



# MALCONTENT NEWS RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR SITUATION REPORT



May 16, 2022



# Malcontent News

## Russia-Ukraine War SITREP

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## SUMMARY – DAY 82

It has been 3,000 days since Russia began its occupation of Crimea on February 27, 2014.

Russian forces continued to make small territorial gains around 28 days after the main offensive to capture the Donbas started. When comparing the Russian Ministry of Defense's clearly stated goals on April 8 to the progress of the eastern offensive, it is clear it has failed.

**Severodonetsk Salient:** Russian forces have made incremental gains but have not captured a single significant population center. The offensives against Rubizhne and Popasna (Popasnya) started well before April 18. Russian state media claimed to have captured Popasna as early as March 12 and Rubizhne on April 12. Rubizhne remains under contested control and has been obliterated by the Russian advance. Russian forces remain capable of encircling smaller groups of Ukrainian troops but are more likely to push back defensive positions one kilometer at a time.

**Severodonetsk Westward Offensive:** Russian forces experienced the most success along this axis. They

successfully broke through defensive lines west of Kreminna and advanced to Torske and Zarichne. On May 1, Russian forces advanced on Yampil and claimed to have captured the settlement. The settlement remained contested until May 12. After reaching the northern bank of the Siverskyi Donets, the offensive floundered. Russian forces suffered a historic defeat at Bilohorivka, losing up to a brigade of combat strength over four days. Advances on Lyman have been equally unsuccessful.

**Donetsk to Western Zaporizhia:** Russian forces made small, tactical advances during the first seven to ten days of the renewed offensive. Since the start of May, the line of conflict has been frozen. Orikhiv, Hulyaipole, Velyka Novosikla, Marinka, Avdiivka [Donetsk], Kamyanka, and Bakhmut all remain under Ukrainian control. Russian forces have not been able to move the line of conflict away from Donetsk. After four weeks, the only breakthrough was at Oleksandropil, which happened on May 15.

**South Donbas and Azov Sea:** The Russian Ministry of Defense declared victory over Mariupol on April 21 and held a scaled-back Victory Day parade on May 9. After April 21, fighting continued north of the Main Port, in the city center, and wasn't reduced to the Azovstal Metallurgical Plant until May 3. Ukrainian and Russian

leaders negotiated a prisoner of war exchange on May 16 for 264 Ukrainian soldiers –53 wounded. The disposition of those soldiers is unknown. Most of Mariupol still does not have water, sewer, garbage, electricity, natural gas, or Internet service. The assault on Mariupol forced 12 Battalion Tactical Groups (BTG) to be locked in battle instead of advancing through Donetsk. An estimated 2,500 Ukrainian marines, Azov Battalion national guard, territorial guard, and police officers shattered the combat strength of up to 20,000 troops committed to securing the city. Of the 430,000 residents who lived there at the start of the war, only 150,000 remain. Russian troops are aggressively “filtering” the remaining occupants as part of their attempt to end civil unrest.

**Northern Kharkiv Counteroffensive:** On April 8, Kharkiv was surrounded on three sides, and the Ground Line of Communication (GLOC – aka supply line) was contested. On May 16, Ukraine pushed Russian forces out of tube artillery range of the city, drove to the Russian border in two locations, and advanced southeast 48 kilometers from the city center. Russian GLOC from Belogord to the Izyum front is now pressured and within the artillery range of Ukrainian forces.

**Izyum Axis:** The Russian advance to Slovyansk to encircle 40,000 Ukrainian forces by moving south of Izyum and north from Donetsk has failed. Further, with current resources and Ukrainian troop strength, it is impossible. The advance from Izyum itself has not only stalled out, but the western flank, particularly northwest of Izyum, went from secure to experiencing GLOC interdiction to contested in large areas. Oskil was likely never captured, and Ukrainian forces were able to strike a Russian ammunition depot in Izyum city itself on May 16.

**Dnipro, Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Zaporizhia Oblasts:**

Russian forces have lost territorial control since the April 18 main offensive. Russian and Russia-backed militias were pushed to the edges of the Mykolaiv Oblast and lost total control of significant areas of the western Kherson Oblast. Civil unrest and open insurrection have grown in Russian-controlled areas of the Kherson and Mykolaiv Oblasts. Russian forces are digging trenches, building concrete reinforcements, and blowing up bridges and roads, indicating they will attempt to maintain their current occupation but not move the line of conflict.

**Odesa and the Black Sea:** The sinking of the Moskva on April 14 likely ended any chance the Russian navy had of launching an amphibious assault on Odesa. The Naval

infantry forces that would have been dedicated to a possible invasion along the Odesa coast were deployed into Mariupol.

Both Russian and Ukrainian forces have suffered heavy losses, but Ukraine has done a better job of training and equipping replacements. Most Russian BTGs are underpowered and understaffed. Yesterday, we reported how critically short the Russian military is on replacement troops. This includes mixing mercenaries with special forces, forming hybrid units from the remains of two or three BTGs, forced conscription of men up to 60 years old, and using navy sailors to replace lost ground troops.

Both belligerents have suffered significant equipment losses, but Ukraine has been far more efficient.

Russia has not been able to establish air superiority or even air dominance. The General Staff reported the Ukrainian Air Force flew over 100 sorties on May 15. The Ukrainian Air Force stopped a Russian advance over the Inhulets River, destroyed an ammunition depot in Davydiv Brid, and attacked GLOC and Russian military assets in the Izyum area.



There are reports of civil unrest in Melitopol, Kherson, and Mariupol. More importantly, there were reports of widespread protests in Donetsk city on May 15 against conscription and the treatment of conscripted soldiers.

**Geopolitically**, the European Union and NATO are more aligned than 24 months ago. Finland and Sweden have officially expressed their intent to join NATO, and joint military exercises were held with the defense pact's newest member, Montenegro. One of Russia's main goals was to stop the expansion of NATO membership. Instead, they have increased it.

