

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Angelica Evans, Grace Mappes, Christina Harward, Riley Bailey, and George Barros
April 19, 2024, 6:35pm 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 1:00pm ET on April 19. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 20 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov signaled Russia’s intent to seize Kharkiv City in a future significant Russian offensive operation, the first senior Kremlin official to outright identify the city as a possible Russian operational objective following recent Ukrainian warnings that Russian forces may attempt to seize the city starting in Summer 2024. Lavrov stated during a radio interview with several prominent Russian state propagandists on April 19 that Kharkiv City “plays an important role” in Russian President Vladimir Putin’s idea of establishing a demilitarized “sanitary zone” in Ukraine to protect Russian border settlements from Ukrainian strikes.[1] Lavrov stated that Putin has very clearly stated that Russian forces must push the frontline far enough into Ukraine – which Lavrov explicitly defines as into Kharkiv Oblast – to place Russian settlements outside of the Ukrainian strike range. This requirement is a very vague definition that could include the entirety of Ukrainian territory as long as an independent Ukrainian state exists and is willing to defend itself. Lavrov stated in response to a question about where Russian forces will go after creating a “sanitary zone” that Russian authorities are “completely convinced” of the need to continue Russia’s war against Ukraine. Lavrov responded in seeming agreement to a comment from one of the interviewers, who suggested that Lavrov’s earlier remarks meant that Russian forces will have to continue to attack further into Ukraine after creating the “sanitary zone” to protect the settlements that would then be within the zone and Ukrainian strike range. Lavrov’s remarks suggest that the Kremlin will likely use the idea of a constantly shifting demilitarized “sanitary zone” to justify Russian offensive operations further and further into Ukraine.

Prominent Russian propagandist and state television host Olga Skabeyeva framed Russia’s drone and missile strikes against Kharkiv Oblast as part of Russia’s efforts to create the “sanitary zone” during a speech on April 19, suggesting that additional prominent Kremlin mouthpieces are also laying the informational groundwork to justify ongoing Russian strikes and a future offensive operation against Kharkiv City under the pretext of defending Russian citizens.[2] Ukrainian officials, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, have recently identified the threat of a possible Russian summer offensive operation aimed at seizing Kharkiv City.[3] ISW continues to assess that a Russian

offensive operation to seize Kharkiv City would be an extremely ambitious undertaking that would pose significant challenges to both the Russian forces responsible for the effort and to the wider Russian campaign in Ukraine.[4] ISW also assesses that US military assistance is vital to Ukraine's ability to defend against any summer Russian offensive operation, including against Kharkiv City.[5]

Ukrainian officials announced that Ukrainian forces downed a Russian aircraft as it conducted missile strikes against Ukraine for the first time overnight on April 18 to 19, demonstrating a capability that may constrain how Russia conducts its strike campaign against Ukraine. Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk announced on April 19 that Ukrainian forces downed a Russian Tu-22M3 strategic bomber that had launched Kh-22 cruise missiles against Ukraine.[6] The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) stated that Ukrainian forces shot down the Tu-22M3 at a distance of 300 kilometers from Ukraine with the same means that Ukraine used to down two Russian A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft.[7] Ukrainian outlet *RBK-Ukraine* reported that Ukrainian security sources stated that Ukrainian forces used S-200 air defense systems to down the Tu-22M3.[8] The GUR reported that the Tu-22M3 crashed in Stavropol Krai, where footage shows the plane losing altitude and crashing.[9] GUR Spokesperson Andriy Yusov stated that the downing of the Tu-22M3 compelled another Russian Tu-22M3 to turn around and noted that it is “practically impossible” for Russia to manufacture new Tu-22M3 bombers.[10] Russian forces reportedly had roughly 60 Tu-22 strategic bombers as of 2023.[11] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) acknowledged the plane crash but attributed it to a technical malfunction rather than Ukrainian forces, and Russian milbloggers largely coalesced around the MoD's narrative.[12] Stavropol Krai officials reported that the crash killed one Russian pilot and inflicted non-life-threatening injuries on two others and that a fourth crewmember remains missing.[13]

Ukrainian air defense capabilities remain limited and degraded, however, allowing Russian aircraft to operate freely without threat on certain critical areas of the front. Russian milbloggers have recently amplified multiple pieces of video footage, including on April 19, showing Russian Su-25 and Su-34 aircraft operating at low altitudes near Chasiv Yar, Donetsk Oblast and striking Ukrainian positions to support Russian advances in the area, and Russian milbloggers have praised Russian aircraft for enabling relatively quick Russian advances in the area since at least late March 2024.[14] The ability of Russian aircraft to operate over 100 kilometers deep in Ukrainian airspace near the frontline without sustaining significant losses indicates that Ukrainian air defenses in the area are currently insufficient to deter or deny Russian aircraft from operating on the front line. The Ukrainian capability to conduct long-range strikes to down Russian strategic aircraft conducting combat operations may temporarily constrain Russian aviation operations as the previous downing of tactical aircraft has achieved.[15] This Ukrainian strike capability, however, is unable to compensate for Ukraine's critical air defense shortages across the theater. Ukrainian forces still must husband materiel and prioritize allocating its limited air defense assets to some areas of the theater over others at great expense, allowing Russian aviation to support more consistent and rapid gains on the ground, including near Chasiv Yar.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stressed that Ukraine requires Western provisions of artillery ammunition, air defense materiel, long-range artillery and missile systems, and fighter aircraft as Ukrainian constraints continue due to delays in US military assistance.[16] Zelensky addressed the Ukraine-NATO Council on April 19 and reiterated that Ukraine needs a minimum of seven additional Patriot air defense systems to defend against

Russia's ongoing missile and drone strike campaign and called on Western countries to fulfill their promise to deliver one million artillery shells to Ukraine.[17] Zelensky added that long-range missiles and artillery systems are crucially needed to improve Ukrainian long-range strike capabilities and that Ukraine requires a sufficient number of fighter aircraft to contend with Russian aviation.[18] NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that several unspecified NATO members made unspecified commitments during the Ukraine-NATO Council meeting to provide additional air defense, artillery, deep precision strike, and drone materiel to Ukraine.[19]

