

## **Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, April 2, 2024**

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**April 2, 2024, 7:15pm 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 12:45pm ET on April 2. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 3 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a law on April 2 that lowers the Ukrainian military's mobilization age from 27 to 25 years of age.** The Verkhovna Rada approved the law in May 2023, and the law will come into force on April 3, 2024.[1] Lowering the mobilization age is one of many measures that Ukraine has been considering in an ongoing effort to create a sustainable wartime force-generation apparatus.[2] Lowering the mobilization age from 27 to 25 years of age will support the Ukrainian military's ability to restore and reconstitute existing units and to create new units.[3] Ukraine will need to equip any newly mobilized military personnel with weapons, and prolonged US debates about military aid to Ukraine and delays in Western aid may impact the speed at which Ukraine can restore degraded and stand up new units. ISW continues to assess that Western-provided materiel continues to be the greatest deciding factor for the Ukrainian military's ability to restore and augment its combat power.

**Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu claimed on April 2 that Russian forces seized about 400 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory in the first three months of 2024 — a rate of advance not necessarily reflective of wider Russian offensive prospects due to the impact of US security assistance delays.** Shoigu claimed during a conference call with Russian military leadership on April 2 that Russian forces have seized 403 square kilometers of territory in Ukraine since the beginning of 2024.[4] ISW has only observed visual evidence allowing ISW to confirm that Russian forces seized approximately 305 square kilometers between January 1 and April 1, 2024. ISW continues to assess that material shortages are forcing Ukraine to conserve ammunition and prioritize limited resources to critical sectors of the front, however, increasing the risk of a Russian breakthrough in other less-well-provisioned sectors and making the frontline overall more fragile than the current relatively slow rate of Russian advances makes it appear.[5] Ukraine's materiel constraints also offer Russian forces flexibility in how they conduct offensive operations, which can lead to compounding and non-linear opportunities for Russian forces to make operationally significant gains in the future.[6]

**Ukraine conducted long-range unidentified unmanned aerial systems (UAS) strikes against Russian military production and oil refinery infrastructure in the Republic of Tatarstan, over 1,200 kilometers from the Ukrainian border.** Russian Telegram channels posted footage on April 2 showing three UAS striking the territory of the Alabuga Special Economic Zone (SEZ) near Yelabuga and causing a large explosion upon impact.[7] Geolocated footage of the strike shows that the UAS hit a dormitory area near the Yelabuga Polytechnical College.[8] Russia notably uses the production facilities at the Alabuga SEZ to make Shahed-136/131 drones to attack Ukraine.[9] Additional geolocated footage published on April 2 shows a drone strike against the Taneko oil refinery in Nizhnekamsk, Tatarstan, and Russian sources claimed that Russian electronic warfare suppressed the drone, causing it to fall on refinery infrastructure and start a fire.[10] *Reuters* reported that the Ukrainian drone strike on Taneko, Russia's third-largest oil refinery, impacted a core refining unit at the facility responsible for roughly half of the facility's oil refining.[11] Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) and Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) claimed responsibility for conducting the strikes, and GUR sources reported that the strike on Yelabuga caused "significant destruction" to Shahed production facilities.[12] Russian sources, including Tatarstan Head Rustam Minnikhanov, denied that the strikes caused any significant damage to either the drone production plants within the Alabuga SEZ or the Taneko refinery.[13] *Reuters* noted that its own data shows that constant Ukrainian drone strikes against Russian oil refineries, such as Taneko, have shut down about 14 percent of Russia's overall refining capacity.[14] The April 2 strikes are the first Ukrainian strikes on Tatarstan, and the distance of the targets from Ukraine's borders represents a significant inflection in Ukraine's demonstrated capability to conduct long-range strikes far into the Russian rear. ISW continues to assess that such Ukrainian strikes are a necessary component of Ukraine's campaign to use asymmetric means to degrade industries that supply and support the Russian military.

