



Kremlin Declares “Land Bridge” Complete From Western Russia To Donbas To Crimea

Description

RUSSIA/UKRAINE: Russia’s military has declared that its desired strategic “land bridge” connecting Russian national territory with the Donbas and Crimea is complete, according to statements given to CNN senior national security correspondent Alex Marquardt. The Tuesday Russian military [statement](#) [said](#) that “**roads and rail lines between western Russia and Crimea are operational,**” which marks that “*the land bridge is complete.*”

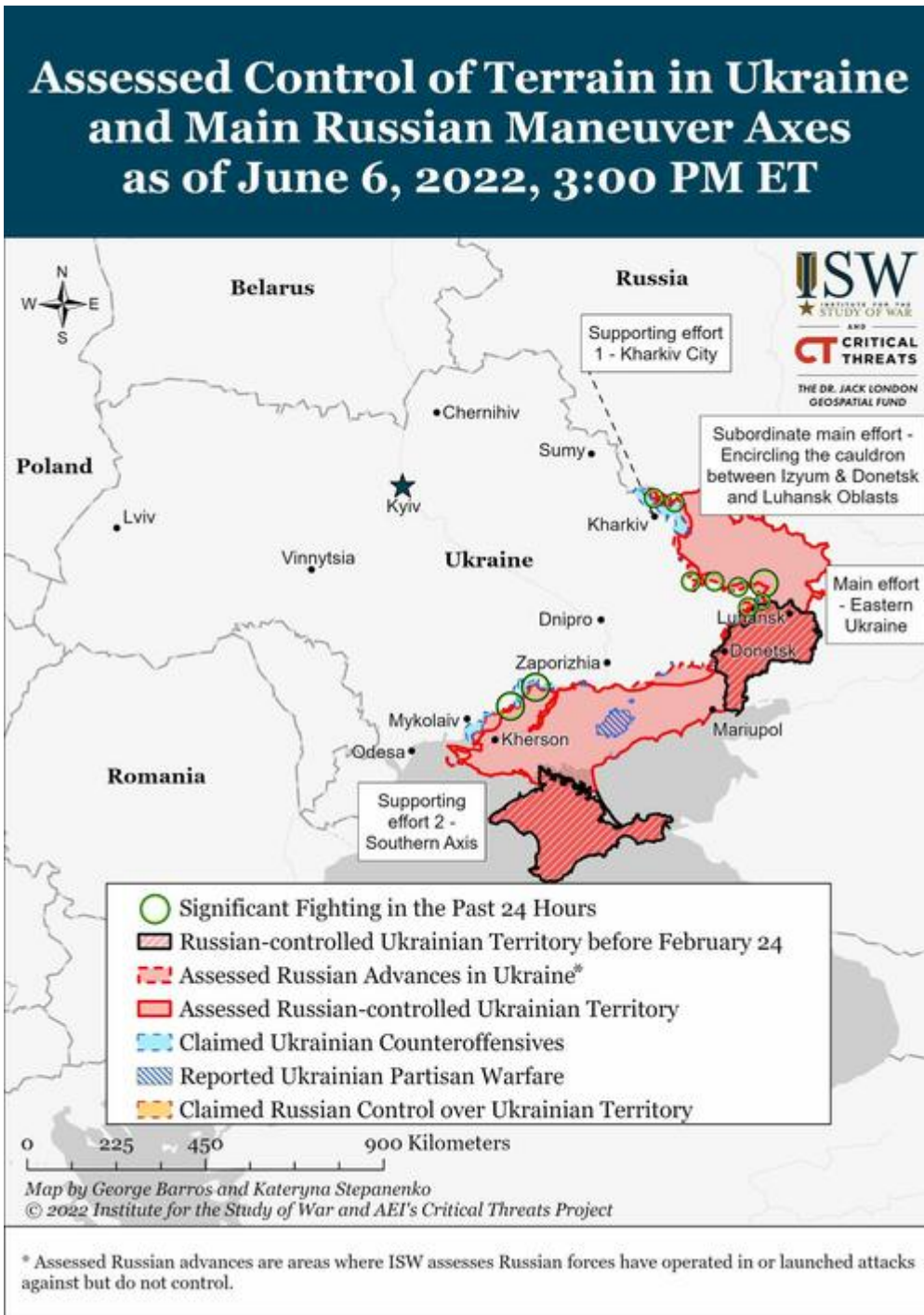
“**Conditions have been created for the resumption of full-fledged traffic between Russia, Donbas, Ukraine and Crimea on six railway sections,**” Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said. “Automobile communication has been opened from the territory of Russia along the mainland to Crimea.” Thus it appears the Kremlin is touting its own ‘mission accomplished’ moment, at least pertaining to the eastern and southern theaters of the war.



Image source: defence-ua.com

Starting in April, the defense ministry announced its “phase 2” plan for the invasion while pulling back in the north, and abandoning the fight outside the capital of Kiev and other cities deep in Ukrainian territory. It stated as its prime objective “control over southern Ukraine and Donbas” – where fighting has been heavily concentrated over the past two months.

Early last month in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, US Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines listed the “land bridge” concept as now a chief goal of President Vladimir Putin and his generals. She said that as part of the Donbas campaign, he’s “**determined to build a land bridge to Russian-controlled territory in Moldova,**” the [AFP reported](#) of her public testimony at the time.



