

**Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, April 21, 2023**  
**Kateryna Stepanenko, Riley Bailey, Grace Mappes, and Frederick W.**  
**Kagan**  
**April 21, 7:45 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 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.

**Russian forces used a new delivery of Shahed drones to strike Ukraine for the third consecutive day, targeting Kyiv for the first time in 25 days.** The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched 26 drones on April 20, of which Ukrainian forces shot down 21 and 12 drones on April 21, of which Ukrainian forces shot down eight.<sup>1</sup> Russian forces targeted Kyiv, Odesa, Poltava, Vinnytsia, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Kharkiv, and Chernihiv oblasts overnight on April 19 to 20 and 20 to 21.<sup>2</sup> The Kyiv City Military Administration reported no damage from the strikes in Kyiv.<sup>3</sup> Head of the Ukrainian Joint Coordination Press Center of the Southern Forces Nataliya Humenyuk stated on April 20 that Russian forces waited until a new shipment of Shahed drones arrived to use them for further strikes and noted that Russian use of missiles has also decreased.<sup>4</sup>

**Commander of the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet Admiral Viktor Liina reportedly assumed command of the Russian Pacific Fleet on April 21 following the completion of Russian drills in the Pacific on April 20.** Kremlin newswire TASS, citing an unnamed source, reported that Liina replaced Admiral Sergei Avakyants who had commanded the Russian Pacific Fleet since 2012.<sup>5</sup> Unofficial reports of Liina's appointments coincide with the Russian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) announcement that the Pacific Fleet and elements of the Russian Aerospace Forces completed drills in the Pacific under the supervision of Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov.<sup>6</sup> The Russian MoD may have named Yevmenov as the supervisor for these drills following milblogger and nationalist discourse about Avakyants' abrupt termination amidst the combat readiness checks.<sup>7</sup> ISW previously assessed that Avakyants' dismissal may have been a result of his inability to recreate pre-war, large scale Pacific Fleet combat readiness checks due to the Pacific Fleet's significant combat losses in Ukraine.<sup>8</sup>

**A Russian fighter-bomber accidentally bombed Belgorod on April 20.** The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on April 20 that a Russian Su-34 bomber accidentally dropped a bomb while flying over Belgorod City.<sup>9</sup> The explosion left a crater with a 20-meter (65-foot) radius in the southern part of the city and injured three civilians.<sup>10</sup> The cause of the accidental bombing remains unclear, as does the reason for flying an armed bomber over a populated city. Russian milbloggers did not react to the bombing with the same vitriolic anger they often use with Russian battlefield failures. One milblogger compared the accidental bombing to the Su-34 crash in Yeysk, Krasnodar Krai, in October 2022, claiming that Belgorod residents should be thankful that the bomb did not hit a residential building.<sup>11</sup> Another milblogger expressed appreciation for the MoD taking responsibility for the accident and characterized the act as an atypical sign of health in the MoD.<sup>12</sup> A Rossiya-1 broadcaster, speaking about the event, stated that "modern military equipment allows Russian units to eliminate extremists in the special operation zone from a minimal distance"-- likely an error that indicates confusion in Russian state media on how to frame the accident in the information space.<sup>13</sup>

**The Angry Patriots Club accused Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin of supporting efforts to freeze the war in Ukraine.** Former Russian officer and ardent nationalist Igor Girkin and his Angry Patriots Club posed 40 direct questions addressed towards the Kremlin, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and the Russian military command about Russia’s conduct of the war in Ukraine, foreign affairs, and domestic power struggles.<sup>14</sup> Girkin asked why Russian authorities are not arresting Prigozhin for his “direct calls” to freeze the war at the current frontlines, which Girkin characterized as calls to “violate the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation.”<sup>15</sup> Girkin notably mentioned Prigozhin when asking who was responsible for Russian withdrawal from Kherson Oblast – an operation overseen by Wagner-affiliated former Commander of the Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine at that time Army General Sergey Surovikin.<sup>16</sup> Girkin and Prigozhin have a long-standing feud – likely as a result of competition for patronage – and Girkin’s accusations against Prigozhin may be an attempt to discredit his rival.<sup>17</sup>

**This accusation may also indicate that Prigozhin has found a patron – possibly affiliated with the Russian MoD – who supports the temporary freeze of the war in Ukraine for political reasons.** The Angry Patriots Club previously amplified a forecast that miscontextualized Prigozhin’s April 14 essay as a call to end the war in Ukraine, stating that Prigozhin’s essay was the start of a political campaign to move to the defense of new territories and freeze the war.<sup>18</sup> The forecast noted that the Russian MoD and Russian private military companies (PMCs) are already recruiting contract servicemen to defend occupied positions, while Russian propagandists are entertaining news about the counteroffensive to possibly present a major victory to Russians if Ukrainians are unsuccessful.<sup>19</sup> The forecast argues that Russia would freeze the war for 2024 for political reasons such as the presidential elections if Russia is successful in repelling Ukrainian counteroffensives. Prigozhin’s essay notably called on Russia to commit to a decisive battle in Ukraine or embrace a temporary defeat that would allow Russia to set conditions for a future victory without negotiations.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that Girkin and his patrons are fearful that Prigozhin has joined the political faction that is urging Russian President Vladimir Putin to stop the war on current lines following planned Ukrainian counteroffensive.<sup>21</sup>

