



Russia's War in Ukraine: Status Update

May 14, 2024

Overview

As Russia's war in Ukraine enters its third year, both [Ukraine](#) and [Russia](#) continue to battle for territory along the 600-mile front line. At various points in the conflict, the advantage has shifted between Ukraine and Russia, but since the beginning of 2024 Russian forces have made territorial gains, prompting some analysts to argue that current conditions [may favor](#) Russia. As Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines [testified](#) before Congress on May 2, 2024, "Russia is making incremental progress on the battlefield with the potential for tactical breakthroughs along the front lines in areas such as Donetsk and Kharkiv." For both Russia and Ukraine, having sufficient military reserves could be a key factor in determining success on the battlefield.

The Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) continue to experience shortages of personnel and equipment, especially artillery and air defense ammunition. In April 2024, Congress passed the Ukraine Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2024 (Division B of P.L. 118-50), committing more than \$60 billion to support Ukraine and other countries affected by Russia's war. P.L. 118-50 provides [security and economic assistance](#), as [observers](#) continue to [debate](#) the ability of [either](#) side to [obtain](#) a decisive advantage through 2024.

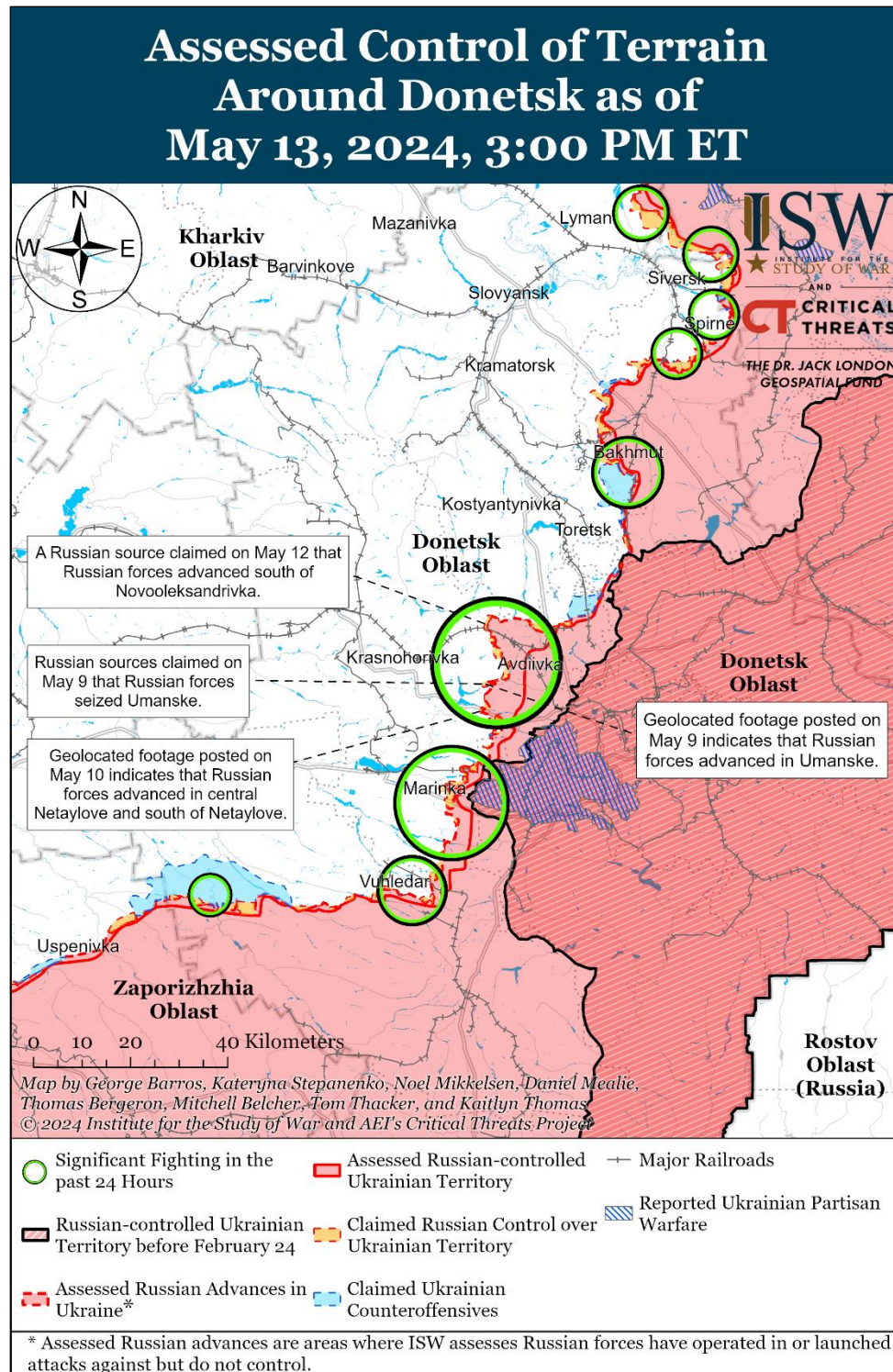
Battlefield Situation

After blunting Ukraine's [summer 2023 counteroffensive](#), Russian forces resumed offensive operations and seized several Ukrainian towns and cities (such as Bakhmut and Avdiivka). Russia continues to leverage its advantages in personnel and equipment to achieve [territorial gains](#) and conduct operations across multiple sectors of the front line. Russia continues to conduct long-range precision strikes against Ukrainian infrastructure and has increasingly used [glide bombs](#) (large unguided warheads upgraded with simple guidance systems) against [UAF positions](#).

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Figure I. Front Line in the Russia-Ukraine War

Source: Institute for the Study of War, May 13, 2024.

Russia appears to be prioritizing exploiting its success at two points in Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions: (1) to capture the strategically important city of [Chasiv Yar](#) outside of Bakhmut and (2) to exploit

a lack of UAF fortifications and defensive positions outside of the town of [Avdiivka](#) in the southern Donetsk region.

On May 10, the UAF [reported](#) that Russia had launched an offensive in the Kharkiv region, although it is unclear if Russia has sufficient forces to breach Ukrainian lines. Risks to the UAF include drawing forces away from other positions, potentially allowing a Russian breakthrough elsewhere.

Russia continues to conduct [casualty-prone operations](#). The British government [estimated in May that](#) Russia is currently suffering an average of 899 casualties a day.

UAF forces [suffer](#) from a lack of personnel—both to replace losses and to rotate exhausted units from the front line—as well as an [acute shortage](#) of artillery ammunition and other supplies (including armored vehicles and air defense systems). Some [observers](#) argue the UAF was late in building [fortifications and defensive lines](#), potentially [compromising](#) its positions. UAF strategy [appears](#) to focus on slowing Russian advances and imposing casualties on Russian forces. Despite these limitations, the UAF has prevented large-scale Russian breakthroughs, although UAF officials candidly [admit](#) further Russian gains are likely.