But US intelligence sees this as a strategic springboard for a Russian military advance on other parts of Ukraine, even beyond its borders: “We assess President Putin is preparing for prolonged conflict in Ukraine during which he still intends to achieve goals beyond the Donbas,” Haines said at the time.

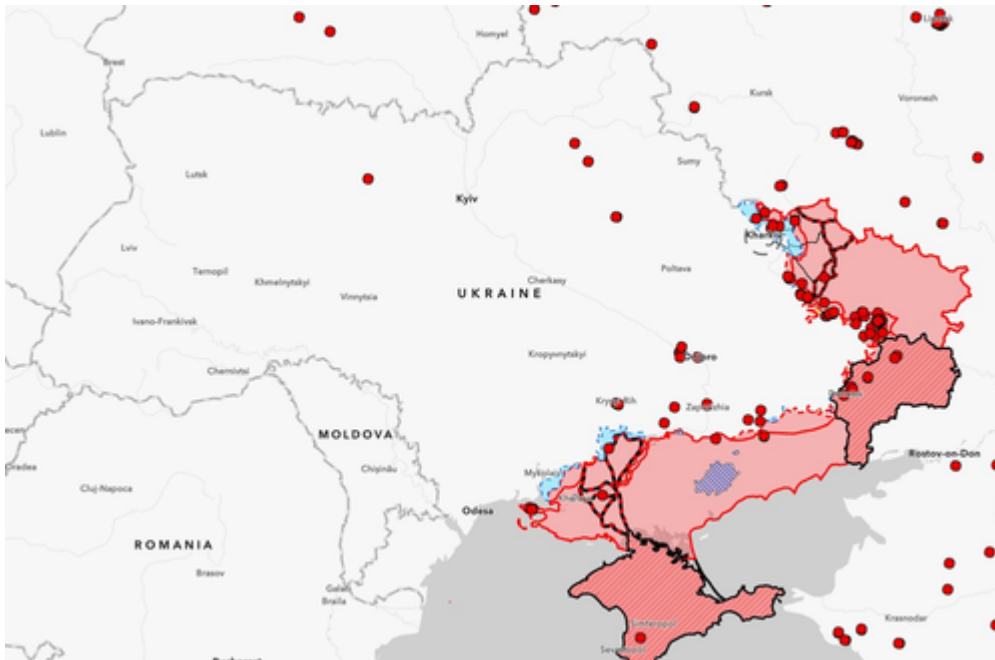
And further:

*“We... see indications that the Russian military **wants to extend the land bridge to Transnistria,**” Haines said, referring to the Moscow-backed separatist region of Moldova*

along Ukraine's southwest border.

If indeed the land bridge is complete, according to Defense Minister Shoigu's latest claims, it's now **likely inevitable that Russia will soon assert full control over the Donbas**. Already within the past days there's been growing consensus that [essentially all of the Luhansk province](#) is under Russian control.

However, it remains to be seen and is entirely unclear at this point whether Russia has aims beyond Ukraine, into Transnistria, as US intelligence is predicting. This would mean the eventual extension of the land bridge **across the whole south of Ukraine**, including the **vital port city Odessa**.



Institute for the Study of War: 24-hour heat anomaly data and Russian control of terrain.

Below: the Land Bridge as it was shaping up by early March...

One goal of Russia's advance in Ukraine is to create a "land bridge" that connects the Russian-speaking Donbas, and Russia itself, with Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.

To achieve its aims, Russia will need to hold its new turf. Can it do that?

— The Economist (@TheEconomist) [March 3, 2022](#)

The final holdout flashpoint city of Severodonetsk has over the past week seen a steady Russian advance, but as street fighting rages local officials say the **situation changes "every hour"**.

Ukraine officials have also admitted the invading Russians far outnumber local troops [defending the city](#) :

“The situation is changing every hour, but at the same time there’s enough forces and resources to repel attacks,” said the mayor of Severodonetsk, Oleksandr Striuk.

“We have hope, we have faith in our armed forces, no one’s going to abandon” Severodonetsk, he added.

Just days ago, Moscow seemed close to taking the strategic industrial hub in the east but Ukrainian forces have managed to hold out.

*“Our heroes are holding their positions in Severodonetsk. **Fierce street fights continue in the city,**” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video address late on Monday.*

Conflicting reports suggest Ukrainian forces may have repelled the Russians in some sectors. Meanwhile the UK defense ministry has on Tuesday commented on the potential for Russian forces to achieve a major breakthrough based on establishing the connecting ‘land bridge’. Achieving victory in Severodonetsk will be key to Russian war aims, the UK defense ministry said.

Director of National Intelligence: "We assess President Putin is preparing for prolonged conflict in Ukraine during which he still intends to achieve goals beyond the Donbas."

"We also see indications that the Russian military wants to extend the land bridge to Transnistria." pic.twitter.com/pkifpLRVZI

— Moshe Schwartz (@YWNReporter) [May 10, 2022](#)

“Russia will almost certainly need to achieve a breakthrough on at least one of these axes to translate tactical gains to operational level success and progress towards its political objective of controlling all of Donetsk Oblast,” a statement by the UK MOD said.

by Tyler Durden

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