Prigozhin publicly restored his cooperation with the Russian MoD and seemingly regained some Kremlin-allocated privileges at the start of April after a months-long feud with the Russian military command.<sup>22</sup> The Russian MoD and the Russian military command could be interested in freezing the war to reconstitute Russian forces. ISW previously assessed that the Russian MoD had likely advised Putin early on about measures such as mobilization that could have changed the course of the war earlier, and the Russian MoD had previously ordered a short-lived operational pause over the summer of 2022, for example.<sup>23</sup> Prigozhin’s recent cooperation with the Russian MoD indicates that he may have reached an agreement with the Russian military command – possibly offering to advocate to Putin for a temporary ceasefire to regain the ability to grow his forces and expand his political standing ahead of Russian gubernatorial and presidential elections. Prigozhin had also been criticizing Putin’s maximalist goals in Ukraine and offering grim forecasts about Russia’s need for years-long grinding attacks to capture Donbas, which are likely part of the ceasefire narrative.<sup>24</sup>

**A temporary ceasefire in Ukraine and protraction of the war will only benefit Russia by allowing it to reconstitute its forces and wear down Western support for Ukraine.** Russia will use occupied territories in Ukraine as a springboard for future offensive operations after it restores its combat capabilities. Russia is continuing to weaponize information operations in the West to discourage military aid provisions, and such efforts will only intensify if Russia is able to establish a strong defensive line with contract servicemen and conscripts that will slow Ukrainian advances.<sup>25</sup>

**Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law aimed at supporting the Kremlin's ongoing efforts to set conditions for domestic crackdowns and the removal of officials who have fallen out of favor.** Putin signed a bill on April 14 increasing administrative liabilities for unauthorized entry into critical energy infrastructure facilities and facilities operated or protected by Rosgvardia (Russian National Guard), the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the Russian penitentiary system, the federal executive body for mobilization, and the Russian Armed Forces.