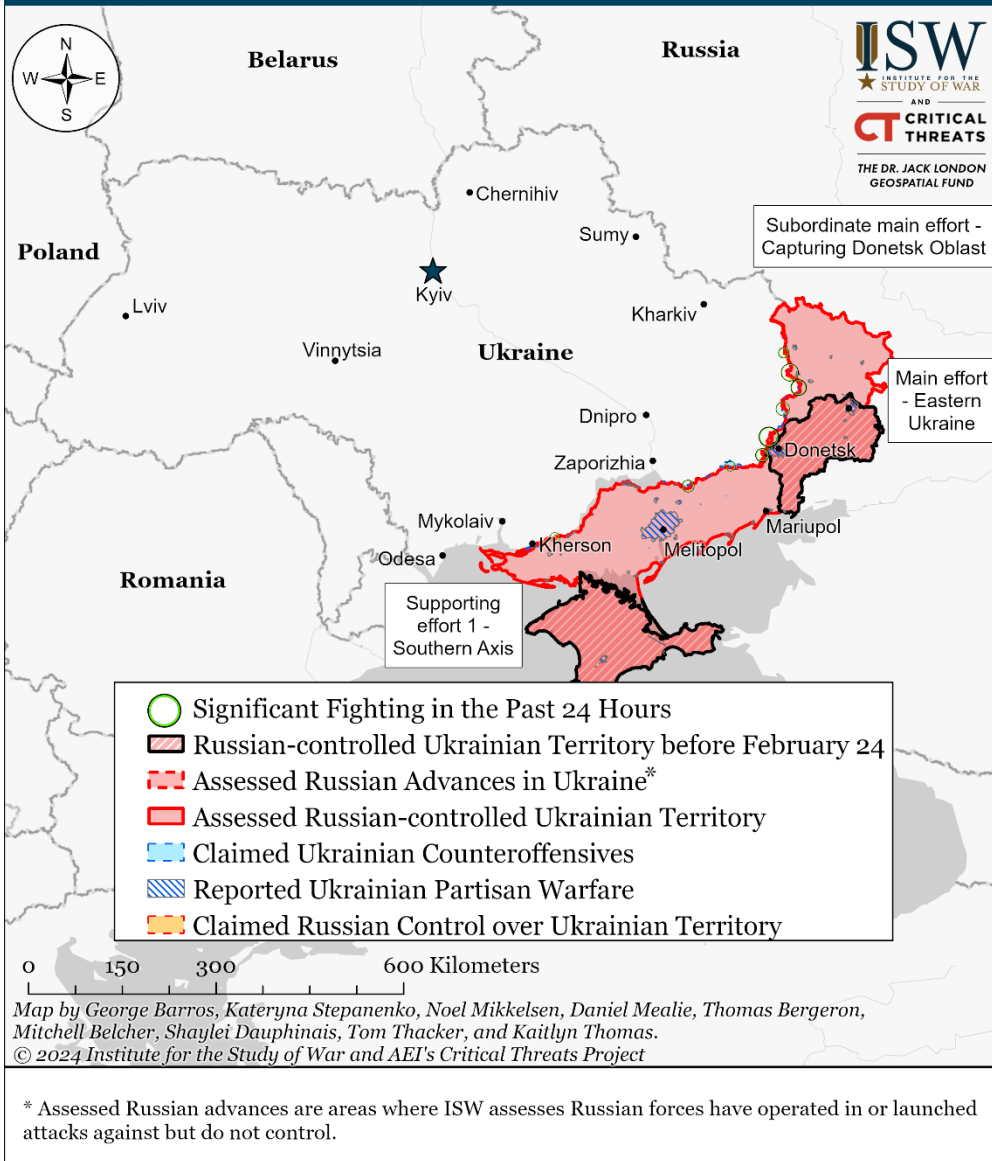
Ukrainian artillery shortages are allowing Russian mechanized forces to make marginal tactical gains, and Ukraine's degraded air defense capabilities are permitting Russian aviation to heavily degrade Ukrainian defenses along the front through glide bomb strikes.[20] Ukrainian officials have highlighted promised F-16 fighter aircraft as a crucial element of a combined air defense system that can intercept more Russian missile and drone strikes and constrain Russian tactical aviation operations.[21] Ukrainian forces have previously leveraged NATO 155mm artillery systems and ammunition capable of striking targets at longer ranges than Soviet equipment to conduct superior counterbattery fire, and more effective long-range artillery systems would support sustained effective Ukrainian counterbattery operations.[22] Ukrainian forces have previously conducted several successful interdiction efforts against Russian forces with Western-provided missile systems and have indicated that they are prepared to resume more regular interdiction efforts should Ukraine receive sufficient provisions of long-range missiles.[23] ISW assesses that continued US delays in security assistance to Ukraine are limiting Ukraine's ability to conduct effective defensive operations while offering Russian forces increasing flexibility to conduct offensive operations — a dynamic that can lead to compounding and non-linear opportunities for Russian forces to make operationally significant gains in the future.[24]

Pro-Russian Moldovan actors continue to set conditions to justify possible future Russian aggression in Moldova as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov compared Moldova to Ukraine and Armenia. The People's Assembly of Gagauzia, the pro-Russian autonomous region in Moldova, appealed to the Moldovan Parliament on April 19 to grant the Russian language the special legal status of a language of interethnic communication in Moldova.[25] Kremlin-affiliated Governor of Gagauzia Yevgenia Gutsul claimed in a statement to Kremlin newswire *TASS* that the Moldovan government is "Russophobic" and will resist this initiative.[26] The Gagauzian appeal is likely part of Kremlin efforts to set information conditions to blame Moldova for discriminating against Russian speakers and justify future Russian aggression in Moldova as necessary to protect Russia's "compatriots abroad." Lavrov claimed during a radio interview with Russian state media on April 19 that the West made Moldovan President Maia Sandu "openly drag Moldova into NATO, either directly or through unification with Romania" and that the West did the same with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.[27] Lavrov criticized both Moldova's and Armenia's moves towards the West and urged them to rethink their decisions by claiming that the West will force its citizens to fight in a possible future war against Russia. Russian officials have recently claimed that the West is "dragging" the South Caucasus region into a "geopolitical confrontation" between Russia and the West and explicitly threatened Armenia over Armenian outreach to the West.[28] Lavrov's comparison of the Moldovan government to both the Armenian and Ukrainian governments is likely a tacit threat. ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin is likely trying to destabilize Moldovan society, attack Moldova's democratic government, and prevent Moldova's accession to the European Union.[29]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov signaled Russia's intent to seize Kharkiv City in a future significant Russian offensive operation, the first senior Kremlin official to outright identify the city as a possible Russian operational objective following recent Ukrainian warnings that Russian forces may attempt to seize the city starting in Summer 2024.**
- **Ukrainian officials announced that Ukrainian forces downed a Russian aircraft as it conducted missile strikes against Ukraine for the first time overnight on April 18 to 19, demonstrating a capability that may constrain how Russia conducts its strike campaign against Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian air defense capabilities remain limited and degraded, however, allowing Russian aircraft to operate freely without threat on certain critical areas of the front.**
- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stressed that Ukraine requires Western provisions of artillery ammunition, air defense materiel, long-range artillery and missile systems, and fighter aircraft as Ukrainian constraints continue due to delays in US military assistance.**
- **Pro-Russian Moldovan actors continue to set conditions to justify possible future Russian aggression in Moldova as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov compared Moldova to Ukraine and Armenia.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to expand the newly reformed Leningrad Military District (LMD) in preparation for an anticipated future large-scale conventional conflict with NATO.**
- **Russian officials continue to forcibly deport and Russify Ukrainian children as Ukrainian authorities work to return deported children to Ukrainian-controlled territory.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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.

