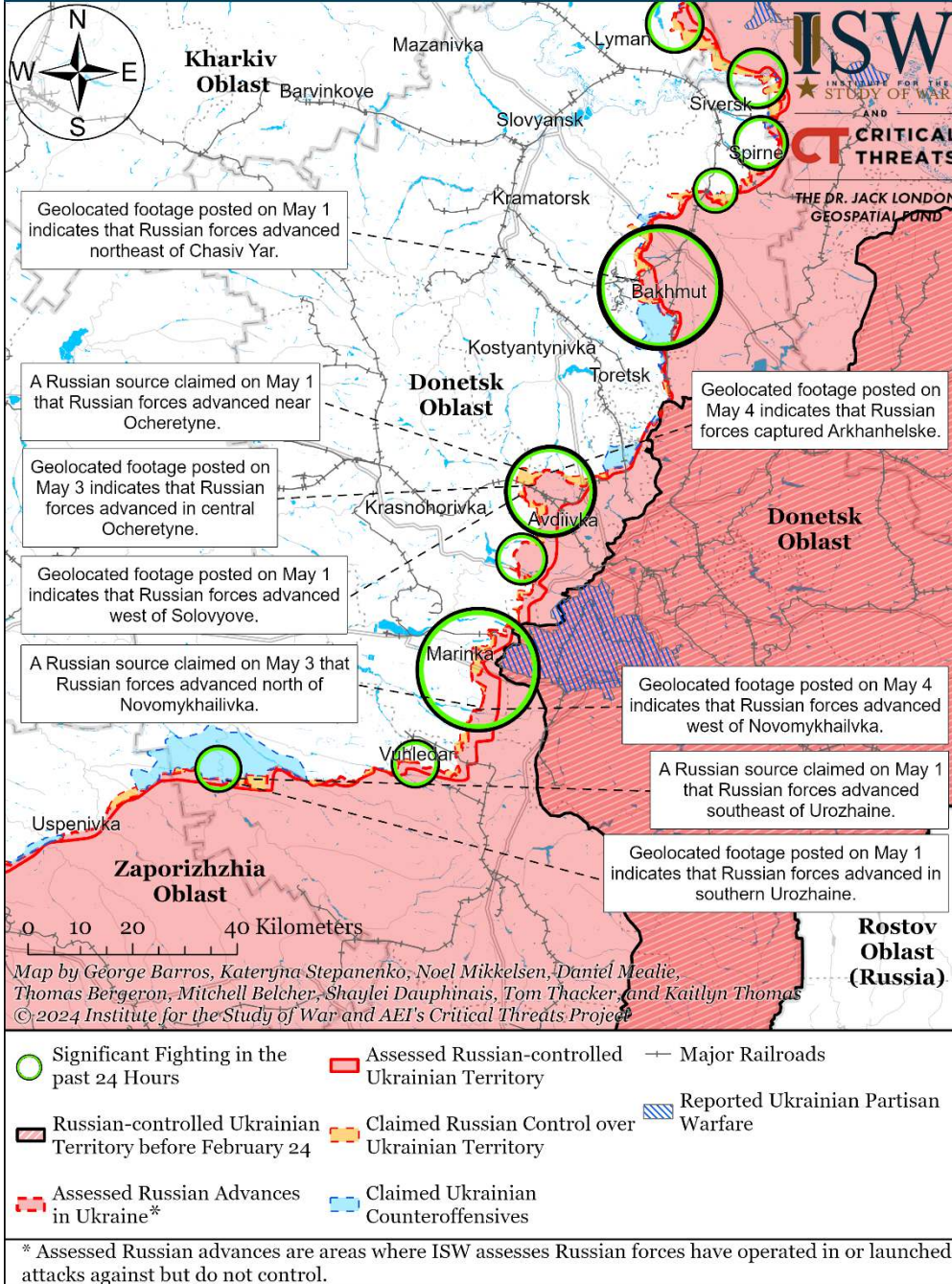
Assessed Control of Terrain Northwest of Avdiivka as of May 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces recently made confirmed advances west and southwest of Donetsk City amid continued fighting in the area on May 4. Geolocated footage published on May 4 indicates that Russian forces advanced in the northern part of the brick factory in central Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City), and