<sup>26</sup> The Kremlin likely intends to use these increased punishments to obscure the activities of Russian military and security organs while also expanding these entities' ability to oust officials and crack down on Russian citizens under accusations of trespassing. Putin recently signed bills expanding legal punishments for the discreditation of all Russian personnel fighting in Ukraine and for the misappropriation of Russian military assets, and Russian security organs have increasingly used these laws as pretexts for the arrest of Russian citizens.<sup>27</sup> ISW has previously assessed that the Kremlin may be using the pretext of threats to Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) to justify crackdowns, and the new law likely aims to broaden the guises under which Russian authorities justify internal repressions.<sup>28</sup> ISW previously assessed that the FSB appears to be conducting a large-scale overhaul of domestic security organs, which the new law may further augment.<sup>29</sup>

### **Key Takeaways**

- **Russian forces used a new delivery of Shahed drones to strike Ukraine for the third consecutive day, targeting Kyiv for the first time in 25 days.**
- **Commander of the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet Admiral Viktor Liina reportedly assumed command of the Russian Pacific Fleet following the completion of Russian drills in the Pacific.**
- **A Russian fighter-bomber accidentally bombed Belgorod on April 20.**
- **The Angry Patriots Club accused Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin of supporting efforts to freeze the war in Ukraine.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law aimed at supporting the Kremlin's ongoing efforts to set conditions for domestic crackdowns and the removal of officials who have fallen out of favor.**
- **Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line.**
- **Russian forces continued to advance in and around Bakhmut, although Russian forces have not completed a turning movement around the city.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk front and conducted a limited ground attack in western Donetsk Oblast.**
- **Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces have established positions on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast.**
- **Russian federal subjects are forming new cross-regional volunteer formations to support the ongoing force generation campaigns.**
- **Russian authorities are expanding the logistics capabilities and security measures on the Arabat Spit likely to prepare for a possible Ukrainian counteroffensive.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Will Kielm, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

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

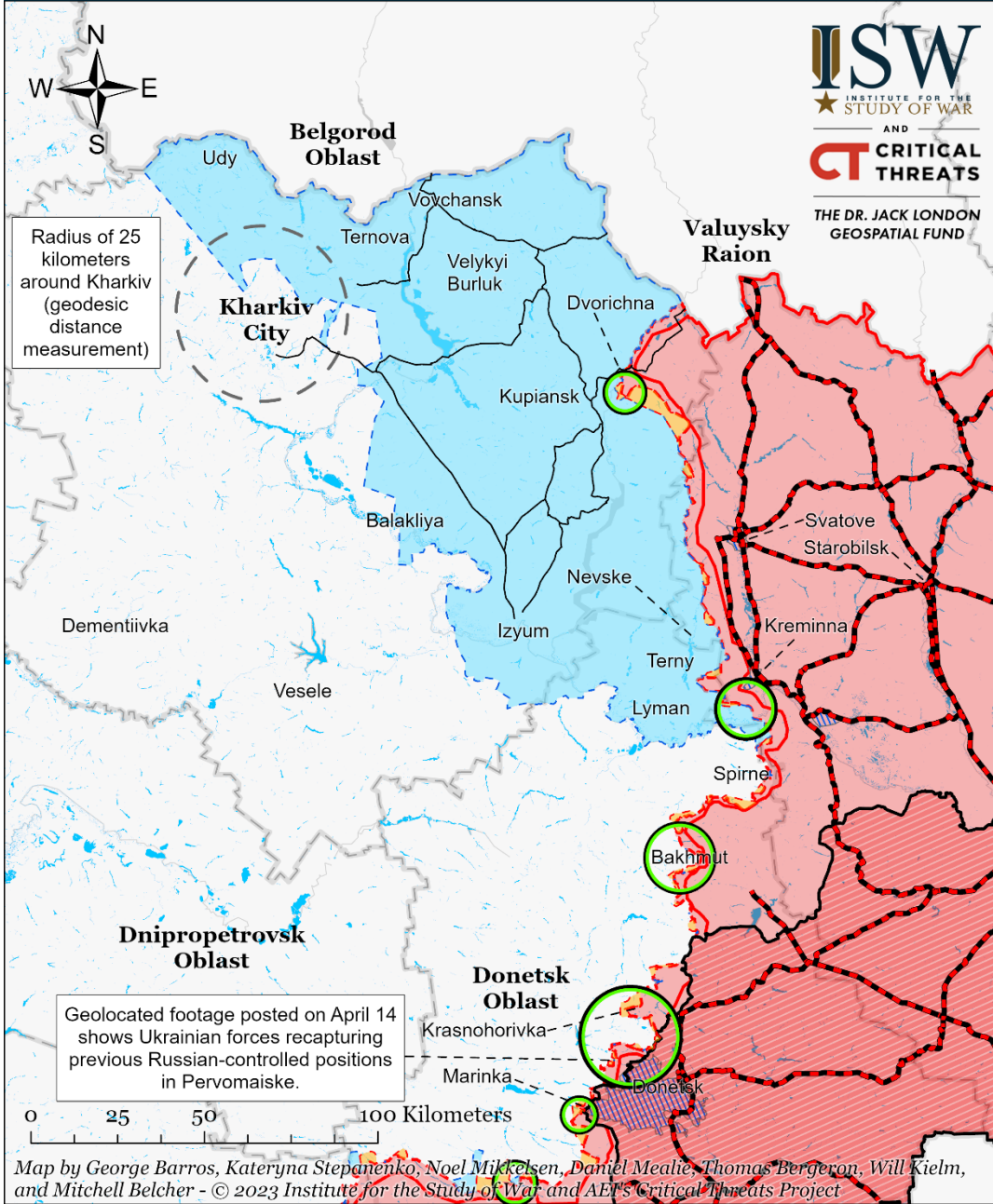
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas