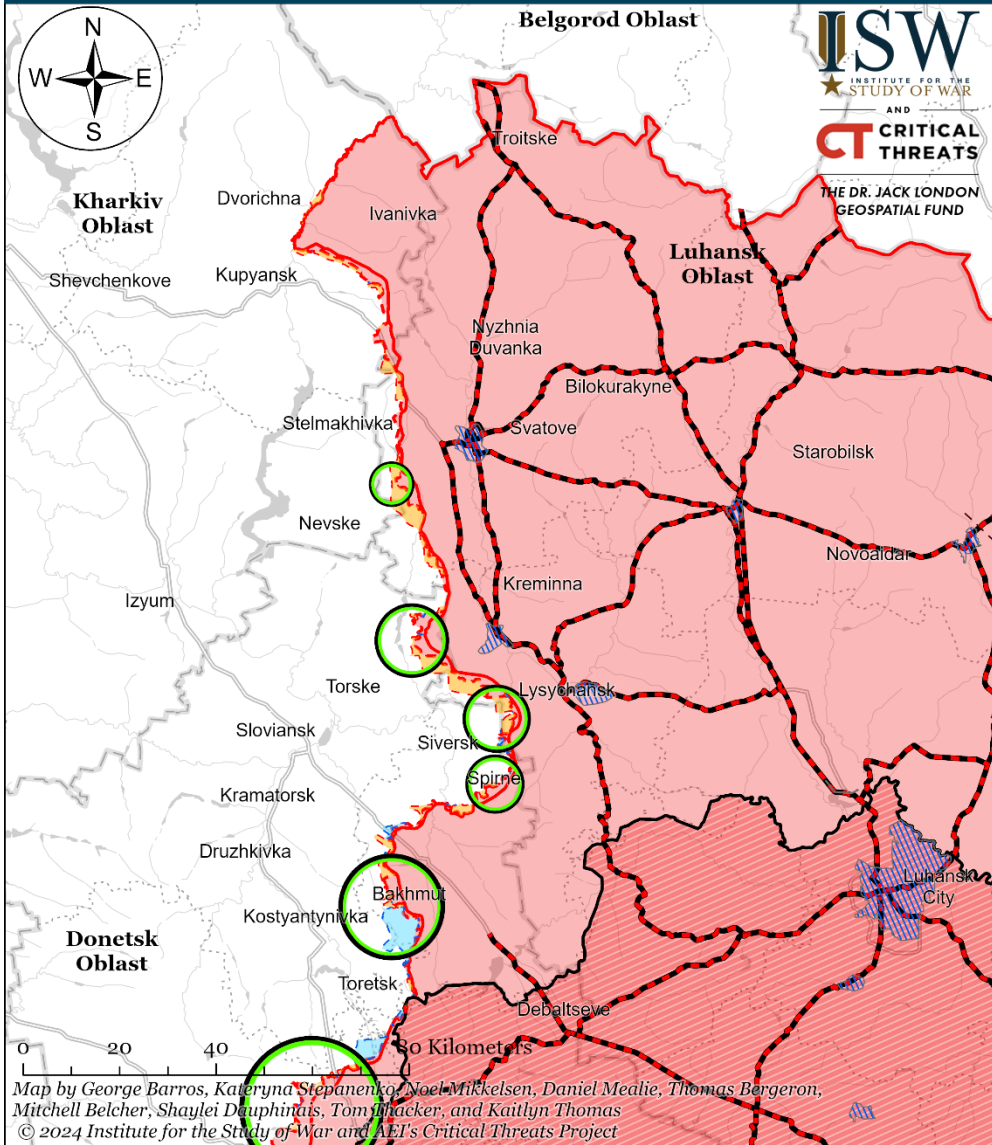
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety 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)

Positional fighting continued on the Svatove-Kreminna line on April 19, but there were no changes to the frontline in the area. Positional engagements occurred southwest of Svatove near Tverdokhlibove; near Kreminna; west of Kreminna near Terny, Torske, and Yampolivka; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[30] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 47th Tank Division (1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) have completed regrouping in the Kupyansk direction; elements of the 752nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (3rd Motorized Rifle Division, 20th Combined Arms Army, [CAA], MMD) are fighting southwest of Svatove near Nadiya; and elements of the 254th and 283rd motorized rifle regiments (144th Motorized Rifle Division, 20th CAA) are attacking Terny from the east and southeast.[31]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of April 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Macker, and Kaitlyn Thomas
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- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

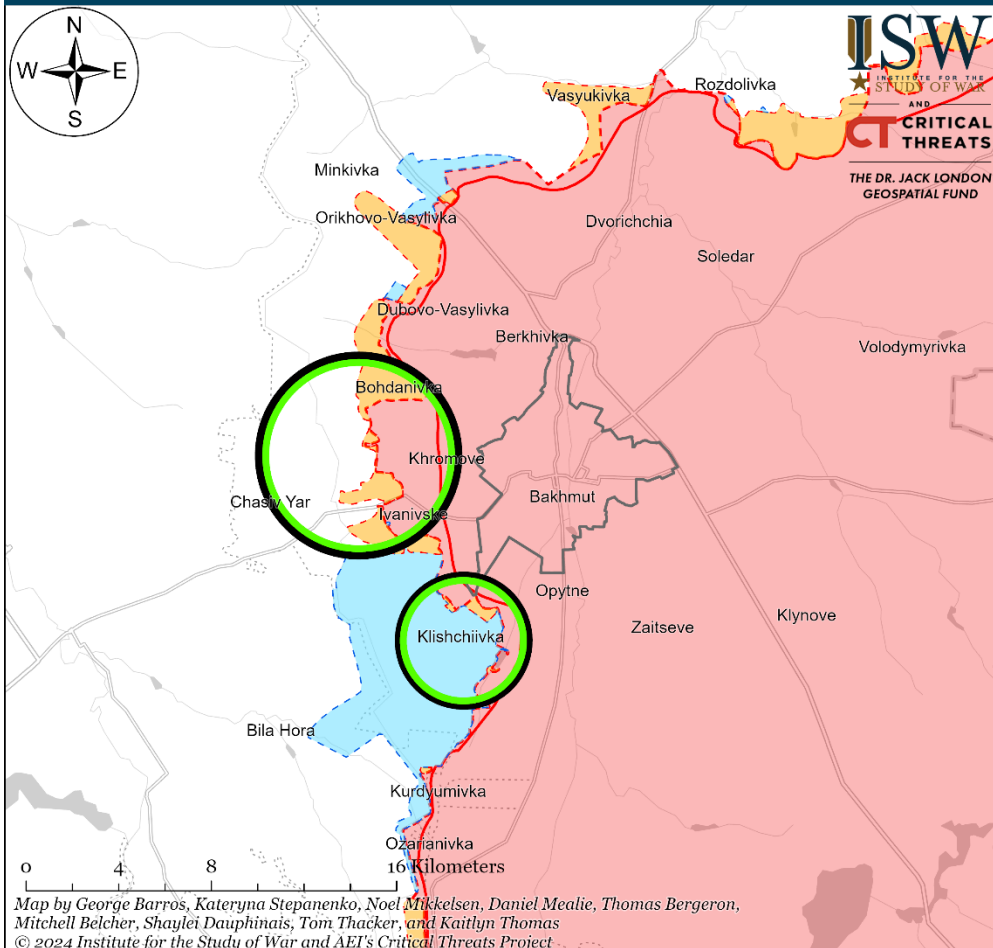
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on April 16 that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces 800 meters from a fortification north of Terny.