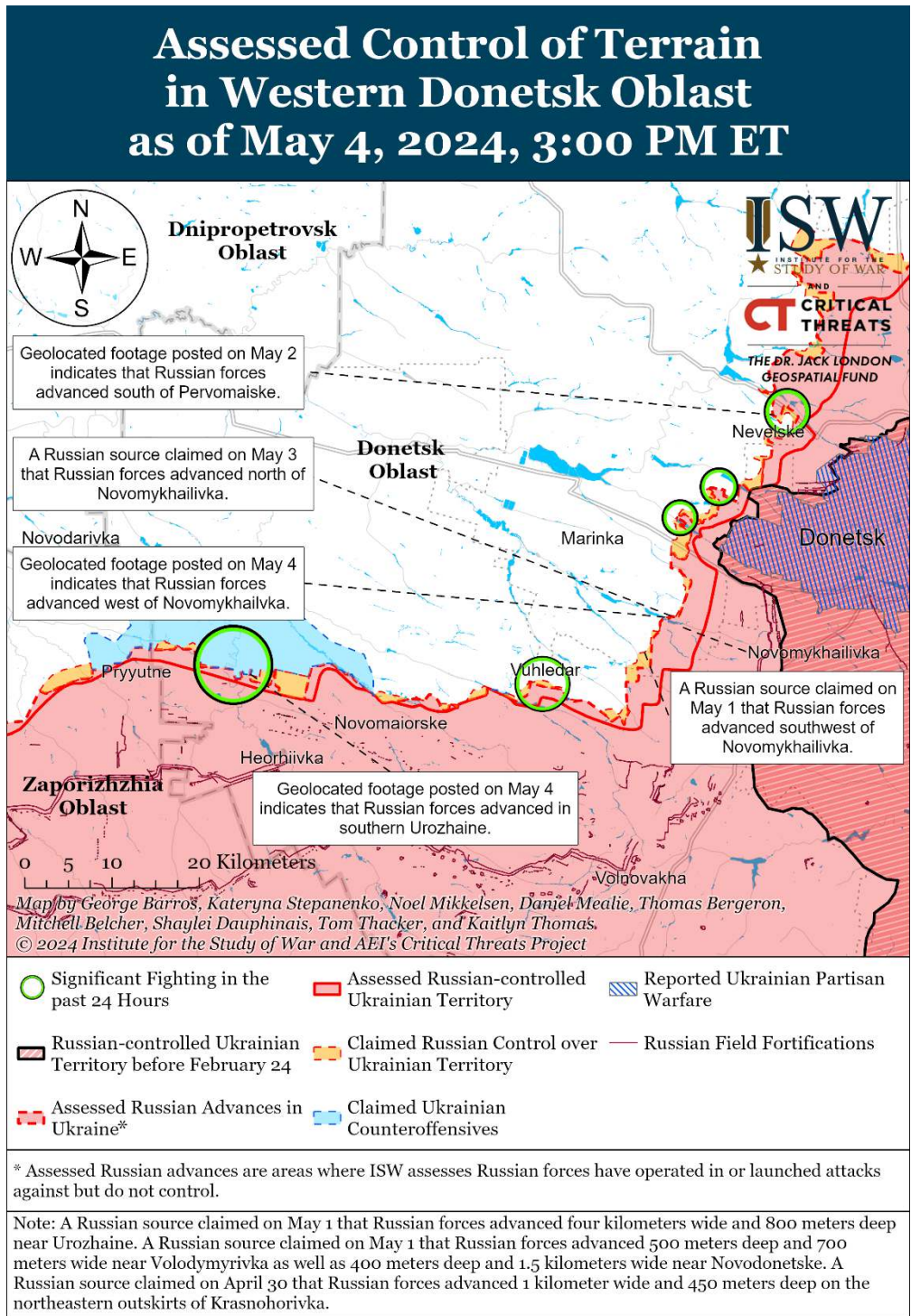
Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR AC) seized the factory.[34] Geolocated footage published on May 3 indicates that Russian forces advanced west and southwest of Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City), and Russian milbloggers commented that Russian forces resumed offensive operations near Novomykhailivka after a brief operational (likely referring to tactical) pause.[35] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in central Heorhiivka (west of Donetsk City), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[36] Russian and Ukrainian forces engaged in combat west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and Krasnohorivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Paraskoviivka and Novomykhailivka.[37]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of May 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces recently made confirmed advances in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area amid continued positional engagements in the area on May 4. Geolocated footage published on May 4 indicates that Russian forces advanced in central Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka).[38] Positional engagements continued northeast of Vuhledar near Vodyane and south of Velyka Novosilka near