### **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 conducted limited ground attacks on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on April 12. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks while attempting to improve their tactical positions near Lyman Pershyi, Kharkiv Oblast (12km northeast of Kupyansk) and in the Serebrianska forest area (11km south of Kreminna).<sup>30</sup> A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Synkivka (10km northeast of Kupyansk) and conducted unsuccessful ground attacks northwest and west of Kreminna near Torske, Terny, and Nevske (16-19km northwest and west of Kreminna).<sup>31</sup> Footage posted on April 20 shows Russian 98th Guards Airborne Division forces striking a Ukrainian tank near Kreminna.<sup>32</sup> The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled four Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups near Lyman Pershyi.<sup>33</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of April 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours		Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24		Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
	Key Ukrainian Roads		Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*		Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
	Russian Ground Lines of Communication		Assessed Russian-controlled 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.

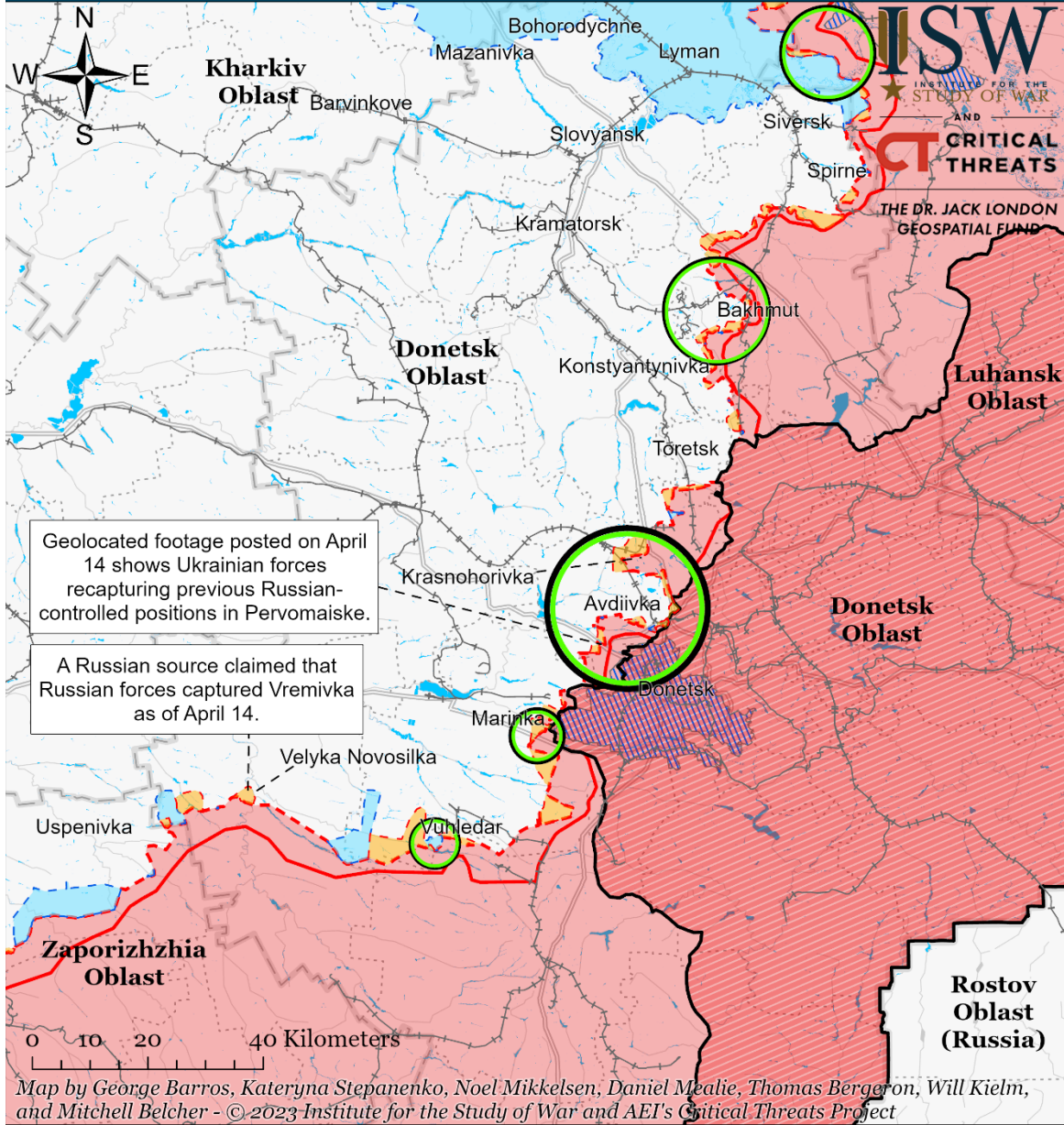
## **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian Objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Russian forces continued to advance in and around Bakhmut on April 21, although Russian forces have not completed a turning movement around the city. Geolocated footage published on April 20 indicates that Russian forces advanced west of Dubovo-Vasylivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut).<sup>34</sup> Geolocated footage published on April 20 and 21 indicates that Wagner forces have likely captured the Bakhmut-2 railway station in central Bakhmut, advanced west of the railway line near the station, and advanced up to the railway line south of the station.<sup>35</sup> Russian milbloggers claimed that Wagner forces advanced in northern and southern Bakhmut and control at least 83 percent of the city.<sup>36</sup> Russian milbloggers claimed that Wagner forces advanced towards Khromove (immediately west Bakhmut) and captured positions along the O0506 highway between Khromove and Chasiv Yar (9km west of Bakhmut).<sup>37</sup> A Russian milblogger claimed that there are reports that Russian forces captured a several hundred-meter section of the highway in an unspecified location, but a majority of Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have not physically cut off the highway.<sup>38</sup> Advisor to the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) head Yan Gagyn announced that Wagner forces had cut off a section of the highway and that this would make it impossible to supply the remaining Ukrainian grouping in Bakhmut.<sup>39</sup> Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin denied that Wagner forces have encircled Bakhmut and stated that rumors about encirclement create problems for Wagner, which is continuing to fight heavy battles in the area.<sup>40</sup> DNR Head Denis Pushilin also denied Yan Gagyn’s claims and stated that he would work with his advisors on avoiding reckless statements about the situation in Bakhmut.<sup>41</sup> Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces would still be able to use tight logistics lines between Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut) and Khromove in the event of the Russian capture of a section of the O0506 highway, although milbloggers claimed that heavy rains are only permitting tracked vehicles to move along country roads in the area.<sup>42</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that heavy battles for Bakhmut are ongoing and that Russian forces conducted an unsuccessful assault near Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut).<sup>43</sup>

Russian forces continued to conduct offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk front on April 21. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations within 13km north of Avdiivka near Novokalynove, Stepove, and Kamianka and within 32km southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske, Nevelske, Marinka, and Pobieda.<sup>44</sup> Geolocated footage published on April 17 indicates that Russian forces likely made marginal gains in Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka).<sup>45</sup> A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also conducted offensive operations near Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka) and Avdiivka.<sup>46</sup> Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces slowed down the pace of Russian advances in the Avdiivka area as of April 20.<sup>47</sup>

Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack in western Donetsk Oblast on April 21. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted an unsuccessful ground attack near Vuhledar (30km southwest of Donetsk City).<sup>48</sup> Geolocated footage published on April 20 indicates that Russian forces made marginal gains north of Mykilske (27km southwest of Donetsk City).<sup>49</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of April 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