**Russian President Vladimir Putin's address at the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) board meeting on April 2 illustrated Russia's dissonant response to the March 22 Crocus City Hall terrorist attack as Russian authorities simultaneously pursue law enforcement actions against migrant communities while also baselessly implicating Ukraine.** Putin stated that Russian authorities are assessing the actions of all Russian law enforcement, management, supervisory services, and commercial organizations responsible for the Crocus City Hall concert venue and instructed the MVD to increase security and emergency preparedness at large public gathering areas.[15] Putin explicitly stated that the MVD needs to address several unresolved problems, including its response to extremist groups, likely to preemptively scapegoat possible criticism about the Russian intelligence failure to prevent the Crocus City Hall attack amid reports that Russia ignored international warnings, including from its allies, about the attack.[16] Putin and other Kremlin officials have struggled to reconcile information operations aimed at blaming Ukraine and the West for the attack with the reality of the Kremlin's intelligence failure, and Putin's indirect public criticism of the MVD likely aims to signal to the Russian public that he is addressing the failures that contributed to the attack.[17]

Putin continued to suggest that there are other beneficiaries of the attack that the MVD needs to investigate, however, and Russian MVD Head Vladimir Kolokoltsev proceeded to baselessly portray Ukraine as a transnational criminal and terrorist threat to Russia.[18] The Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) baselessly claimed on April 1 that the US is attempting to cover up alleged Ukrainian responsibility for the Crocus City Hall attack, including by blaming the attack on the Islamic State's Afghan branch IS-Khorasan (IS-K).[19] Russian law enforcement and intelligence

responses in the North Caucasus — such as a counterterrorism raid in Dagestan on March 31 and intensified measures targeting Central Asian migrants in Russia are further evidence that Russian authorities in practice assess that the terrorist threat is emanating from Russia’s Central Asian and Muslim minority communities instead of Ukraine.[20] The Kremlin will likely continue efforts to capitalize on domestic fear and anger about the attack to generate perceptions of Ukrainian and Western involvement in the Crocus City Hall attack and wider alleged “terrorist” attacks within Russia in hopes of increasing Russian domestic support for the war in Ukraine.[21] ISW remains confident that IS conducted the Crocus City Hall attack and has yet to observe independent reporting or evidence to suggest that an actor other than IS was responsible for or aided the attack.[22]

**Putin also attempted to address intensified debates about migration that have emerged following the Crocus City Hall attack but continued to express an inconsistent and vague stance on the issue.** Putin stated that illegal migration can be a breeding ground for extremist activity and asserted that Russia needs to improve its migration database since the alleged attackers were able to legally stay in Russia without speaking Russian.[23] Putin called for Russia to radically update its approach to migration policy and instructed the MVD to draft its own new migration policy.[24] Putin did not expound upon what this new policy should entail beyond vague demands that it should preserve interethnic and interreligious harmony and Russia’s cultural and linguistic identity.[25] Putin reiterated that it is unacceptable to use the Crocus City Hall attack to provoke ethnic, Islamophobic, or xenophobic hatred, a rhetorical position that may collide with the Kremlin’s and Russian Orthodox Church’s contradictory appeals to ultranationalists’ anti-migration fervor.[26] Anti-migrant policies could worsen Russian labor shortages and degrade Russia’s cryptomobilization efforts if Russia deports large numbers of migrants or if significant portions of Russia’s migrant communities emigrate due to anti-migrant sentiment, and Russian authorities are generally unlikely to fully give into ultranationalist xenophobic demands to drastically reduce if not eliminate foreign immigration to Russia at the expense of Russia’s war effort. The Kremlin’s attempts to appeal to ultranationalists may generate further inconsistencies and contradictions within the Kremlin’s migration policy, however.[27]

**Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi stated on April 2 that the GUR believes that Russian forces will likely temporarily pause strikes against Ukrainian energy infrastructure in order to replenish low missile stockpiles.[28]** Skibitskyi stated that the Russian military currently has about 950 high-precision operational-strategic and strategic level missiles with a range of or exceeding 350 kilometers available in its arsenal.[29] Skibitskyi stated that the Russian military tries to prevent the missile stockpile from falling below 900 missiles and that Russian forces will temporarily pause missile strikes to accumulate more missiles to a level above this threshold.[30] Skibitskyi stated that Russia plans to produce 40 Kh-101 cruise missiles in April and suggested that Russia will have roughly at least 90 missiles to conduct two or three more large strike series against Ukrainian targets before pausing to restock missiles.[31] Skibitskyi noted that Russian forces have not launched any Kalibr cruise missiles since September 2023 and that Russia has accumulated at least 260 of these missiles and aims to produce 30 more in April. Skibitskyi added that Russian forces may not be launching Kalibr cruise missiles either because Ukrainian air defenses can easily intercept them or because Ukrainian strikes have damaged Black Sea Fleet (BSF) Kalibr missile carriers.[32] Skibitskyi and Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian forces are increasingly launching unknown ballistic missiles from occupied Crimea at Ukraine, but noted that it is unclear if Russian forces are using Zircon hypersonic cruise missiles or