Staromayorske and Urozhaine.[39] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces struck a bridge over the Mokri Yaly River in Velyka Novosilka with a Kh-38ML air-to-surface missile.[40] Elements of the Russian 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th AC, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and elements of the 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (subordinate to the Russian General Staff's Main Intelligence Directorate [GRU]) and 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Vuhledar.[41]



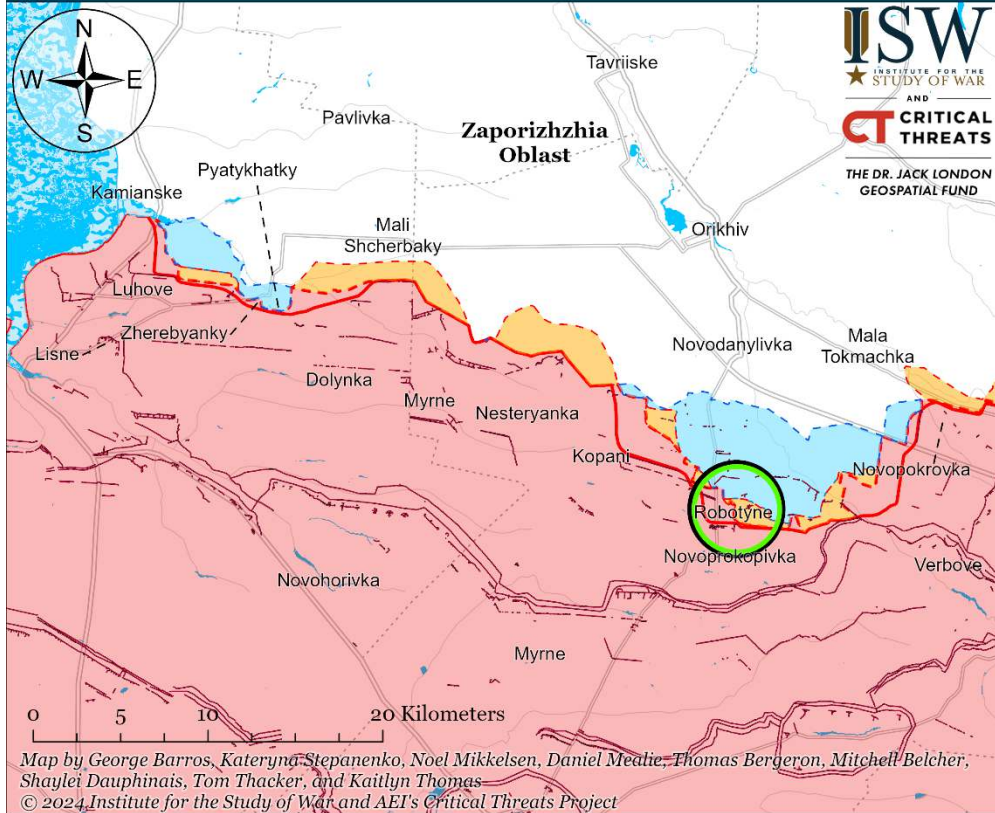
Russian forces reportedly recently conducted a series of unsuccessful mechanized assaults near Vuhledar, likely over the past several weeks. A Ukrainian OSINT account, who is reportedly in contact with Ukrainian servicemen operating in Vuhledar direction, posted photos on May 4 reportedly of at least 32 damaged and destroyed Russian armored vehicles near Vuhledar following mechanized assaults by elements of the Russian 5th Tank Brigade (36th CAA, EMD), 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th CAA), and 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet, EMD).[42] Although the source did not specify the timing of the reported unsuccessful Russian mechanized assaults, multiple factors indicate that the photos of the destroyed and damaged vehicles are likely recent: the vehicle treads appear to be fresh, the ground is covered in green grass, and some of the vehicles are Russian “turtle tanks” equipped with welded metal plates that Russian forces only started to use widely on the battlefield in recent weeks.[43] Russian forces suffered large-scale equipment losses during mechanized assaults near Vuhledar in 2023, and the recent unsuccessful Russian mechanized assaults, especially with “turtle tanks” aimed at protecting Russian equipment from Ukrainian drone strikes, demonstrate that Russian forces have been unable to overcome their issues when conducting mechanized assaults near Vuhledar.[44]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on May 4 that Ukrainian forces shot down a Russian Su-25 aircraft in an unspecified area of Donetsk Oblast.[45]