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

Russian forces reportedly advanced northeast of Bakhmut on April 19, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on April 19 that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces are attempting to push Ukrainian forces out of Bilohorivka (south of Kreminna) in order to break through to the area near Zvanivka (southwest of Siversk) and set conditions for future Russian offensive operations towards Siversk.[32] Mashovets stated that the Russian military command has deployed most of the 2nd Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Army Corps (AC), including elements of its 6th, 7th, and 123rd motorized rifle brigades, supported by elements of the 106th Airborne (VDV) Division’s 51st, 119th, and 137th VDV regiments, to the Siversk direction. Mashovets stated that elements of the 51st and 119th VDV regiments advanced southeast of Rozdolivka (south of Siversk) and that elements of the 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade advanced several hundred meters south of Vyimka (southeast of Siversk). Mashovets stated that elements of the 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade were unable to push Ukrainian forces out of positions west of Bilohorivka and that elements of the 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade and 137th VDV Regiment have been unable to advance near Spirne (southeast of Siversk) and south of Fedorivka (southwest of Siversk), respectively. Mashovets stated that elements of the 6th Motorized Rifle Brigade have slowed their rate of advance in the Zolotarivka-Verkhokamyanka direction. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked northeast of Bakhmut near Verkhokamyanske, Spirne, and Vyimka.[33]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of April 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Bakhmut City Limits	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

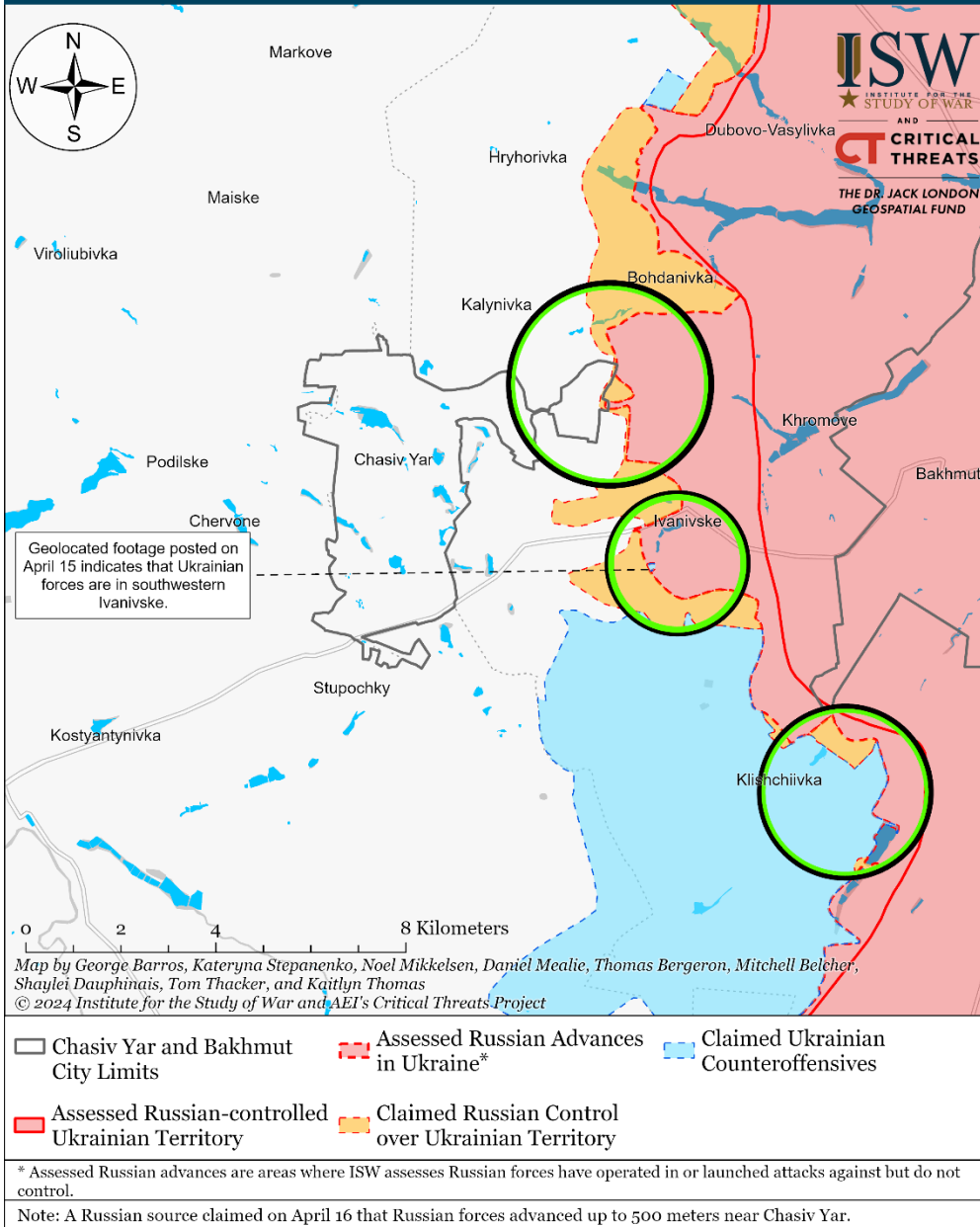
Note: A Russian source claimed on April 16 that Russian forces advanced up to 500 meters near Chasiv Yar.

Russian forces recently advanced near Chasiv Yar amid continued fighting on April 19. Geolocated footage published on April 19 indicates that Russian forces advanced within southwestern Bohdanivka (northeast of Chasiv Yar).[34] Fighting continued north of Chasiv Yar near Kalynivka; near the Novyi Microraion (eastern Chasiv Yar) and the Kanal Microraion (easternmost Chasiv Yar); east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske; southeast of Chasiv Yar near Klishchiivka; and south of Chasiv Yar near Niu York.[35] A Russian milblogger claimed that half of the dacha area north of the Kanal Microraion is a contested "gray zone." [36] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces continued to conduct air strikes, including with guided glide bombs, on Chasiv Yar.[37] Mashovets stated that Russian forces are simultaneously attacking towards Bohdanivka-Kalynivka, towards the Kanal Microraion, along the T0504 (Bakhmut-Chasiv Yar) highway northwest of Ivanivske, from Ivanivske, and between Ivanivske

and Klishchiivka towards the Siverskyi-Donetsk Donbas canal.[38] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 11th VDV Brigade are operating northwest of Ivanivske and that elements of the 331st VDV Regiment (98th VDV Division) are operating near the Kanal Microraion. Mashovets stated that elements of the 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th AC, Leningrad Military District [LMD]) and 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are also operating near Chasiv Yar.[39]