modernized Onyx-M anti-ship cruise missiles.[33] Russian forces can launch Zircon missiles at semi-ballistic trajectories, however.[34] Humenyuk reported on March 27 that Russian forces had accumulated “several dozen” Zircon missiles in military facilities in occupied Crimea.[35] Skibitskyi stated that Russian forces have accumulated 440 Onyx anti-ship cruise missiles, and that Russia can produce about six to eight of these missiles per month.[36] Russian forces temporarily reduced the intensity of its missile strikes and relied more heavily on Shahed drone strikes in summer and fall 2023 to marginally replenish stocks of high-precision missiles ahead of the intensification of the Russian strike campaign in winter 2023-2024 and spring 2024.[37]

**US sanctions against Russia continue to impact Russian financial ties to post-Soviet countries, as Kyrgyzstan’s national payment system Elkart announced on April 2 that it would stop processing transactions using the Russian “Mir” payment system to prevent secondary sanctions.** Elkart’s operator Interbank Processing Center stated that Elkart would stop processing all transactions with the “Mir” payment system starting on April 5 since the US sanctioned “Mir” system’s operator, the National Payment Card System Joint Stock Company, in February 2024.[38] Ten of 23 Kyrgyz commercial banks completely or partially suspended their use of the “Mir” payment system in October 2022 after the US Department of the Treasury reported that it would impose sanctions on financial institutions that enter contracts with the National Payment Card System.[39] ISW recently reported that several Kazakh banks and Armenia’s Central Bank also suspended the use of Mir payment systems to prevent secondary sanctions.[40]

**Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu confirmed on April 2 that Vice Admiral Sergei Pinchuk became the commander of the Black Sea Fleet (BSF).**[41] Pinchuk replaced former BSF Commander Admiral Viktor Sokolov, who likely died as a result of a Ukrainian strike on the BSF headquarters in occupied Sevastopol, Crimea in September 2023.[42]

**NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg reportedly proposed a NATO aid package that would send \$100 billion of military assistance to Ukraine over five years.**[43] *Bloomberg* reported that all NATO members need to approve the proposal and that the details will likely change during negotiations between member states.[44] *Bloomberg* reported that the proposal gives NATO control of the US-led Ukraine Contact Defense Group that coordinates weapons supplies to Ukraine and that sources familiar with the talks stated that NATO members are discussing whether the total sum should include bilateral aid to Ukraine. *Financial Times* reported that NATO foreign ministers will discuss the proposal on April 3 and that discussions will likely continue in the lead up to the NATO summit in Washington in July 2024.[45]

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a law on April 2 that lowers the Ukrainian military’s mobilization age from 27 to 25 years of age.**
- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu claimed on April 2 that Russian forces seized about 400 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory in the first three months of 2024 — a rate of advance not necessarily reflective of wider Russian offensive prospects due to the impact of US security assistance delays.**
- **Ukraine conducted long-range unidentified unmanned aerial systems (UAS) strikes against Russian military production and oil refinery infrastructure in the Republic of Tatarstan, over 1,200 kilometers from the Ukrainian border.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin’s address at the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) board meeting on April 2 illustrated Russia’s dissonant**

**response to the March 22 Crocus City Hall terrorist attack as Russian authorities simultaneously pursue law enforcement actions against migrant communities while also baselessly implicating Ukraine. Putin also attempted to address intensified debates about migration that have emerged following the Crocus City Hall attack but continued to express an inconsistent and vague stance on the issue.**

- Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi stated on April 2 that the GUR believes that Russian forces will likely temporarily pause strikes against Ukrainian energy infrastructure in order to replenish low missile stockpiles.**
- US sanctions against Russia continue to impact Russian financial ties to post-Soviet countries, as Kyrgyzstan’s national payment system Elkart announced on April 2 that it would stop processing transactions using the Russian “Mir” payment system to prevent secondary sanctions.**
- NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg reportedly proposed a NATO aid package that would send \$100 billion of military assistance to Ukraine over five years.**
- Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Kreminna and Avdiivka amid continued positional engagements along the entire line of contact on April 2.**
- Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stated on April 2 that the Russian military intends to finish and deploy several newly constructed small missile and patrol ships in 2024.**
- The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) is increasing its law enforcement presence in occupied Ukraine in order to intensify Russian control over Ukrainian civilians and strengthen security over critical infrastructure.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 2, 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