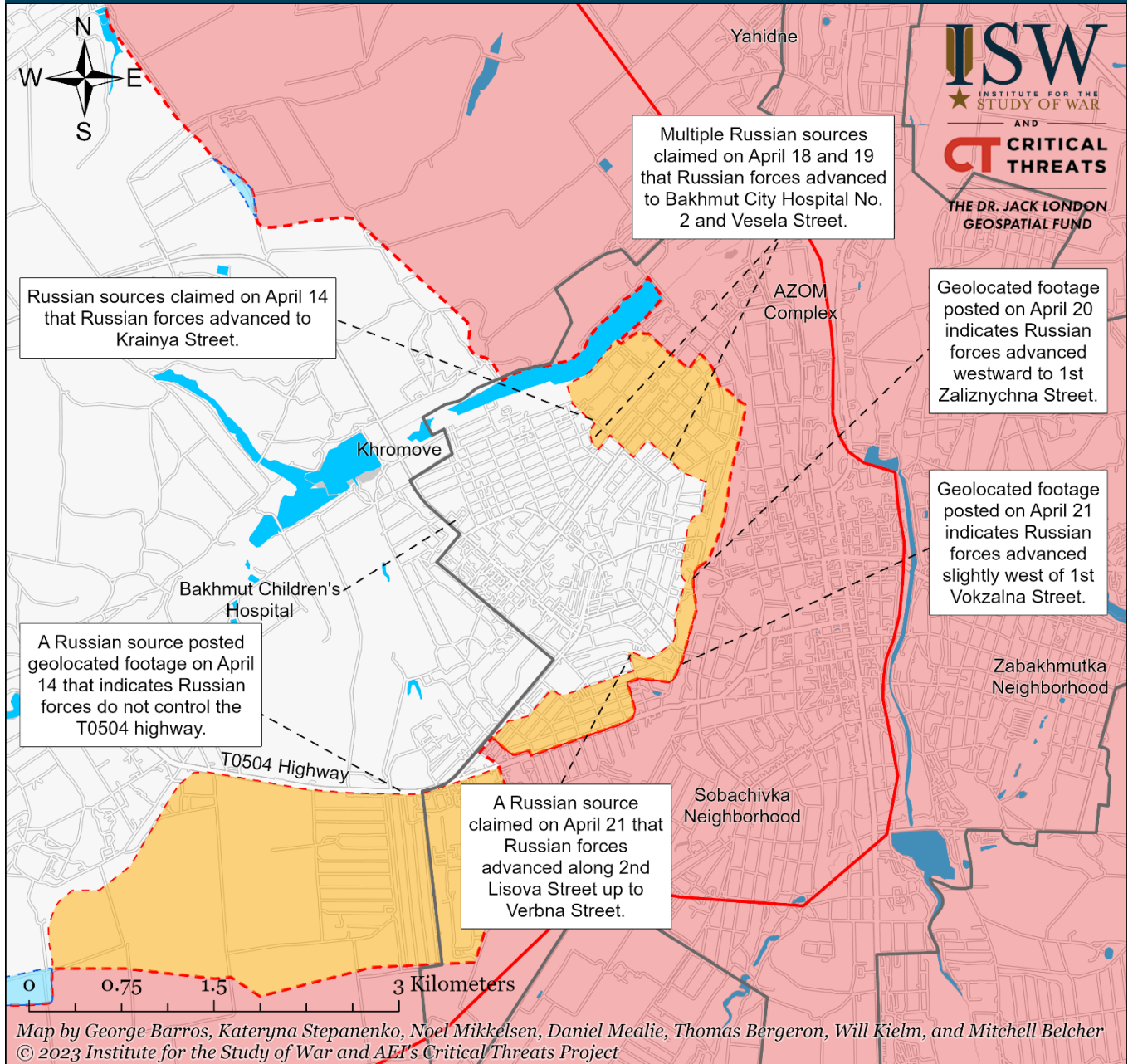


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- + Major Railroads
- 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.



# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of April 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Will Kielm, and Mitchell Belcher  
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- Bakhmut City Limits
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- 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.

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

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces have established positions on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast as of April 20. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on April 20 that Ukrainian forces established a foothold across from Kindiyka (8km north of Oleshky) and regularly conduct sorties on the east (left) bank with Western-provided naval equipment.<sup>50</sup> The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces have not attempted to move further inland because of supply issues and that recent attempts to advance from coastal areas on Velykyi Potemkin and Dnipryany islands in the Dnipro River delta failed for similar reasons.<sup>51</sup> The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are now able to cross the Dnipro River during the day whereas they previously conducted such crossings only at night.<sup>52</sup> The milblogger blamed bureaucratic red tape for preventing Russian artillery units in the area from conducting timely strikes on Ukrainian groups crossing the river.<sup>53</sup> Another Russian milblogger claimed on April 20 that Ukrainian forces successfully landed and entrenched themselves west of the Antonivsky bridge and have established stable supply lines to these positions.<sup>54</sup> A different prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces have a small bridgehead on an unspecified island in the Dnipro River delta close to the east (left) bank, but that the positions provide access only to floodplain swamp areas.<sup>55</sup> The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces appear to be preparing a serious landing across the Dnipro River to create one or multiple bridgeheads.<sup>56</sup> ISW has not observed visual confirmation of Ukrainian forces maintaining positions on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast. One of the milbloggers speculated that Ukrainian forces may be conducting river crossings in order to divert Russian forces' attention to this sector of the front and set conditions for a potential upcoming Ukraine counteroffensive.<sup>57</sup>

A Russian occupation official claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced in Zaporizhia Oblast on April 20. Zaporizhia Oblast Occupation Head Yevgeny Balitsky claimed that Ukrainian forces captured an unspecified section of a contested area of the front line in Zaporizhia Oblast.<sup>58</sup> ISW has not observed visual confirmation of recent marginal Ukrainian advances in Zaporizhia Oblast.