## **DAILY ASSESSMENT**

Theaterwide, there weren't any significant changes in territorial control across the line of conflict. Russian forces may have had some success near Lyman, south of Izyum, and west of Horlivka. Ukrainian forces may have had success on the eastern side of the Siverskyi Donets River in Kharkiv Oblast and the western flank of the Izyum axis.

We maintain the following:

1. Phase 2 of the war in Ukraine is over'
2. Without a general mobilization of the Russian military and a formal declaration of war, Russia will likely work to secure Luhansk and Kherson Oblasts and parts of the Donetsk and Zaporizhia Oblasts to establish a land bridge with Russia
3. If this becomes the new goal, Russia is highly likely to use these territorial gains to launch a renewed invasion of Ukraine in the future
4. If Russia can press for a ceasefire with new territorial gains, they will attempt a new invasion after reconstituting the military and use hybrid warfare to create a more favorable international climate
5. A 21st Century version of World War I trench warfare continues along most of the line of conflict between Ukraine and Russia, with artillery used as the primary weapon
6. Daily tracking of the capture and liberation of settlements is a fool's errand, with territorial control flipping between the belligerents sometimes more than once a day
7. The Russian military continues to prioritize the killing of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure, wasting critical military resources on non-critical targets
8. Russian forces can still make territorial gains by concentrating power in small target areas

## 9. Russia's position on the global stage as an economic and military superpower has been ruined

We maintain Russia has enough resources if used strategically to capture the Severodonetsk region. We do not believe that Russia has enough resources to control and hold that territory in the medium and long term.

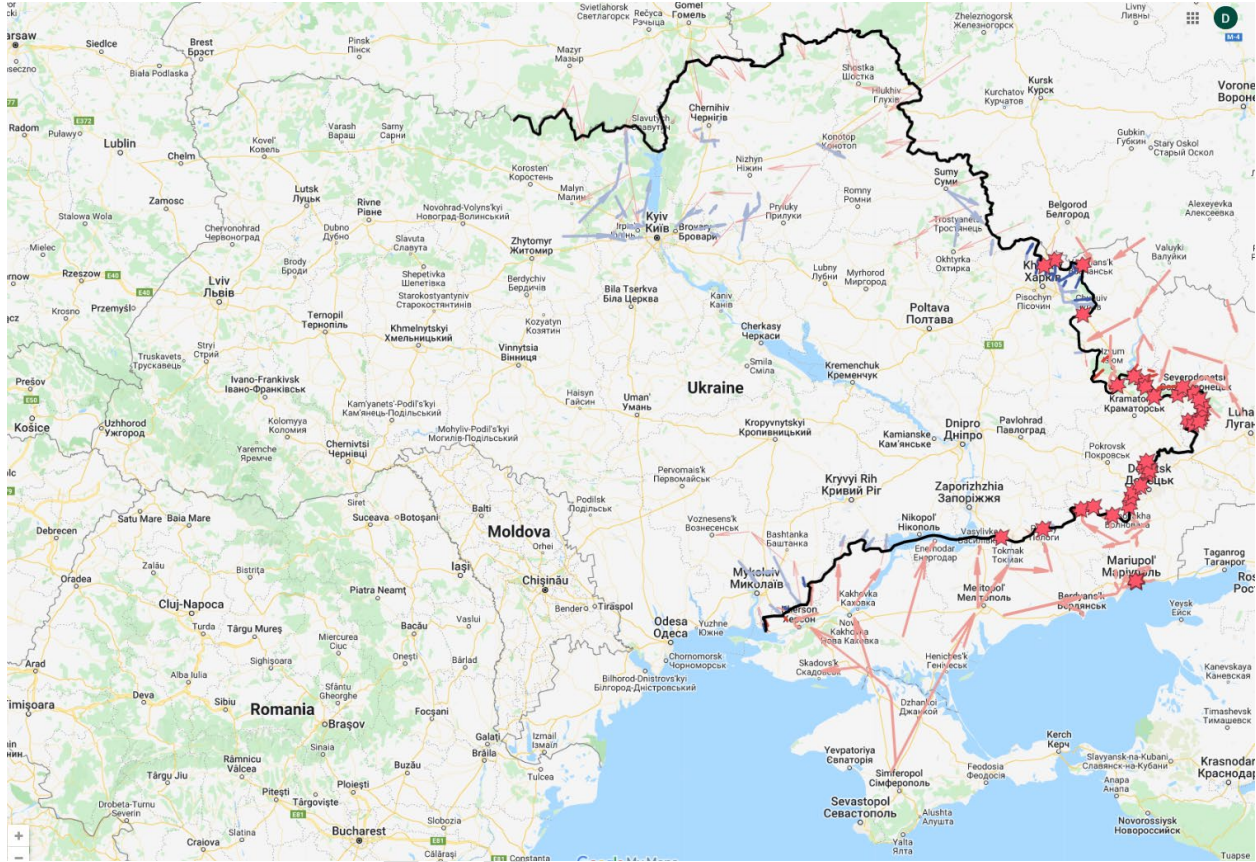
We further assess that Ukraine will have the resources and capability to take the initiative along multiple axes within the next 25 to 40 days. If the Kremlin cannot or will not find a way out, the conventional warfare capabilities of the Russian military are in jeopardy.

Russian state media made additional threats to use nuclear weapons against Ireland.<sup>1</sup> We remain concerned that we are stuck in the Mutual Assured Destruction Instability Paradox.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://twitter.com/francis\\_scarr/status/1525925744056143878](https://twitter.com/francis_scarr/status/1525925744056143878)

# TODAY'S WAR IN UKRAINE MAP



## **DONBAS REGION**

Russian forces made minor territorial gains while continuing to suffer unsustainable losses.