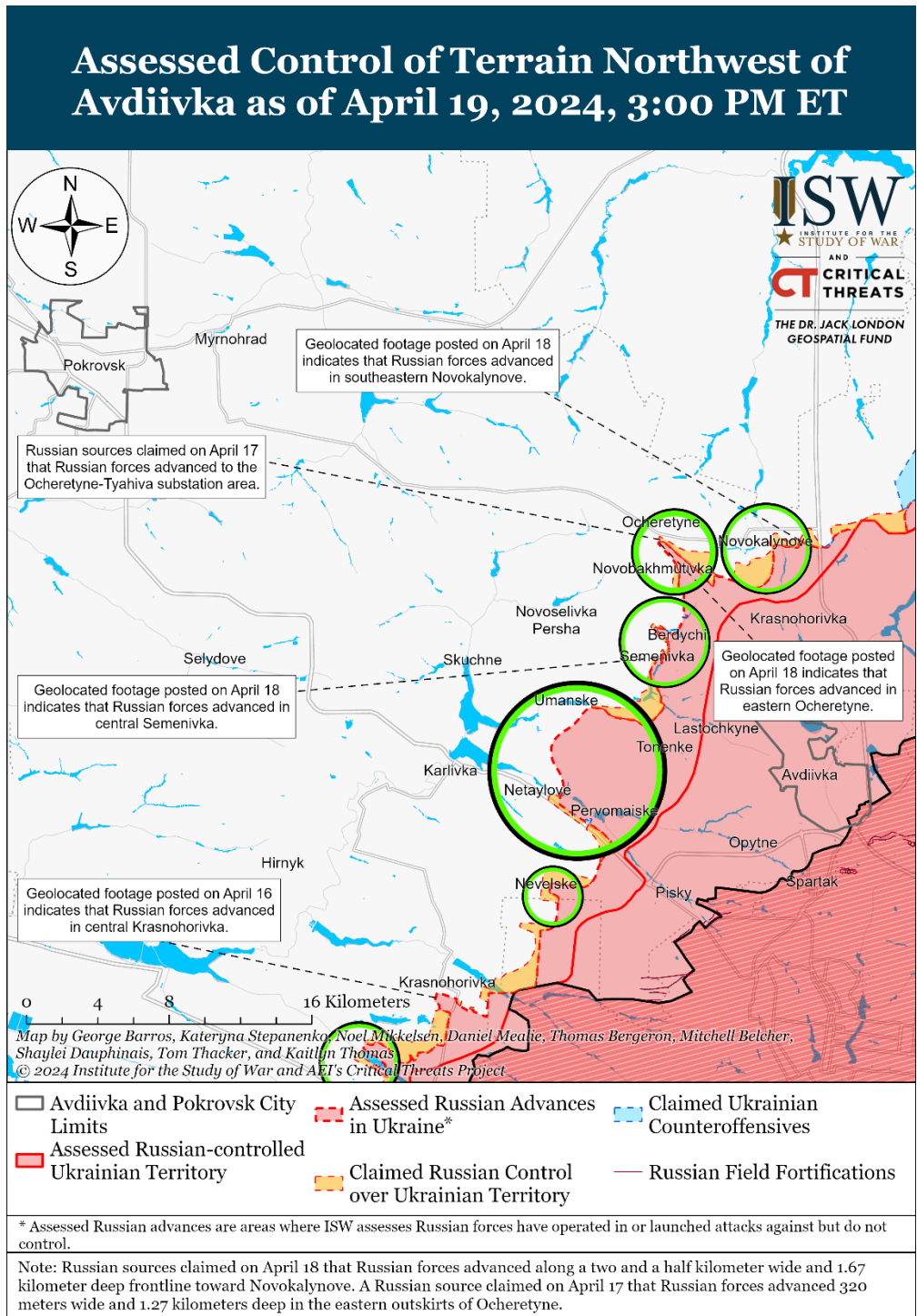
The Russian Southern Grouping of Forces have reportedly lost a significant number of armored vehicles during recent intensified Russian mechanized assaults. Mashovets stated that the number of available tanks within the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces in the Siversk, Chasiv Yar, and Kurakhove directions has decreased significantly to less than 650 tanks (including those that are damaged, temporarily disabled, and undergoing repairs) in recent weeks.[40] Mashovets stated that Russian forces committed reserves into battle in the Siversk, Chasiv Yar, and Kurakhove directions as part of "massive" mechanized assaults that reduced the number of "comparatively combat-ready" armored fighting vehicles in the Southern Grouping of Forces to no more than 1,850 vehicles.

Assessed Control of Terrain near Chasiv Yar as of April 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



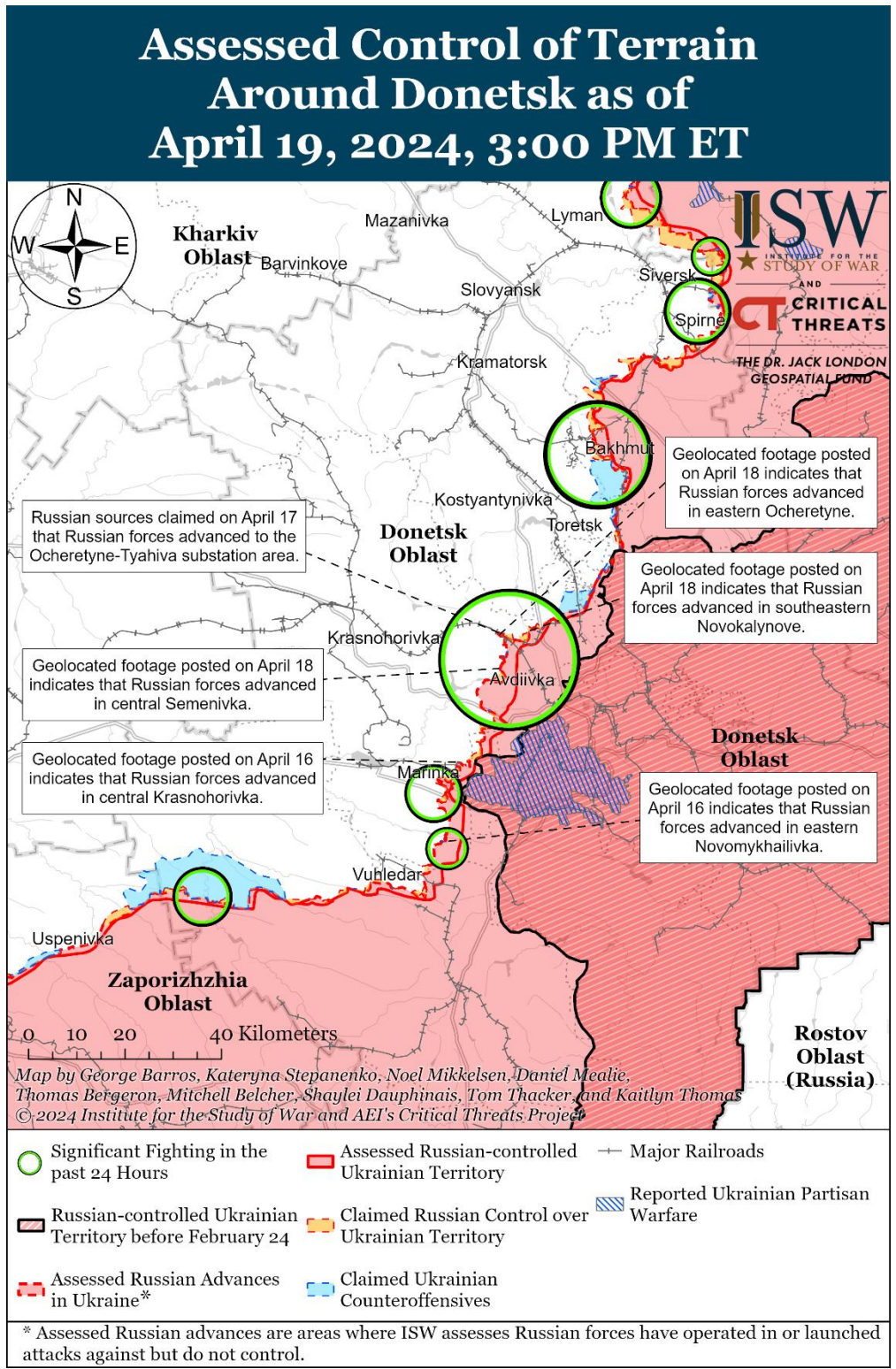
Russian forces recently advanced west of Avdiivka amid continued fighting in the area on April 19. Geolocated footage published on April 10 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced within southern Semenivka (west of Avdiivka).[41] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces also advanced northwest of Avdiivka near Novokalynove, Ocheretyne, and Berdychi; west of Avdiivka near Tonenke, and southwest of Avdiivka near Netaylove.[42] Another Russian milblogger claimed that there is no evidence of Russian advances near Netaylove, however.[43] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these various Russian claims. Fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novokalynove,

Ocheretyne, Novobakhmutivka, Berdychi, and Semenivka; west of Avdiivka near Umanske; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske, Vodyane, Netaylove, and Nevelske.[44]