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

Russian forces continued to attack Ukrainian positions in Robotyne and its vicinity on May 4, but the frontline did not change. Positional battles continued in the Robotyne area and northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne).[46] Spokesperson of the Ukrainian Legion of Freedom Kostyantyn Denysov stated that Russian forces are continuing to use small infantry groups to attack in the Zaporizhia direction and observed that Russian forces’ successes in Zaporizhia Oblast are “microscopic and pitiful” relative to the resources Russian forces committed to this direction.[47] Denysov added that the intensity of Russian attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast decreased over the past four to five weeks. One milblogger observed that Russian forces are having difficulties securing positions north of Robotyne and northwest of Verbove because of the destruction of positions and buildings in the area.[48] The milblogger also claimed that Russian forces operating on the Robotyne-Verbove line require additional electronic warfare (EW) systems to repel Ukrainian drones. Russian elements of the 108th Guards Airborne (VDV) Regiment and 56th Guards VDV Regiment (both part of the 7th VDV Division) are reportedly operating on the Robotyne-Verbove line.[49] Elements of the Russian 1152nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and 291st Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA) are also reportedly operating in the Robotyne area; and elements of the Russian 136th Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (58th CAA) are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhia direction.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of May 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

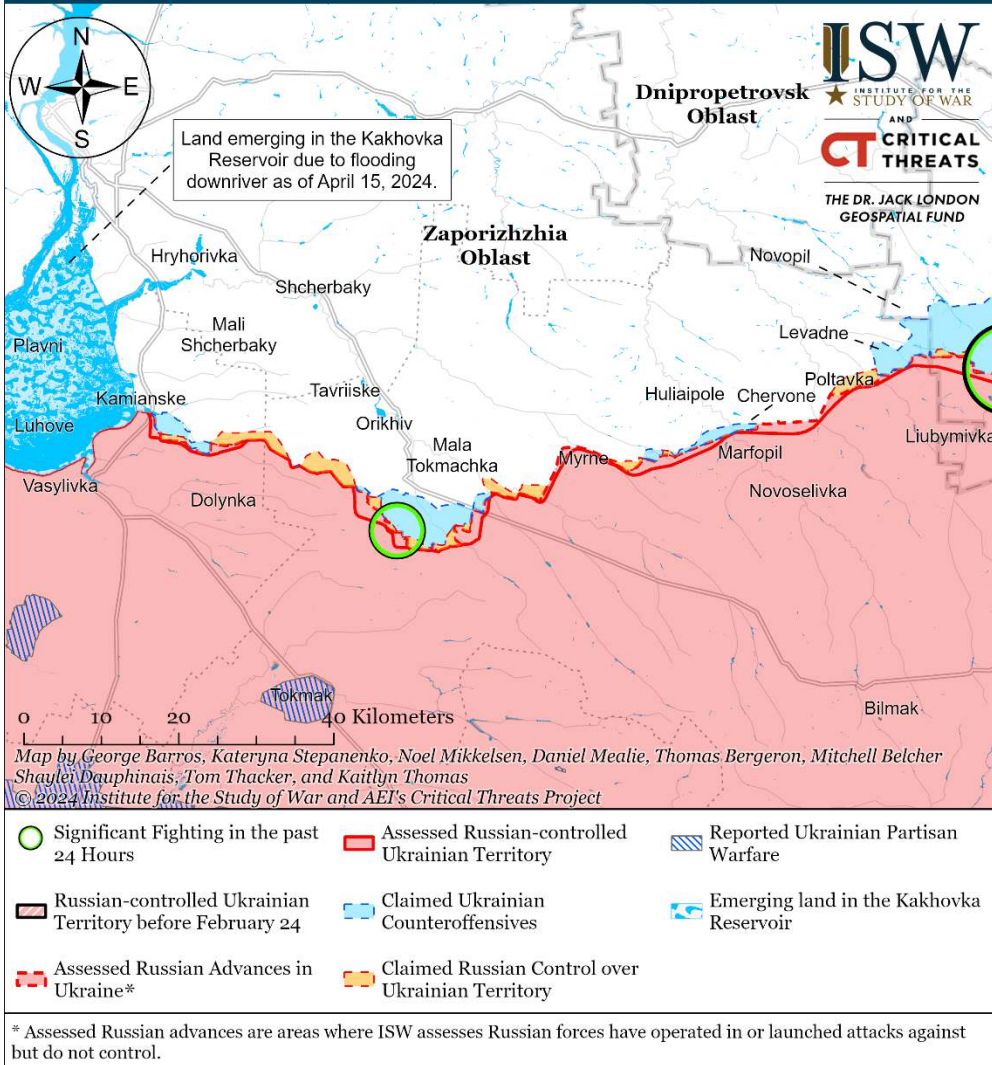


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THE DR. JACK LONDON
GEOSPATIAL FUND

- 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
- Russian Field Fortifications
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir

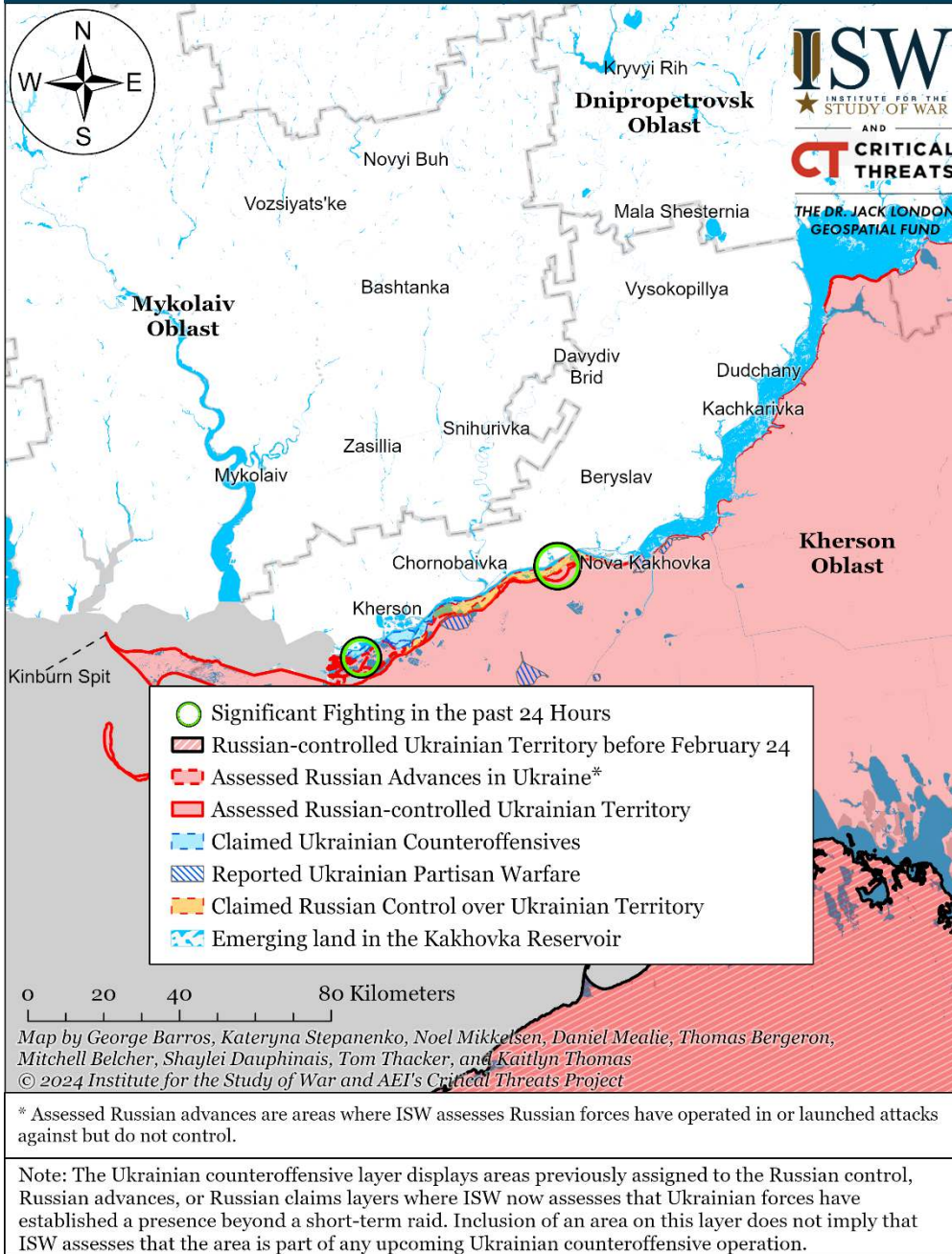
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of May 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional engagements continued in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast near Krynyky and on the Nestryha Island in the Dnipro River Delta on May 3 and May 4.[51] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk stated that Ukrainian positions on the Nestryha Island do not constitute a bridgehead and noted that Ukrainian control over this island is important as it is the last island close to the shore.[52] Pletenchuk added that Russian forces would need to cross the Dnipro River to get closer to Ukrainian forces, which would make Russian forces more vulnerable to Ukrainian fire. A Russian milblogger observed that both Russian and Ukrainian forces are intensifying operations on the islands in the Dnipro River Delta and noted that Russian forces have an acute lack of mobile EW systems and experience problems with personnel evacuations.[53] Elements of the Russian 810th Guards Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet [BSF]) are reportedly operating near Krynyky.[54] Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) reportedly launched three guided aerial bombs on Beryslav (west [right] bank Kherson Oblast).[55]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of May 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