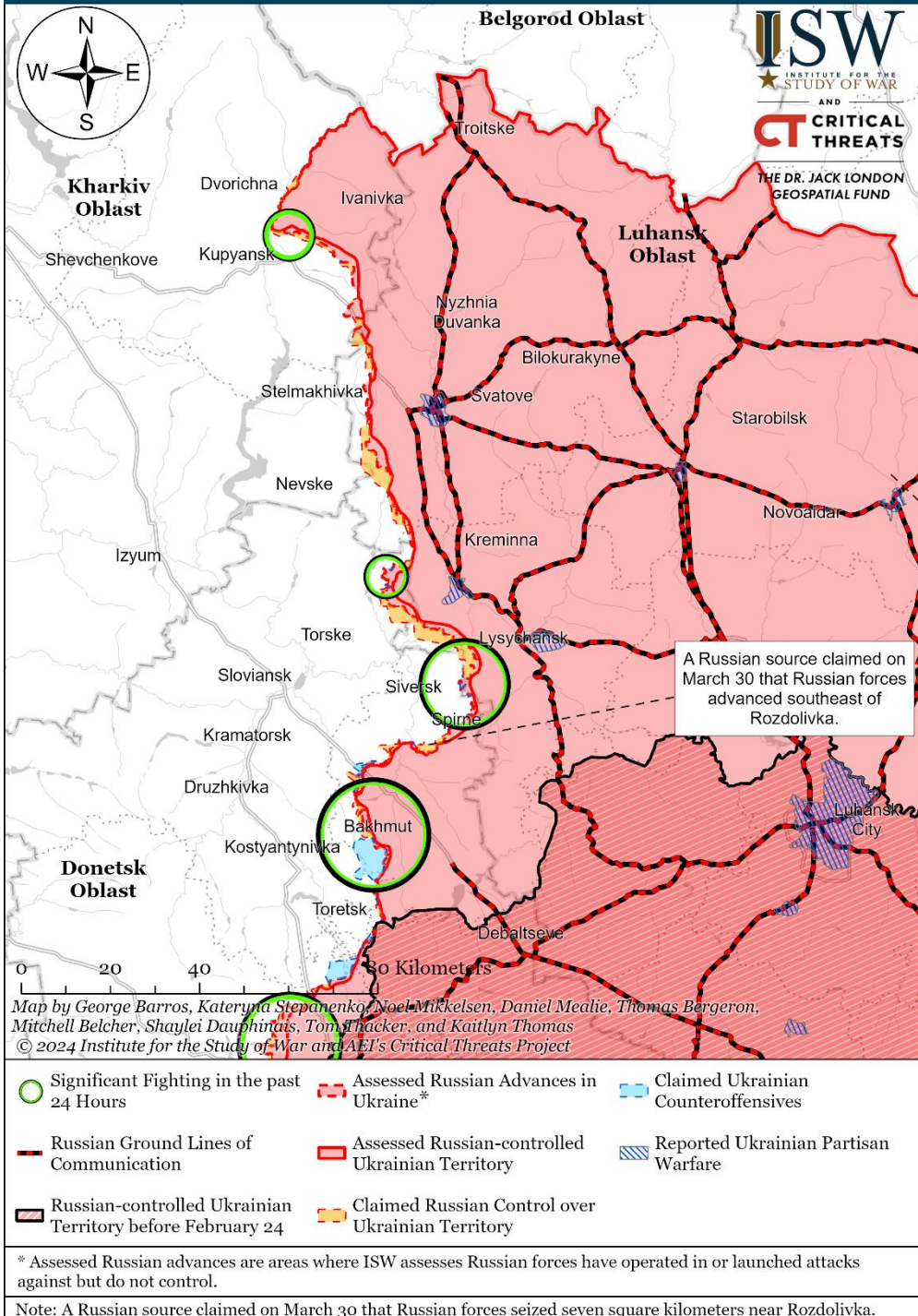
### **Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine**