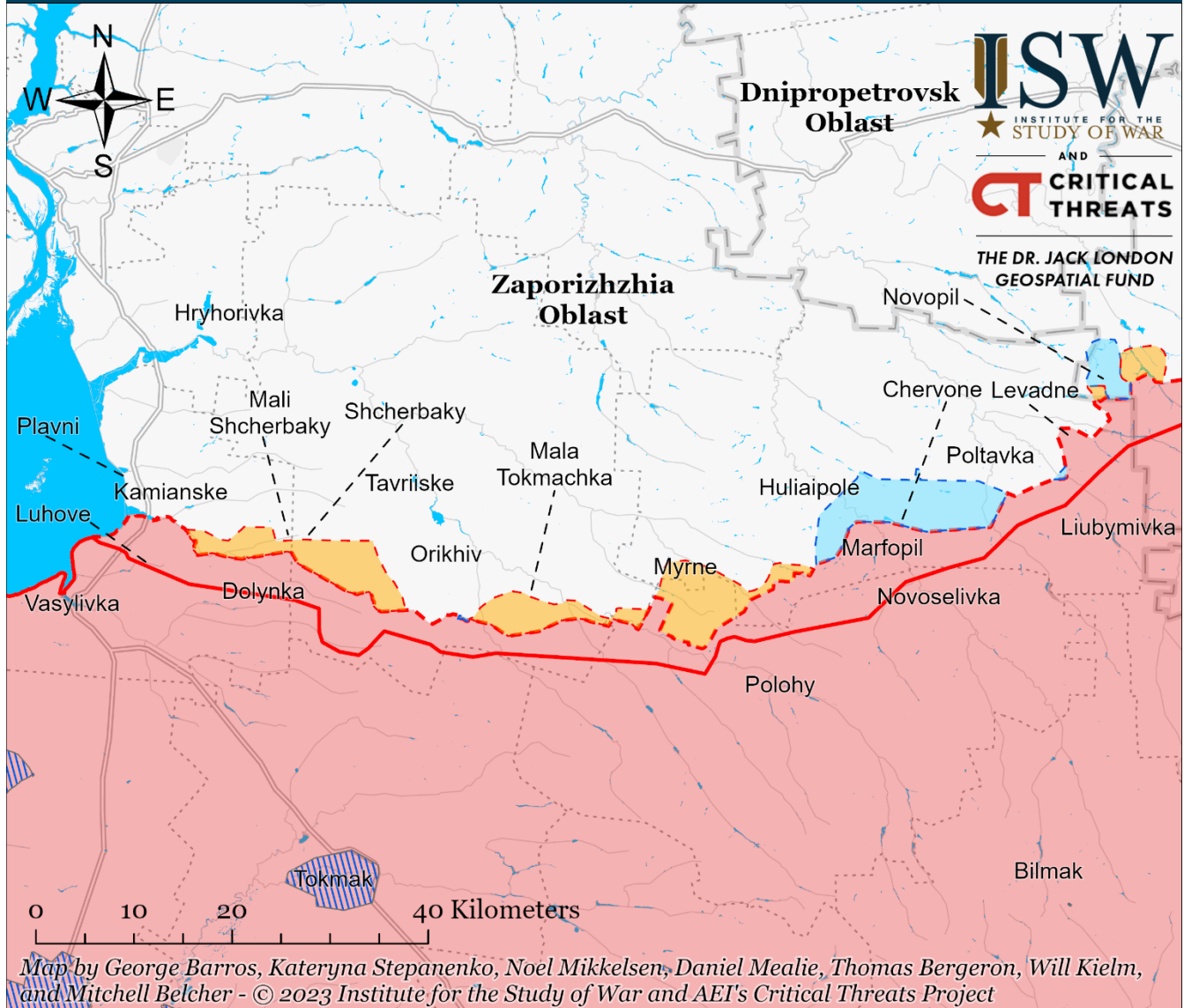
Russian forces continued routine fire west of Hulyaipole and in Kherson Oblast on April 21.<sup>59</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



\* 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 April 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- 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
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

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

Russian federal subjects are forming new cross-regional volunteer formations to support ongoing force generation campaigns. Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported that Russian officials are planning to form the “Siberia” volunteer Cossack battalion to recruit Cossacks from Siberia, the Far East, and Central Russia.<sup>60</sup> Russian Presidential Representative to the North Caucasus Federal District Yuri Chaika announced that Russia has created the “Skif” Cossack battalion with recruits from the North Caucasus and Crimea. Magadan Oblast Governor Sergei Nosov stated that Russian officials in Orenburg Oblast are forming the “Kolyma” battalion financed by Magadan Oblast budget.<sup>61</sup> Nosov stated that residents of different regions can enlist into the “Kolyma” battalion and are eligible for a one-time enlistment payment of up to 545,000 rubles (about \$6,700) and a monthly salary of up to 440,000 rubles (about \$5,400). Magadan Oblast may be attempting to shield its constituencies from contract service at the expense of residents in Orenburg Oblast.

Russian officials are continuing to issue contradictory statements regarding the subordination and operations of Russian military recruitment centers. Head of the Russian Main Organizational and Mobilization Directorate of the General Staff Colonel General Yevgeny Burdinsky stated that the Russian General Staff sent an order to Russian military recruitment centers to exclude some reservists from a training call-up due to constraints imposed by partial mobilization and conscription.<sup>62</sup> Burdinsky noted that regional governors and administration heads are in charge of the draft committee and have the authority to decide on the distribution of draft notices. Burdinsky concluded that the draft committee is not subordinate to the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), hence why the Russian General Staff’s request to cancel some reservist call-up did not affect local draft procedures.<sup>63</sup>

Russian milbloggers criticized the commander of the Luhansk People’s Republic’s (LNR) 2nd Guards Army Corps, Lieutenant General Esedulla Abachev, for seizing civilian vehicles from servicemen at the Russia-Luhansk Oblast checkpoints.<sup>64</sup> The milbloggers claimed that Abachev is forcing Russian servicemen to use suboptimal trucks and likely Soviet UAZ utility vehicles.

The *Financial Times*, citing leaked US intelligence documents, reported that Wagner Group attempted to purchase ammunition from China at the beginning of 2023.<sup>65</sup> The *Financial Times* reported that China did not provide weapons or weapon samples to Wagner and noted that there is no information that China is planning such provisions.