A ceasefire at the Azovstal Metallurgical Plant enabled 264 Ukrainian Marines, Avov Batallion, territorial guard, and police to evacuate the plant as part of a future prisoner of war swap.

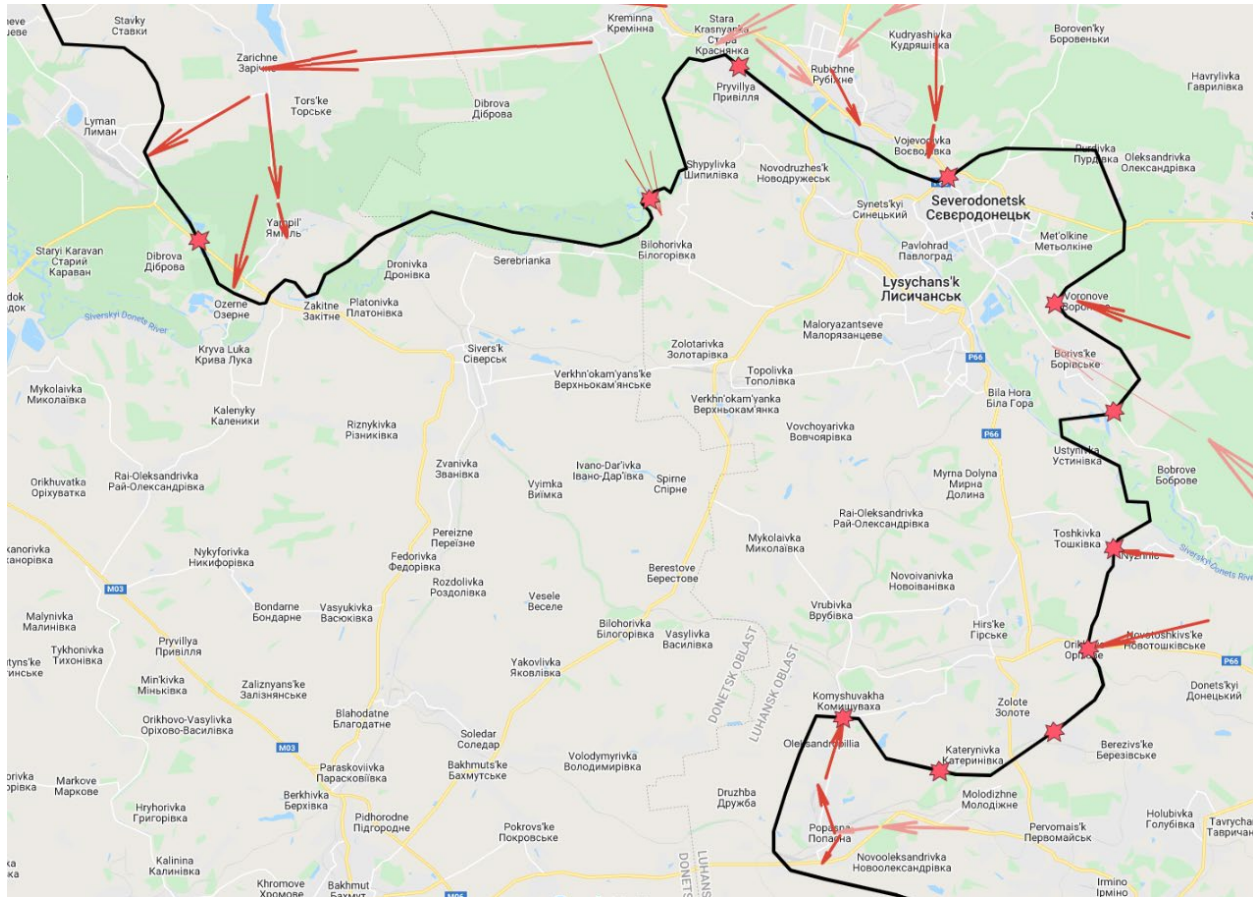
## **LUHANSK**

### *Severodonetsk Salient*

Russian forces did not attempt to advance on Severodonetsk, continuing to use artillery along a static line of conflict. Russian forces likely pulled out of Vojevodivka due to Ukrainian artillery fire – the suburb of Severodonetsk has been a no man's land since Ukrainian troops withdrew.

The aggregated force of Russian, Wagner Group PMC, Chechen, and Russia-backed militias attempted to advance

east and north from Oleksandropilla and Popasna and were unsuccessful.



### Severodonetsk Westward Offensive

Russian troops appear to have secured the settlements of Derylove. We cannot independently verify the report. The

settlement of Drobysheve is contested, and Russian forces are attempting to approach Lyman on two axes.<sup>2</sup>

## **DONETSK TO WESTERN ZAPORIZHIA**

Russian forces continued to shell Ukrainian-controlled areas from Horlivka to Velyka Novosilka and further west into the Zaporizhia Oblast to Hulyaipole and Orikhiv.

The Ukrainian General Staff and Pro-Russian accounts reported the advance on Avdiivka was unsuccessful.<sup>3</sup> Ukrainian forces blew up a dam near Avdiivka, flooding Russian positions downstream.<sup>4</sup> The video was geolocated.<sup>5</sup>

Pro-Russian accounts have made multiple claims that Niu York has been captured. A video on May 14 indicated that the settlement was not occupied.<sup>6</sup> The video claims to have captured equipment from positions held by Ukrainian-backed forces in Troitske. This is unlikely as Troitske has been under Russian-backed militia control since the end of April.