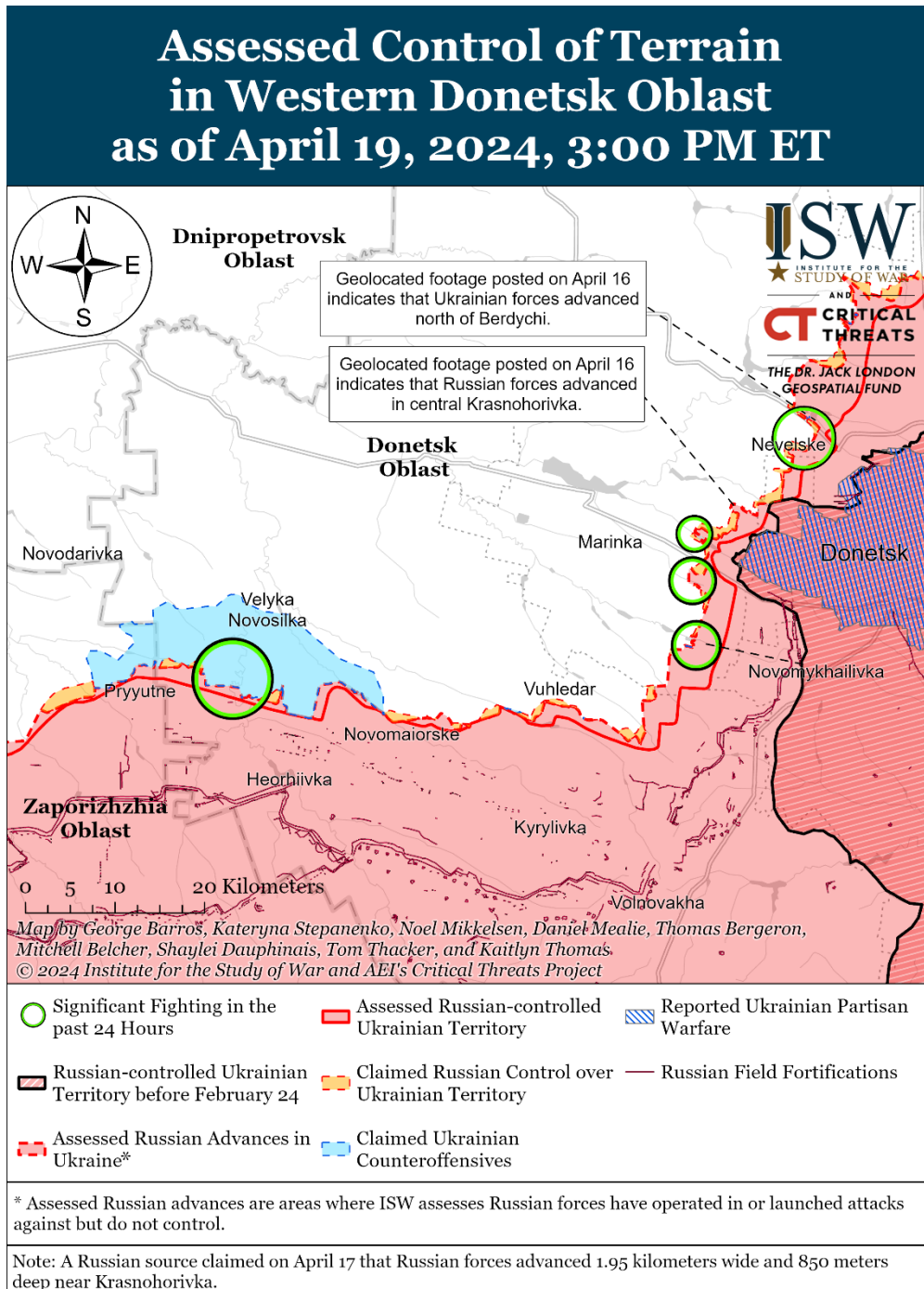


Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Donetsk City amid continued positional engagements west and southwest of Donetsk City on April 19. Geolocated footage published on April 18 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced west of Solodka (southwest of Donetsk City).[45] Ukrainian and

Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and Krasnohorivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda and Novomykhailivka.[46]

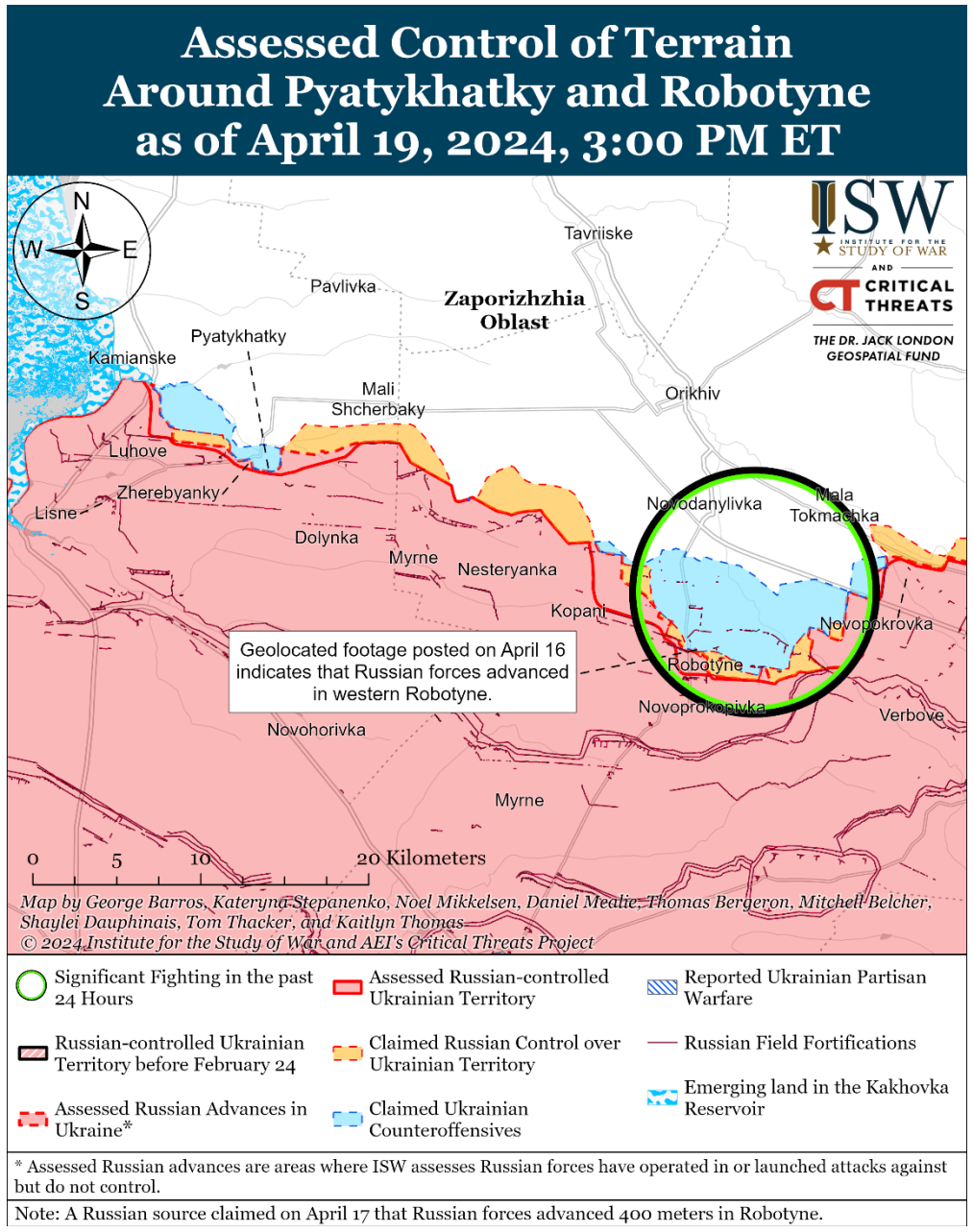


Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on April 19, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued south of Velyka Novosilka near Staromayorske and Urozhaine.[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Staromayorske, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[48] Elements of the Russian 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Vuhledar.[49]