*Bloomberg* reported that Russia stopped supplying credit for \$10 billion worth of spare parts and two S-400 batteries air defense systems as India is unable to find ways to pay Russia without violating US sanctions.<sup>66</sup> Unnamed officials told *Bloomberg* that Russia remains unwilling to accept rupees due to exchange-rate volatility, while India simultaneously does not want to pay in rubles.<sup>67</sup>

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

Russian authorities are expanding the logistics capabilities and security measures on the Arbat Spit likely to prepare for a possible Ukrainian counteroffensive. Kherson Oblast Occupation Head Vladimir Saldo announced the construction of a second Arbat Spit road and the increasing staffing at security checkpoints, both of which Saldo claimed will solve longstanding traffic and logistics problems.<sup>68</sup> Saldo noted that there is an existing road on the Arbat Spit but that the road needs repairs.<sup>69</sup> Saldo stated that occupation authorities continue to develop residential areas in the spit, which authorities would

likely use to support increased logistics capabilities.<sup>70</sup> The decision to build a second road rather than just repair the existing Arabat Spit road suggests that Russian authorities want to significantly increase the logistics capability of the spit in a short period of time. Russian forces could use one or two roads to advance quickly from rear areas in occupied Crimea to secure checkpoints at the spit in the event of a Ukrainian counteroffensive, for example.

Ukrainian officials reported that Russian authorities continue to forcibly remove Ukrainian children to Russia under evacuation schemes. The Ukrainian Office of the General Prosecutor announced an investigation into a video that shows Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and Wagner representatives illegally removing families with underage children from Bakhmut.<sup>71</sup> The Office of the General Prosecutor stated that the Wagner Group also transported two additional families with underage children to an unspecified area. Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Human Rights Commissioner Dmytro Lubinets stated that Russian military personnel in Kherson Oblast and Enerhodar, Zaporizhia Oblast are attempting to forcibly deport Ukrainian children to the Russian Far East and to Crimea, respectively, under evacuation and health camp schemes.<sup>72</sup>

**Significant activity in Belarus (ISW assesses that a Russian or Belarusian attack into northern Ukraine in early 2023 is extraordinarily unlikely and has thus restructured this section of the update. It will no longer include counter-indicators for such an offensive.)**

**ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus, but these are not indicators that Russian and Belarusian forces are preparing for an imminent attack on Ukraine from Belarus. ISW will revise this text and its assessment if it observes any unambiguous indicators that Russia or Belarus is preparing to attack northern Ukraine.**

Belarusian forces continued to conduct combat readiness drills in Belarus.<sup>73</sup>

**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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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0aNT3UFDtWSGYrtt6i8oWKe1M6cCevpmRsffUmtwCHPpCXDBK2k2byThbEjcs47mpl>;

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<sup>2</sup> [https://t.me/miroshnik\\_r/11119](https://t.me/miroshnik_r/11119); <https://t.me/readovkanews/57183>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57184>;

<https://t.me/readovkanews/57185>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57187>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57188>;

<https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/46912>; <https://t.me/milchronicles/1794>; <https://t.me/milinfolive/99503>;

<https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/24506>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57180>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57182>;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5vvrB1YsqU>; <https://suspilne.media/450939-ukraina-otrimae-novu-dopomogu-vid-ssasilii-oboroni-vedut-kontrnastup-na-kilkoh-napramkah-421-den-vijni-onlajn/>; <https://t.me/milchronicles/1795>

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<sup>3</sup> [https://t.me/VA\\_Kyiv/1505](https://t.me/VA_Kyiv/1505)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5vvrB1YsqU>; <https://suspilne dot media/450939-ukraina-otrimae-novu-dopomogu-vid-ssa-sili-oboroni-vedut-kontrnastup-na-kilkoh-napramkah-421-den-vijni-onlajn/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-general-officer-guide-may-11>

<sup>6</sup> [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/25819](https://t.me/mod_russia/25819)

<sup>7</sup> <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-20-2023>

<sup>8</sup> <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-20-2023>

<sup>9</sup> <https://t.me/chpbelgorod/5945>

<sup>10</sup> <https://t.me/readovkanews/57296>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57291>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57281>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57277>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57274>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57271>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57268>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/57265>; <https://t.me/milinfo/99573>; <https://t.me/milinfo/99574>; [https://t.me/rlz\\_the\\_kraken/57854](https://t.me/rlz_the_kraken/57854)

<sup>11</sup> [https://t.me/boris\\_rozhin/83500](https://t.me/boris_rozhin/83500); [https://t.me/boris\\_rozhin/83509](https://t.me/boris_rozhin/83509); <https://t.me/m0sc0wcalling/23219>

<sup>12</sup> [https://t.me/aleksandr\\_skif/2667](https://t.me/aleksandr_skif/2667)

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<sup>14</sup> <https://t.me/strelkovii/4603> ; <https://t.me/KRPRus/10> ; <https://t.me/KRPRus/11> ; <https://t.me/strelkovii/4604> ; <https://t.me/strelkovii/4605> ; <https://t.me/strelkovii/4606> ; <https://t.me/strelkovii/4607>

<sup>15</sup> <https://t.me/strelkovii/4605>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-9>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-26-2023>

<sup>18</sup> <https://t.me/KRPRus/5>

<sup>19</sup> <https://t.me/KRPRus/5>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-15-2023>

<sup>21</sup> <https://t.me/KRPRus/5>

<sup>22</sup> <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-17-2023>

<sup>23</sup> <https://isw.pub/RusCampaignJuly7> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-12-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-26-2023>

<sup>24</sup> <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021123> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar032223>

<sup>25</sup> <https://meduza dot io/feature/2023/04/21/kreml-stremitsya-sozdat-v-germanii-koalitsiyu-ob-ediniv-levyh-i-pravyh-tsel-oslabit-podderzhku-ukrainy-v-evrope>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.kremlin dot ru/acts/news/70932>

<sup>27</sup> <https://isw.pub/UkrWar0318723> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-5-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar041723> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar032823>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-5-2023>