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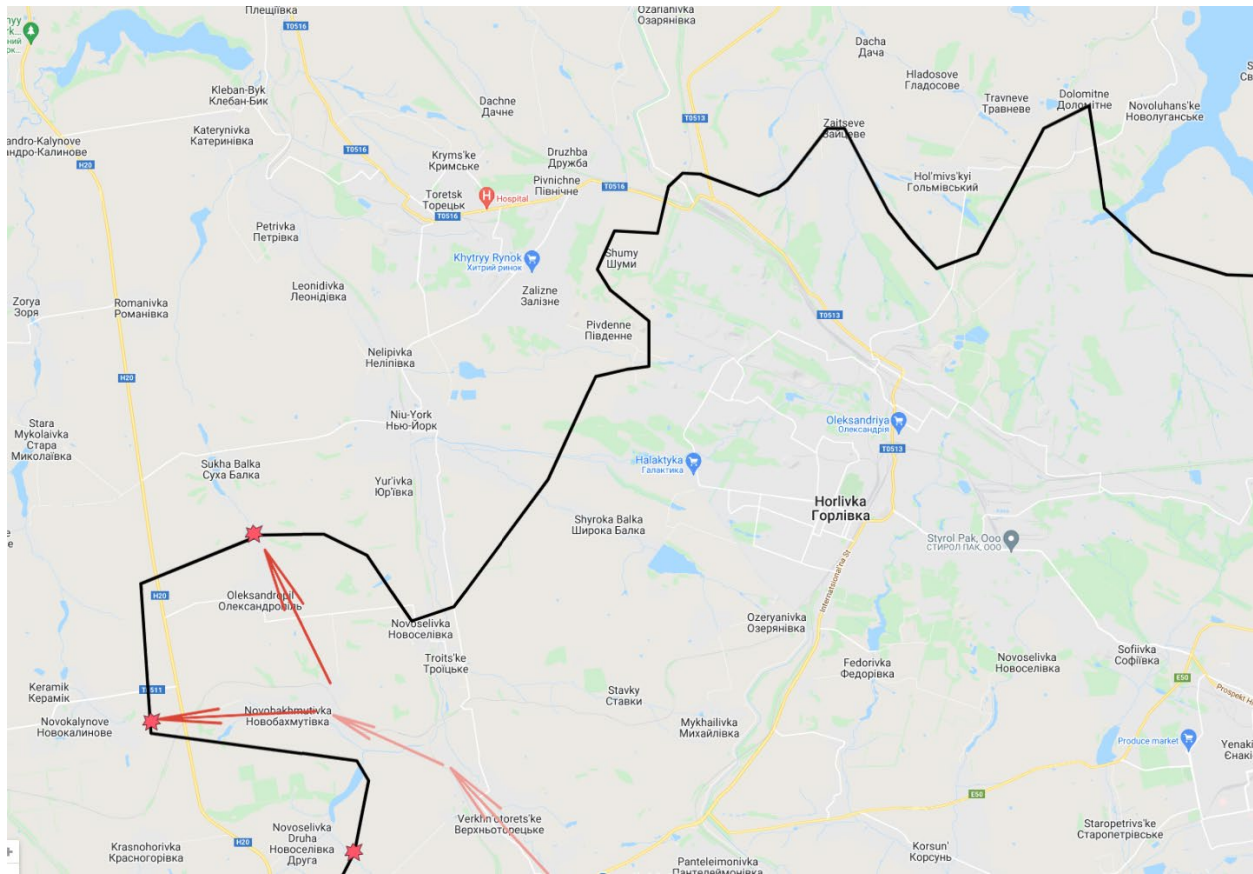
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/318410583805360>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/318410583805360>

<sup>4</sup> <https://twitter.com/RedIntelPanda/status/1526367270049554434>

<sup>5</sup> <https://goo.gl/maps/5joKqvF3Tycr7yZF6>

<sup>6</sup> [https://twitter.com/eye\\_southern/status/1525421953447780352](https://twitter.com/eye_southern/status/1525421953447780352)



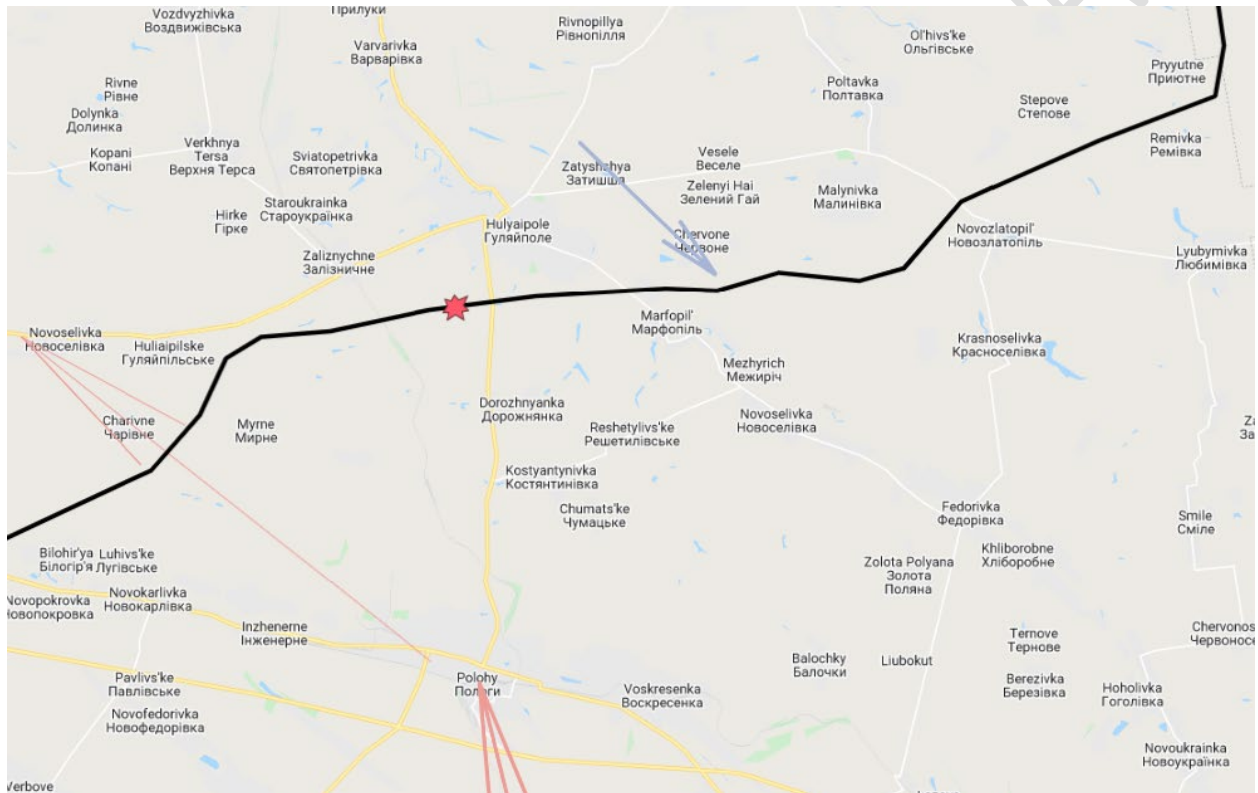
The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces attempted to advance on Sukha Balka and were unsuccessful.<sup>7</sup> This confirms that Oleksandropil is under Russian control.