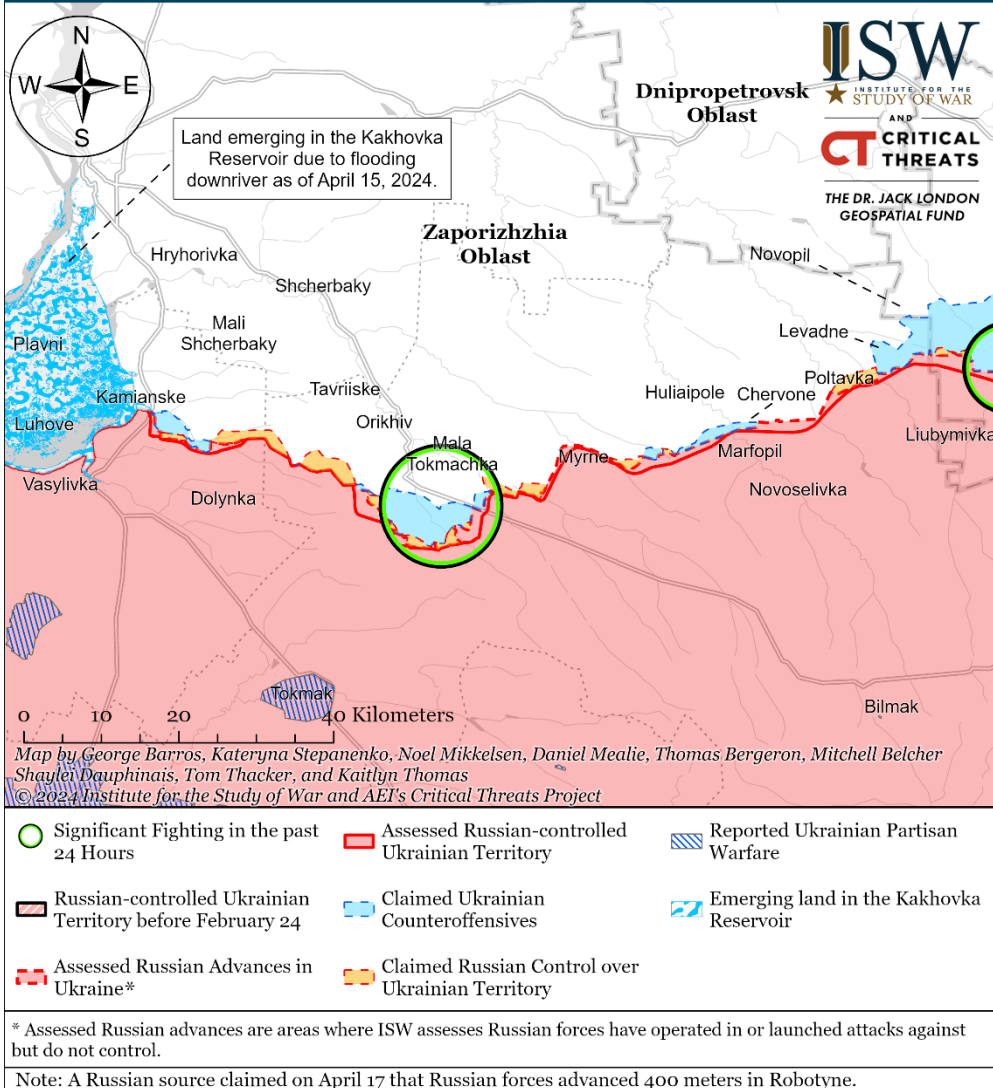


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional fighting continued near Robotyne and northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne) in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on April 19.[50]



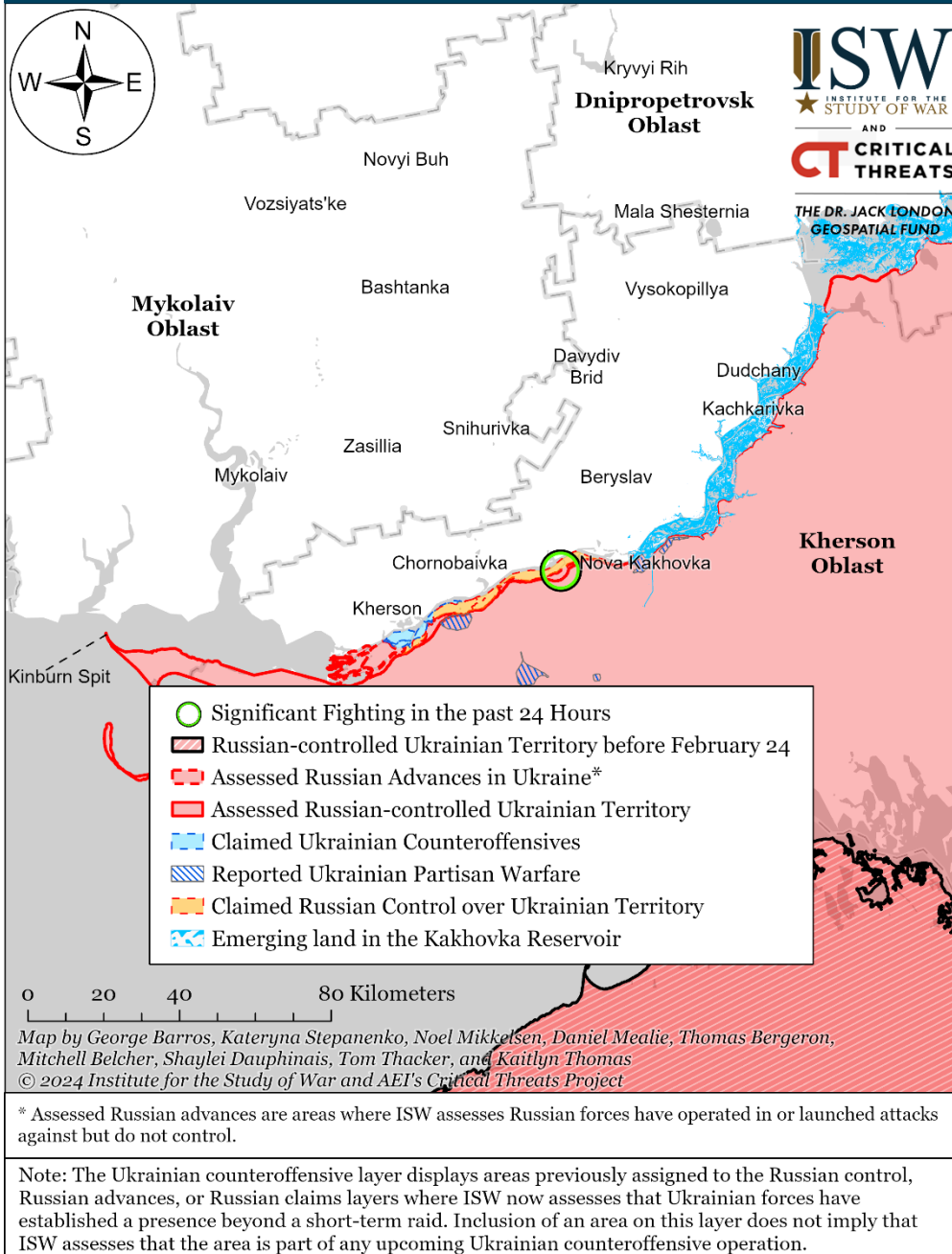
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of April 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stated on April 18 that an unspecified drone targeted a training facility at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) but did not cause any damage or casualties.[51] The IAEA noted that this was the third unspecified drone strike targeting the ZNPP in recent weeks.[52]