The Russian MoD claimed on May 4 that Russian forces intercepted four Ukrainian ATACMS strikes over Crimea.[56]

Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)

Russian forces conducted a limited series of drone and missile strikes against targets in Ukraine on May 4. Ukrainian military officials reported on May 4 that Russian forces launched 13 Shahed-136/131 drones and four S-300 air defense missiles from Belgorod Oblast on the night of May 4.[57] Ukrainian air defenses and mobile fire groups destroyed the 13 Shahed drones over Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts. Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Military Administration Head Serhii Lysak reported that debris from downed drones damaged critical infrastructure and three houses.[58] Kharkiv Oblast officials reported that debris from Russian Shahed drones caused three large fires in warehouses in Kharkiv City and injured several civilians, including a young girl.[59] Ukrainian Eastern Air Command later reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed a Kh-59/69 guided missile over Dnipro raion, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on the evening of May 4.[60] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces conducted a cruise missile strike, presumably with a Kh-59 guided missile, against Kirovohrad Oblast and struck 20 residential and commercial buildings and a gas pipeline.[61] Odesa Oblast Military Administration Head Oleh Kiper reported that Russian forces conducted a missile strike against targets in Odesa raion using an unspecified number and type of missiles, damaging civilian infrastructure and injuring three people on the afternoon of May 4.[62]

Russian forces are reportedly adjusting their strike packages to include greater numbers of ballistic and guided missiles. Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Major Ilya Yevlash reported on May 4 that Russian forces have recently significantly decreased their use of attack drones, namely Shahed drones, during Russian strikes against Ukraine.[63] Yevlash stated that Russian forces are using a greater number of ballistic and guided missiles, such as Kh-59 missiles, over Shahed drones. Yevlash warned that Russian forces are likely accumulating weapons to conduct strikes in honor of upcoming holidays, including Orthodox Easter and the May 9 Victory Day holiday. Yevlash reported that Russian forces are using reconnaissance drones and Su-24MR aircraft in place of A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft to conduct reconnaissance along the Russia-Ukraine border and frontline areas. Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk stated that Russian forces are using ballistic missiles in place of less accurate sea-based cruise missiles.[64] Pletenchuk stated that Russian forces are launching ballistic missiles, namely Iskander-M missiles, from occupied Crimea and that these missiles are particularly dangerous because their proximity to Ukraine allows Ukrainian forces very little reaction time.