The Russian military destroyed the T0401 highway south of Hulyaipole and four kilometers south of the line of conflict in Russian-controlled territory. This has severed the

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/318410583805360>



primary highway connection to Polohy. Russian forces have been building defenses across the line of conflict and could be abandoning their efforts to capture Hulyaipole and possibly Orikhiv. This would align with Russian activity west of the Dnipro River and south of Melitopol.



Russian forces continue to fire artillery at civilians and civilian infrastructure in Orikhiv and Hulyaipole.

## **SOUTH DONBAS – AZOV SEA**

Russia and Ukraine reached an agreement to evacuate 264 Ukrainian troops at the Azovstal Metallurgical Plant, including 53 seriously wounded soldiers in a prisoner of war swap brokered by the United Nations and Red Cross.<sup>8 9</sup>

Five buses escorted by an armored personnel carrier brought the 53 wounded soldiers to a hospital in Novoazovsk, 38 kilometers east of Mariupol. The town is under the control of the Russia-backed Donetsk People's Republic. The remaining 211 were transferred to Olenivka, 30 kilometers south of Donetsk.<sup>10</sup> The soldiers were likely taken to the infamous detention camp 52, between Olenivka and Molodizhne.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/318566267123125>

<sup>9</sup> [https://t.me/V\\_Zelenskiy\\_official/1671](https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official/1671)

<sup>10</sup> [AL Jazeera](#)

<sup>11</sup> <https://goo.gl/maps/Bjwd63evdXGEF6X66>



Between 600 to 2,200 people remain in the tunnels and bunkers under the factory. Ukraine estimates the number at 600 while Russian State Media stated 2,200. There is significant confusion on the status of the remaining Ukrainian forces beyond a statement from the Deputy Defense Minister of Ukraine, Anna Malyar, saying, "Thanks to the defenders of Mariupol, Ukraine gained critically

important time. They fulfilled all their tasks. But it is impossible to unblock Azovstal by military means."

Russian State Media Russia Today reported that Ukraine had ordered Azovstal fighters to surrender. However, they did not provide any additional information beyond the statements from Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian General Staff, and Ms. Malyar.<sup>12</sup>

In Mariupol, Russian and Ukrainian forces continued fighting for the Azovstal Metallurgical Plant control.<sup>13</sup> Video shows Russia firing incendiary munitions into the compound, which many social media users misidentified as white phosphorus.

**ASSESSMENT:** Ukrainian marines held for 25 days since "victory" was declared in Mariupol and 76 days after encirclement. We cannot access if Russian forces will cease bombardment and ground assaults on the Azovstal Metallurgical Plant.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www \[dot\] rt.com/russia/555591-azovstal-captives-surrender-ukraine/](https://www[dot]rt.com/russia/555591-azovstal-captives-surrender-ukraine/) [Russian State Media Rating: Partial Disinformation, Partial Valid]

<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/mhmck/status/1525924447990996992>

## **KHARKIV REGION**

### **NORTHERN KHARKIV COUNTEROFFENSIVE**

There were no verifiable changes in territorial control.



Ukrainian forces shot down a Russian Mi-28N attack helicopter [RF-13628] near Elitne, on the eastern edge of

Kharkiv city.<sup>14</sup> The location is a new crash site and was geoconfirmed.

Russian forces have stopped their retreat north of Kharkiv and are defending their positions at Kozacha Lopan, Nove, Hlyboke, and Vesele. From Hlyboke, NATO M777A2 artillery could reach the southern edges of Belgorod, Russia.

There were multiple but unconfirmed reports that Ukrainian troops had successfully crossed the Siverskyi Donets River at Staryi Saltiv and moved into the settlement of Zarichne.<sup>15</sup> A video released today showed Ukrainian troops doing an inspection of Staryi Saltiv on the western bank of the river.<sup>16</sup>

Satellite imagery indicates Russian troops blew up the bridge at Staryi Saltiv and Rubizhne to prevent river crossings.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/UAWeapons/status/1526240874014855168>

<sup>15</sup> <https://twitter.com/Nrg8000/status/1526231508914442241>

<sup>16</sup> <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1526265622593781762>

<sup>17</sup> <https://twitter.com/PaulJawin/status/1525110001227931649>

Sentinel-2 L2A satellite imagery from May 13 shows that all bridges across the Siverskyi Donets River from Pechenihiy to the Russian border are destroyed. On the same day, the image showed a series of fires on both sides of the river and a network of islands at the river bend.