Positional fighting continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast, including near Krynky, on April 19.[53] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian infantry maintains a roughly reduced company-sized presence in the Krynky area and also maintain positions near the Antonivsky roadway bridge (north of Oleshky).[54] Elements of the Russian 1197th Motorized Rifle Regiment are reportedly operating along the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast.[55]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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 relatively large series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of April 18 to 19 and limited strikes later in the day on April 19. Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk reported that Russian forces launched 14 Shahed-136/131

drones and 22 missiles, including 12 Kh-59/69 cruise missiles, two Iskander-K ballistic missiles, two Kh-101/Kh-555 cruise missiles, and six Kh-22 cruise missiles, at Ukraine on the night of April 18 to 19.[56] Oleshchuk reported that Ukrainian forces intercepted two Kh-101/Kh-555 cruise missiles, 14 Shahed drones, 11 Kh-59/69 cruise missiles, and two Kh-22 cruise missiles.[57] Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Military Administration Head Serhiy Lysak stated that Russian forces heavily targeted Dnipropetrovsk Oblast with at least 11 missiles and struck transportation and civilian infrastructure in Dnipro City, Pavlohrad, Kryvyi Rih, and Synelnykove.[58] Ukrainian railway operator Ukrzaliznytsia reported that Russian missile strikes in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast damaged Ukrzaliznytsia facilities and wounded railway workers.[59] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces also struck port infrastructure in Odesa City with an unspecified type and number of missiles.[60] Ukrainian Eastern Air Command reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian Kh-59 cruise missile near Dnipro City later on April 19.[61] Kharkiv Oblast Military Administration Head Oleh Synehubov stated that Russian forces struck Sorokove, Kharkiv Oblast with a S-300 air defense missile.[62]

Ukrainian officials noted that Ukrainian forces successfully intercepted Russian Kh-22 cruise missiles for the first time.[63] ISW has not previously observed reports of Ukrainian forces intercepting Russian Kh-22/32 cruise missiles during Russian missile strikes in Ukraine. Russian forces sporadically use a limited number of Kh-22/32 cruise missiles during strikes against Ukraine.

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

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to expand the newly reformed Leningrad Military District (LMD) in preparation for an anticipated future large-scale conventional conflict with NATO. Sources within the Russian MoD told Russian news outlet *Izvestia* on April 19 that the Russian MoD formed a separate missile brigade in the Republic of Karelia equipped with Iskander-M ballistic missile systems, likely as part of an army corps (AC) that the Russian MoD is reportedly forming within the LMD.[64] Former Russian Baltic Fleet commander Admiral Vladimir Valuyev told *Izvestia* that the Russian MoD formed the brigade in response to Finland's accession to NATO and to strengthen Russia's force posturing along its western flank. Russian officials, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, are increasingly framing the war in Ukraine as part of a wider existential conflict with the West in hopes of justifying a long-term Russian war effort.[65]

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu inspected Russian tank and thermobaric artillery system production facilities in Omsk Oblast on April 19 and instructed the facilities to increase their production output.[66] Shoigu also visited the Omsk Automotive and Armored Engineering Institute and met with Russian cadets training to repair and maintain armored vehicles and operate drones in frontline areas.

Russian officials continue to weigh the necessity of migrant labor to offset Russia's labor shortages with ongoing ultranationalist demands for more restricted migration policies. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty outlet *Idel Realii* reported on APR 19 that Tatarstan Government Head Alexey Pesoshin stated that Tatarstan will not be able to meet labor demand from Russian industrial facilities, including drone production facilities, without migrant labor.[67] Pesoshin conceded that "the issue with migrants is multifaceted," acknowledging ongoing demands from Russian ultranationalists for anti-migrant policies.[68] Putin recently advocated for migrant labor as the only viable solution for Russia's ongoing and future labor shortage.[69]

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

Russian forces continue quick and cheap adaptations to harden military equipment against Ukrainian first-person view (FPV) drone strikes along the frontline. Russian sources published imagery on April 18 of a KAMAZ truck, carrying a Russian Pantsir-S1 Air defense system, outfitted with forward-facing metal mesh screens for protection against FPV drone strikes.[70] A Russian milblogger expressed doubt that such quick adaptations will sufficiently protect Russian equipment against Ukrainian FPV drone strikes, however.[71]

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)

Russian officials continue to forcibly deport and Russify Ukrainian children as Ukrainian authorities work to return deported children to Ukrainian-controlled territory. Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Military Administration Head Artem Lysohor stated on April 18 that Luhansk Oblast occupation authorities sent Ukrainian children to the Russian “Young Soldier’s Course” historical and educational forum in Kaluga Oblast.[72] The Russian Kherson Oblast Occupation Administration announced that occupation authorities will send children between the ages of 10 and 17 years old to a camp in Primorsky Krai, but did not specify when or if the children will return to occupied Kherson Oblast.[73] Kremlin-appointed Children’s Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova stated during a visit to an orphanage in occupied Luhansk Oblast on April 19 that occupation authorities have relocated more than 80 Ukrainian children to families throughout occupied Ukraine and claimed that she helped develop plans to place 83 additional Ukrainian children with families in occupied Luhansk Oblast.[74] The Ukrainian National Police stated on April 17 that Ukrainian and German authorities identified 161 Ukrainian children in Germany whom Russian authorities had deported to Russia and Belarus, but did not specify how the children arrived in Germany.[75] Ukrainian Kherson Oblast Military Administration Head Oleksandr Prokudin announced on April 18 that Ukrainian authorities recently returned two Ukrainian teenagers from Russian-occupied territory to Ukrainian-controlled territory, and the Ukrainian Ministry of Reintegration reported on April 19 that Ukrainian authorities returned another Ukrainian teenager to Ukraine from Russia after Russian authorities forcibly deported the teen.[76]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov continued rhetoric aimed at weakening US and Western support for Ukraine and promoting Western self-deterrence. Lavrov claimed that Russia will not stop hostilities during any potential peace negotiations like it allegedly did during peace negotiations in Istanbul in March 2022 and that Russia is convinced that it must continue its war in Ukraine because Russia does not fear a situation in which the West wants to defeat Russia.[77] Lavrov also claimed that Ukraine is unwilling to negotiate and that any future peace negotiations involving Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelensky are “meaningless.”[78] Lavrov is likely intensifying his rhetoric in conjunction with other senior Russian officials, including Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova, to influence internal US debates ahead of the US House of Representatives vote on a supplemental military assistance package for Ukraine on April 20.[79]

Russian media and ultranationalists continued spreading information operations aimed at degrading domestic trust in the Ukrainian government through attempts to undermine mobilization efforts following the new Ukrainian mobilization law.[80]

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)

Nothing significant to report.

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.

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

[1] <https://www.kp dot ru/daily/27595.5/4921158/> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar031824>

[2] <https://t.me/ButusovPlus/9652> ; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_MLS5xG8S4

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