Outlook

The situation for the UAF has “[worsened](#)” due in part to Russia’s “numerical advantage in personnel, weapons, and equipment,” [according](#) to Ukrainian Commander in Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrsky. Even with new security assistance, the UAF will likely continue to experience shortages (including artillery ammunition and air defense munitions) as logistical and production [constraints](#) slow the delivery of aid.

Ukraine recently adopted new [laws](#) in an effort to recruit more personnel. It remains [unclear](#) how the Ukrainian government will implement these measures and how effective they will be. The UAF [maintains](#) it will be able to conduct basic training in Ukraine, while the United States and other partners continue to offer “[comprehensive](#)” unit-level and officer training should the UAF recruit more personnel.

Russian military recruitment is resilient, with financial incentives apparently [remaining attractive](#) to new recruits and, [currently](#), mitigating the need for further mobilization. The Russian military continues to [refurbish](#) equipment from stockpiles, and its operations could reflect the Kremlin’s assessment that the defense industry can continue to provide sufficient equipment for the immediate future. Some observers [debate](#) the long-term sustainability of its production given [capacity and input](#) constraints.

Issues for Congress

In addition to [providing assistance to Ukraine](#), Congress has passed legislation to conduct oversight of U.S. policy regarding the war. Both P.L. 118-47 (7046(d)(1) of Division F) and P.L. 118-50 (Title V, §504) require the Biden Administration to provide a strategy regarding the war. P.L. 118-50, for example, calls for a [strategy](#) that will be “multi-year, establish specific and achievable objectives, define and prioritize United States national security interests, and include the metrics to be used to measure progress in achieving such objectives.”

As Congress considers U.S. support for the UAF—including possible provision of additional security assistance—and conducts oversight of U.S. policy in Ukraine, Members could examine numerous questions, including the following:

- What are the impacts of recent Russian battlefield gains on U.S. and allied policy toward the conflict? What is the potential of Ukraine regaining the advantage in 2024?

- How effective have U.S. efforts to train and advise the UAF been? Do the United States and its allies have the capacity to train more personnel and units?
- Has U.S. and allied and partner support improved the UAF's ability to [maintain and repair equipment](#)? What else could be done to improve the UAF's ability to maintain and sustain provided security assistance?
- Should the United States and its allies and partners consider additional efforts to support the development of Ukraine's domestic defense industry? Are there other policies, in addition to those such as hosting the [U.S.-Ukraine Defense Industrial Base Conference](#), that could be considered?

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