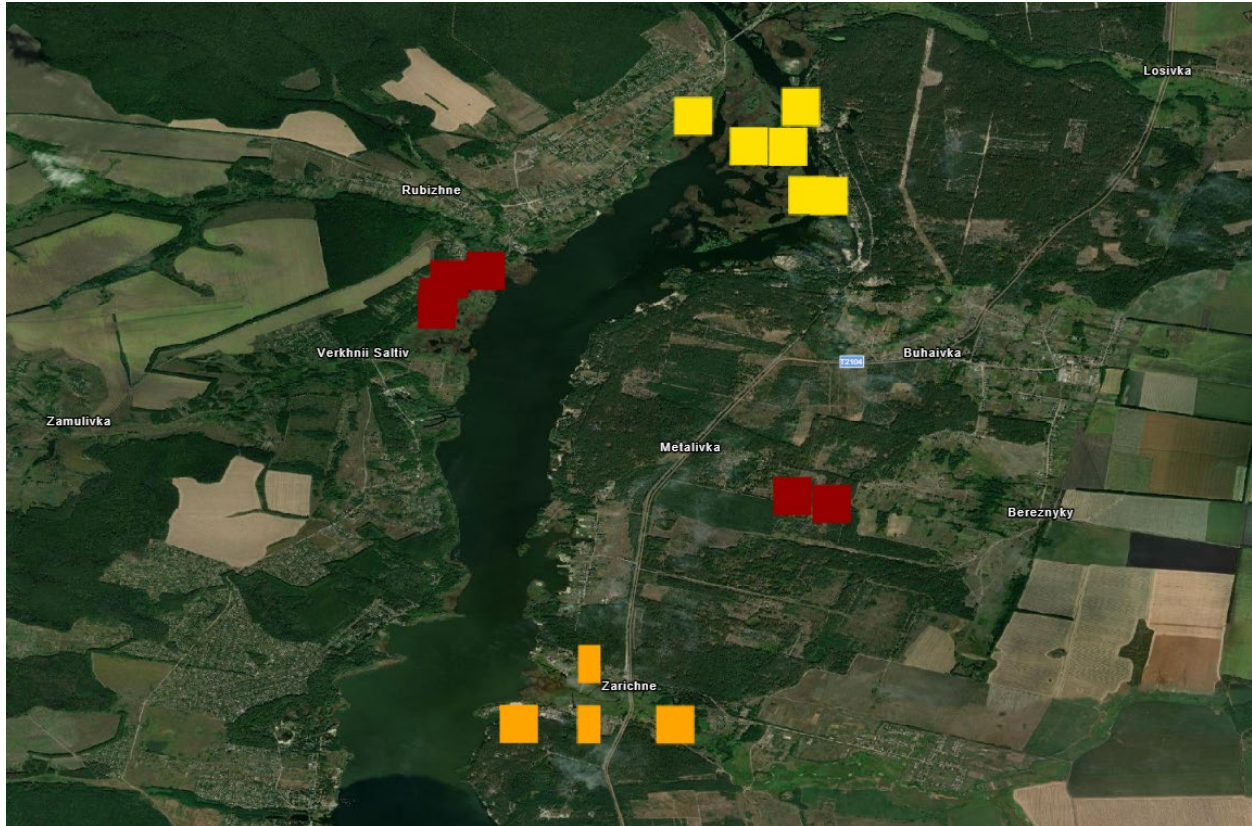


Zooming in closer degrades resolution, but fires are clearly visible on both banks of the river and the network of islands.



The satellite imagery does not show any bridging attempts, but the resolution is poor. NASA FIRMS data strongly suggests there have been exchanges of artillery fire from May 13 to 16 in Rubizhne [Kharkiv], Verkhni Saltiv, Zarichne, and east of Metalivka. A network of pedestrian bridges connects the river bend islands with numerous docks and improved beaches.





**ASSESSMENT:** Russian forces will attempt to hold the salient north of Kharkiv and continue to attack Ukrainian positions, civilians, and civilian infrastructure. We do not believe Russia has the resources to reinforce these positions. We do not believe that Ukrainian forces have had a successful "wet crossing" over the Siverskyi Donets. There is significant evidence that a small group of Ukrainian forces have crossed the river and are performing reconnaissance or GLOC interdiction.

## IZYUM AXIS

The Ukrainian General Staff reports that NATO provided M777A2 artillery fired on a Russian ammunition depot in Izyum, creating a massive secondary explosion.<sup>18</sup> The blast destroyed eight armored vehicles and up to a company of Russian troops. There is not enough information to geolocate the image.



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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/318410583805360>

Local officials had reported massive explosions on May 14 in the vicinity of Pidvysoke [49°26'18.8"N 37°16'20.8"E], and the Russian BTGs station in the hamlet retreated to Horokhovatka. Pidvysoke is 7 kilometers southeast of where Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian convoy at Vesele.<sup>19</sup>