<sup>29</sup> <https://isw.pub/UkrWar041923>

<sup>30</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0XCkzTq3Afq4B4vTdvqFFYjw1uWddPEREBaxjfwWwZzrvcdjBUpYSNAJEWtw\\_aQx8l](https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0XCkzTq3Afq4B4vTdvqFFYjw1uWddPEREBaxjfwWwZzrvcdjBUpYSNAJEWtw_aQx8l);

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<sup>31</sup> <https://t.me/wargonzo/12062>

<sup>32</sup> <https://t.me/readovkanews/57262>

<sup>33</sup> [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/25834](https://t.me/mod_russia/25834)

<sup>34</sup> <https://twitter.com/KrzysztofJano15/status/1649096528152215565>;

<https://twitter.com/PauliusZaleckas/status/1649139094989991936>;

<https://twitter.com/klinger66/status/1649185396637544449>

<sup>35</sup> <https://twitter.com/klinger66/status/1649209391483179009>;

<https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1649205086281777152> ;

[https://twitter.com/SerDer\\_Daniels/status/1649446174372265984](https://twitter.com/SerDer_Daniels/status/1649446174372265984);

<https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1649458393193811970>

<sup>36</sup> <https://t.me/voenkorkotenok/46976> ; <https://t.me/wargonzo/12062> ; [https://t.me/z\\_arhiv/20491](https://t.me/z_arhiv/20491)

<sup>37</sup> <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/24560> ; [https://t.me/rusich\\_army/8486](https://t.me/rusich_army/8486) ;  
<https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/24562> ; [https://t.me/rusich\\_army/8487](https://t.me/rusich_army/8487) ; [https://t.me/basurin\\_e/932](https://t.me/basurin_e/932) ;  
[https://t.me/basurin\\_e/938](https://t.me/basurin_e/938) ; [https://t.me/orchestra\\_w/6244](https://t.me/orchestra_w/6244) ; <https://t.me/sashakots/39416> ;  
<https://t.me/wargonzo/12081> ; <https://t.me/vysokygovorit/11373> ; <https://t.me/rybar/46077>

<sup>38</sup> [https://t.me/boris\\_rozhin/83530](https://t.me/boris_rozhin/83530) ; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/24560> ; [https://t.me/rusich\\_army/8486](https://t.me/rusich_army/8486) ;  
<https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/24562> ; [https://t.me/rusich\\_army/8487](https://t.me/rusich_army/8487) ; [https://t.me/basurin\\_e/932](https://t.me/basurin_e/932) ;  
[https://t.me/basurin\\_e/938](https://t.me/basurin_e/938) ; [https://t.me/orchestra\\_w/6244](https://t.me/orchestra_w/6244) ; <https://t.me/sashakots/39416> ;  
<https://t.me/wargonzo/12081> ; <https://t.me/vysokygovorit/11373> ;

<sup>39</sup> <https://tass.ru/politika/17576391>

<sup>40</sup> [https://t.me/concordgroup\\_official/814](https://t.me/concordgroup_official/814)

<sup>41</sup> <https://t.me/sashakots/39420> ;

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<https://t.me/vysokygovorit/11373> ; [https://t.me/basurin\\_e/938](https://t.me/basurin_e/938) ; [https://t.me/orchestra\\_w/6244](https://t.me/orchestra_w/6244) ;  
<https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/24562> ; [https://t.me/rusich\\_army/8487](https://t.me/rusich_army/8487) ; <https://t.me/rybar/46092>

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<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> [https://twitter.com/auditor\\_ya/status/1649334118071582720](https://twitter.com/auditor_ya/status/1649334118071582720) ;

<https://twitter.com/TarasChuprynk/status/1649212815377399808> ; <https://t.me/voenacher/43046>

<sup>46</sup> <https://t.me/wargonzo/12062>

<sup>47</sup> <https://t.me/rybar/46077>

<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> [https://twitter.com/auditor\\_ya/status/1649168447090114560](https://twitter.com/auditor_ya/status/1649168447090114560) ;

[https://twitter.com/666\\_mancer/status/1649057288412606467](https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1649057288412606467) ; [https://t.me/lost\\_warinua/33999](https://t.me/lost_warinua/33999)

<sup>50</sup> <https://t.me/rybar/46079>

<sup>51</sup> <https://t.me/rybar/46079>

<sup>52</sup> <https://t.me/rybar/46079>

<sup>53</sup> <https://t.me/rybar/46079>

<sup>54</sup> [https://t.me/Separ13\\_13/10915](https://t.me/Separ13_13/10915) ;

<sup>55</sup> <https://t.me/strelkovii/4597>

<sup>56</sup> <https://t.me/strelkovii/4597>

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<sup>58</sup> <https://utro.ru/news/ukraine/2023/04/20/1526518.shtml> ; <https://zp-news.ru/society/2023/04/20/118149.html>

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- <sup>60</sup> <https://tass dot ru/obschestvo/17579471>
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- <sup>62</sup> <https://t.me/mobilizationnews/11350>
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- <sup>68</sup> [https://t.me/SALDO\\_VGA/704](https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/704)
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- <sup>71</sup> <https://armyinform dot com.ua/2023/04/21/iz-bahmutu-vagnerivczi-prymusovo-deportuvaly-ditej-ofis-genprokurora/>
- <sup>72</sup> [https://t.me/dmytro\\_lubinetzs/2220](https://t.me/dmytro_lubinetzs/2220)
- <sup>73</sup> <https://t.me/modmilby/26135>; <https://t.me/modmilby/26108>; <https://t.me/modmilby/26095>