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

The Kremlin is continuing its ongoing campaign to centralize control over Donetsk People's Republic's (DNR) irregular forces by co-opting DNR commanders and officials. Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded the commander of the "Kaskad" operational combat tactical formation, Alexei Dikiy, with the title of Hero of Russia on May 4.[65] ISW previously reported that the Russian MoD disbanded and dissolved Kaskad as the operational combat tactical formation of the DNR Internal Ministry.[66] The Kremlin may have awarded Dikiy to co-opt him following the dissolution of Kaskad as a semi-independent armed formation.

A Russian milblogger, who had previously served as a “Storm Z” instructor, claimed that Russian drone operators complain about the lack of first-person vision (FPV) drones in the Bakhmut direction.[67] Russian drone operators of an unnamed separate motorized rifle brigade operating in the Bakhmut area reportedly told the milblogger that they received only 15 drones for the entire brigade. The milblogger added that Russian forces are also experiencing acute problems with a shortage of working drones.

Russian Technological Adaptations (Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)

Nothing significant to report.

Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)

ISW is not publishing coverage of Ukrainian defense industrial efforts today.

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

ISW is not publishing coverage of Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine today.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

The Brookings Institution published a report on May 2 that found that Kremlin-affiliated actors are increasingly using TikTok to disseminate propaganda and disinformation to foreign audiences.[68] Brookings Institution fellow Valerie Wirtshafter, citing collected data from Kremlin-affiliated social media accounts, reported not only that Kremlin-affiliated accounts have increased their use of TikTok in 2024, but also that TikTok videos on these accounts are achieving significantly higher engagement rates compared to posts on other social media platforms. Wirtshafter reported that engagement with Kremlin-affiliated TikTok videos is 3.5 times higher than Kremlin-affiliated posts on Telegram and 20 times higher than posts on X (formerly Twitter). Wirtshafter reported that the content of roughly five percent of Kremlin-affiliated Telegram posts is related to US politics, but that the majority of posts about US politics focus on divisive issues. Wirtshafter reported that Spanish-language content about US politics is the most popular content disseminated by Kremlin-affiliated accounts. Wirtshafter noted that Kremlin-affiliated accounts largely use these platforms to spread Kremlin narratives and pro-Russian framing about current events.

Kremlin mouthpieces continue to attack Moldova's right to self-determination and sovereignty. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova claimed on May 4 that the West controls Moldova and that Moldova is “repeating” the path of Ukraine.[69] Zakharova claimed that the current Moldovan government is increasingly considering itself Romanian and is repressing Moldovans. ISW has recently observed indications that the Kremlin is likely setting conditions to intensify its hybrid operations against Moldova.[70]

The Kremlin continues to lay the foundation to justify further repression against journalists and non-government organizations (NGOs). The Russian State Duma Commission for Investigating the Interference of Foreign States in Russia's Internal Affairs claimed on May 4 that Russian authorities have recorded attempts by Western-funded journalists and NGOs to create a "negative backdrop" to Russian President Vladimir Putin's upcoming inauguration.[71] The committee claimed that Western NGOs and journalists are distributing leaflets and posters with anti-Russian sentiments to Russian citizens. The committee's statement is likely part of the Kremlin's efforts to portray Russia as unified behind Putin and discredit any opposition to Putin. The Russian government will likely also attempt to use this claim to justify continuing to detain Russian journalists who work for Western publications.[72]

Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on May 5 that former Wagner servicemen are training elements of the Belarusian 120th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade at an unspecified training ground in Belarus.[73]

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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