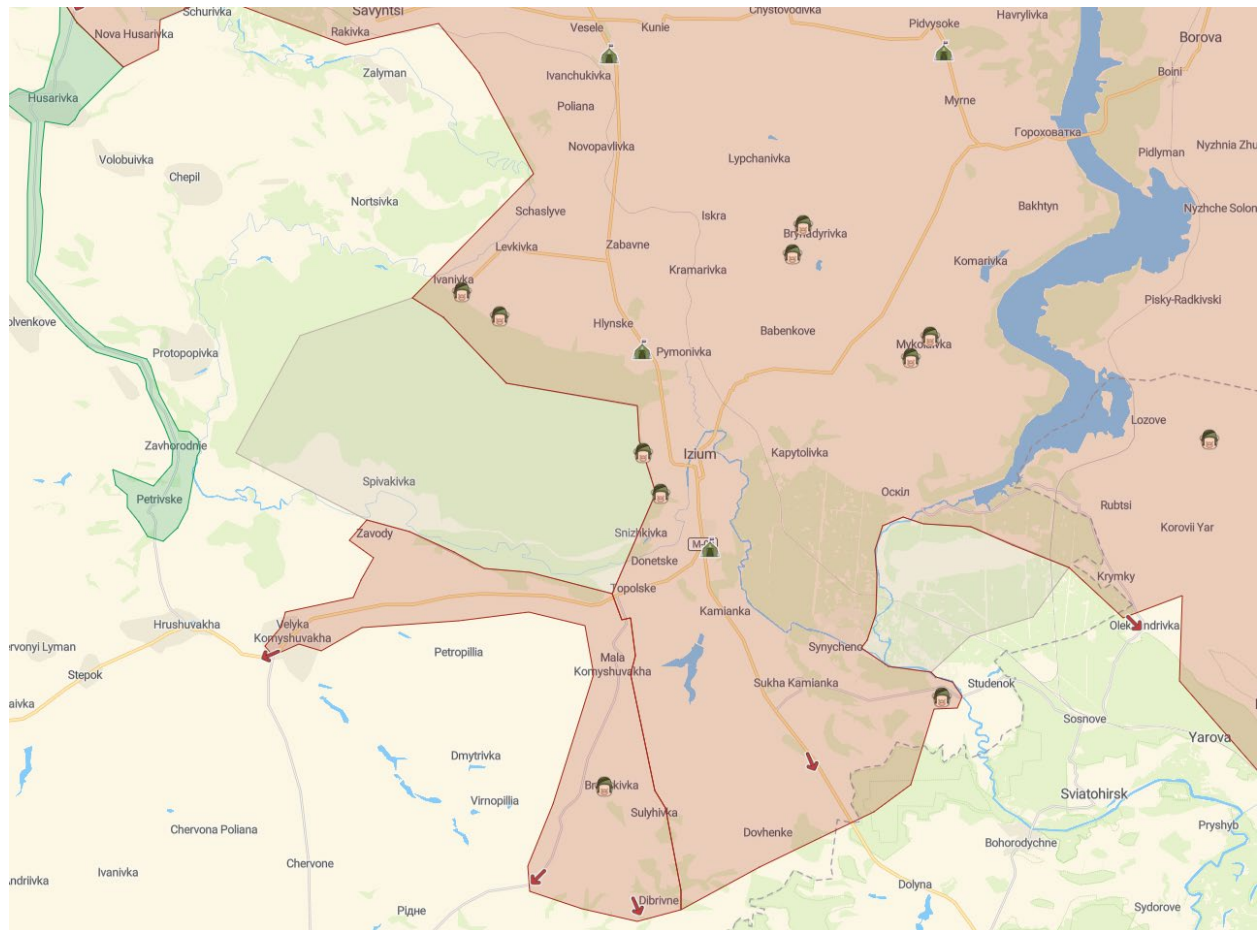
**ASSESSMENT:** There is not enough visual information in the single image provided by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, but it is consistent with the landscape of Pidvysoke. We are aware the blast is reported to have happened within Izyum city, but we find that unlikely given the magnitude of the explosion. In our assessment, Pidvysoke is a prime location, and we can use satellite imaging to confirm once the weather improves.

The status of Dovehenke is in flux, with continued reports of its capture and liberation. Pro-Russian accounts reported the settlement was not captured.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> <https://goo.gl/maps/kebWxBBUzF7nPrMB8>

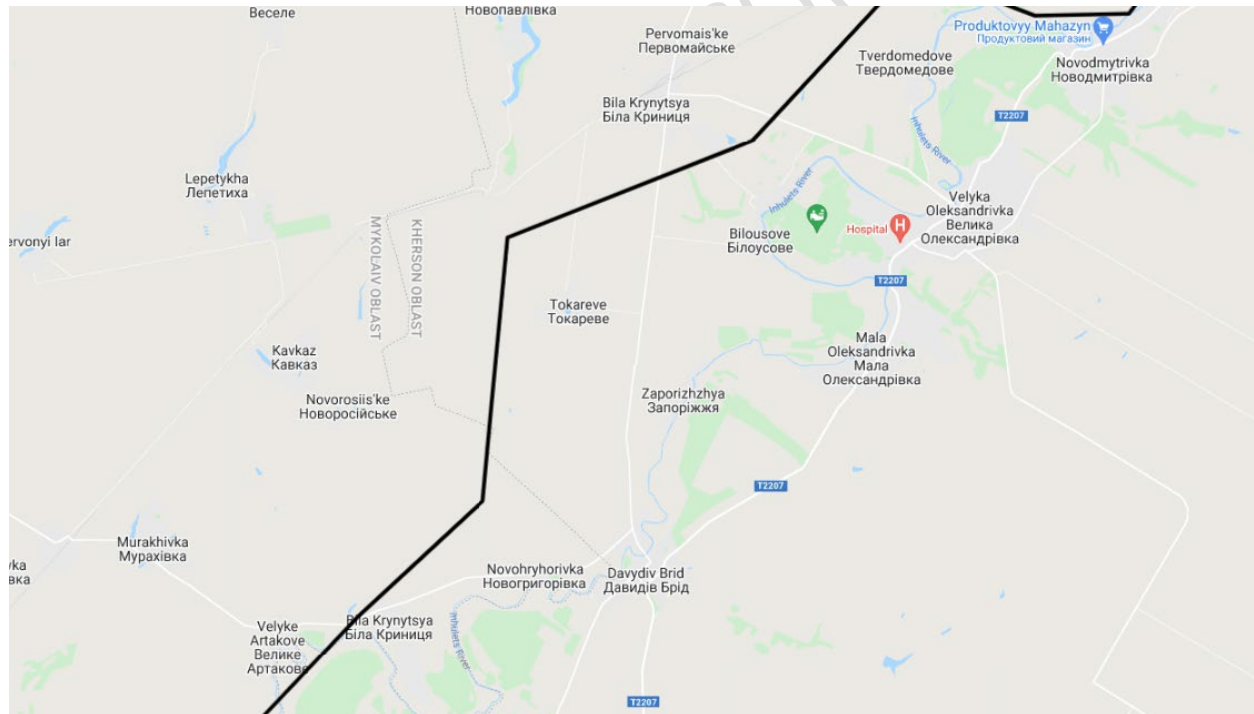
<sup>20</sup> <https://twitter.com/mdmitri91/status/1526213512904818688>



**ASSESSMENT:** It remains challenging to get a clear picture of the Izyum axis situation. There remains strong evidence that Ukrainian forces are using NATO M777A2 fire and SOF or small groups of troops for harassment and interdiction. That evidence remains speculative and circumstantial.

## DNIPRO, KHERSON & MYKOLAIV, ZAPORIZHIA REGION

Ukraine's Operation Command South reported that a fuel depot at Chornobaivka, just west of Kherson, was destroyed along with munitions and armored vehicles.<sup>21</sup> This was the 20th successful strike on the Russian base by Kherson International Airport.<sup>22</sup>



<sup>21</sup> <https://twitter.com/KyivIndependent/status/1526413666718990337>

<sup>22</sup> <https://twitter.com/TWMCLtd/status/1525898538038722563>

The Ukrainian General Staff reported the destruction of an ammo depot at Davydiv Brid.<sup>23</sup>

There were scattered artillery strikes along the static line of conflict. Russian forces are building complex defenses, indicating they plan to retain existing territory in the short and medium term.

## **CHERNIHIV & SUMY REGION**

The Ukraine State Border Guard Service reported that Russian forces shelled the Chernihiv and Sumy Oblasts and attempted a direct incursion into Ukraine.<sup>24</sup>

Attacks occurred on border settlements in the Novgorod-Siversky, Semeniv, and Gorodnyansky districts of the Chernihiv Oblast and the Shostkin and Konotopsky districts of the Sumy Oblasts. Shelling along the Chernihiv Oblast-Russian border lasted for two hours.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://twitter.com/EuromaidanPress/status/1526356826089848832>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/DPSUkraine/posts/340151164890427>

A group of Russian forces attempted to cross the border into Sumy, supported by mortars and machine guns. The group was repelled by border security.

## **KYIV REGION**

There wasn't any significant military action in this region.

## **BLACK SEA & ODESA REGION**

Russia launched a missile strike on the Zatoka Bridge for the fifth time. Damage is unknown, but the bridge has been inoperative since last week's fourth missile strike.<sup>25</sup> Russian missile strikes also hit civilian targets in Odesa, destroying a hotel and wounding several people.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> <https://twitter.com/olehbatkovych/status/1526098948187897856>

<sup>26</sup> <https://twitter.com/olehbatkovych/status/1526141446268538882>



**ASSESSMENT:** We believe a land invasion by Russian forces backed by Transnistrian militia is unlikely.

## **WEST REGION**

Russian cruise missiles targeted the International Center for Peacekeeping and Security in Volya-Starytska in the



Lviv Oblast for the second time in less than a week.<sup>27</sup> Initial reports indicated successful strikes in Lviv and Volya-Starytska, but updated information suggests that all cruise missiles were intercepted. The base was heavily damaged on May 15 and was not in operation.

## **THEATERWIDE & EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS**

Norway, Denmark, and Iceland joined the United States and United Kingdom in providing security guarantees to Sweden and Finland as they go through their application process for NATO membership.<sup>28</sup>

## **WAR CRIMES AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

The British Defence Intelligence Agency reported that Russian forces destroyed 3,500 buildings in the Chernihiv region during the city's siege – 80% of the damage was to residential housing.<sup>29</sup> The intentional targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure is a war crime.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://twitter.com/KyivIndependent/status/1526349049225523200>

<sup>28</sup> <https://twitter.com/KyivIndependent/status/1526224273760735232>

<sup>29</sup> <https://twitter.com/Osinttechnical/status/1526424007763017730/photo/1>

## **GEOPOLITICAL**

There weren't any significant developments.

## **ECONOMIC**

McDonald's announced they were leaving Russia permanently. The first restaurant opened in Moscow in 1990 and was considered a symbol of Soviet and Western relations thawing further after the fall of the Berlin Wall.<sup>30</sup>

McDonald's chief executive Chris Kempczinski released a statement to suppliers saying in part, "Some might argue that providing access to food and continuing to employ tens of thousands of ordinary citizens is surely the right thing to do."

"But it is impossible to ignore the humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Ukraine. And it is impossible to imagine the Golden Arches representing the same hope and promise that led us to enter the Russian market 32 years ago."

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-61463876>

McDonald's employed over 60,000 people in Russia before the start of the war, and has been paying the salaries of its employees despite the store closures.

Renault agreed to sell its majority stake in Russian automaker Autovaz for one rouble. Renault has the option to repurchase its stake within the next six years. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said that to preserve thousands of jobs, the city was taking control of the factory and would restart production under the Soviet-era Moskvich brand.<sup>31</sup> Renault will likely have to take a 2.2 billion euro writedown after symbolically selling its share in Autovaz for little more than a penny. The sale could impact up to 45,000 Russian workers.

The rouble was unchanged over the weekend, trading at 65 for 1 US dollar.

Oil prices were mixed, with WTI and Brent having a rare intersection in price. WTI jumped to \$114 a barrel while Brent crude dropped to \$114. United States wholesale gasoline futures reached \$4.01 a gallon. (\$1.06 a liter)

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<sup>31</sup> [Reuters](#)