#### **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)**

Russian forces recently advanced south of Kreminna amid continued positional engagements along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on April 2. Geolocated footage published on April 2 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced south of Bilohorivka (south of Kreminna).[46] Positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and west of Kreminna near Terny.[47]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of April 2, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

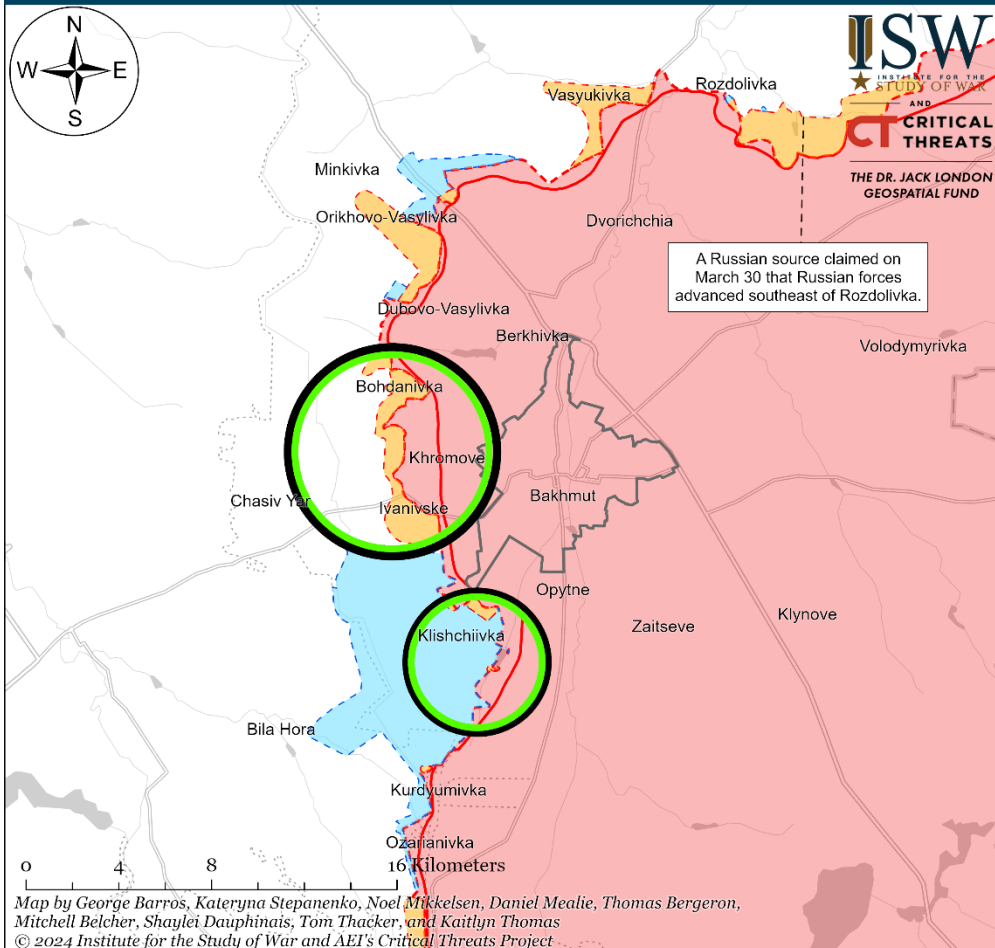


## **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**



Positional engagements continued near Bakhmut on April 2, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[48] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces are concentrating reserves east of Kanal (an eastern suburb of Chasiv Yar) for future offensive operations.[49] Russian milbloggers continued to claim that Russian forces are about 600–800 meters from the outskirts of Chasiv Yar, although ISW has only collected data to confirm that Russian forces at the furthest point of their confirmed advances are about 640 meters from the easternmost outskirt of Chasiv Yar.[50] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske and Chasiv Yar; southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka; and south of Bakhmut near Niu York and Pivdenne.[51] A Russian milblogger claimed that a Russian serviceman from the 331st Airborne (VDV) Regiment (98th VDV Division) stated that Ukrainian forces are constantly operating first-person view (FPV) drones in this direction, complicating Russian forces' advance near Chasiv Yar.[52]

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of April 2, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas  
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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

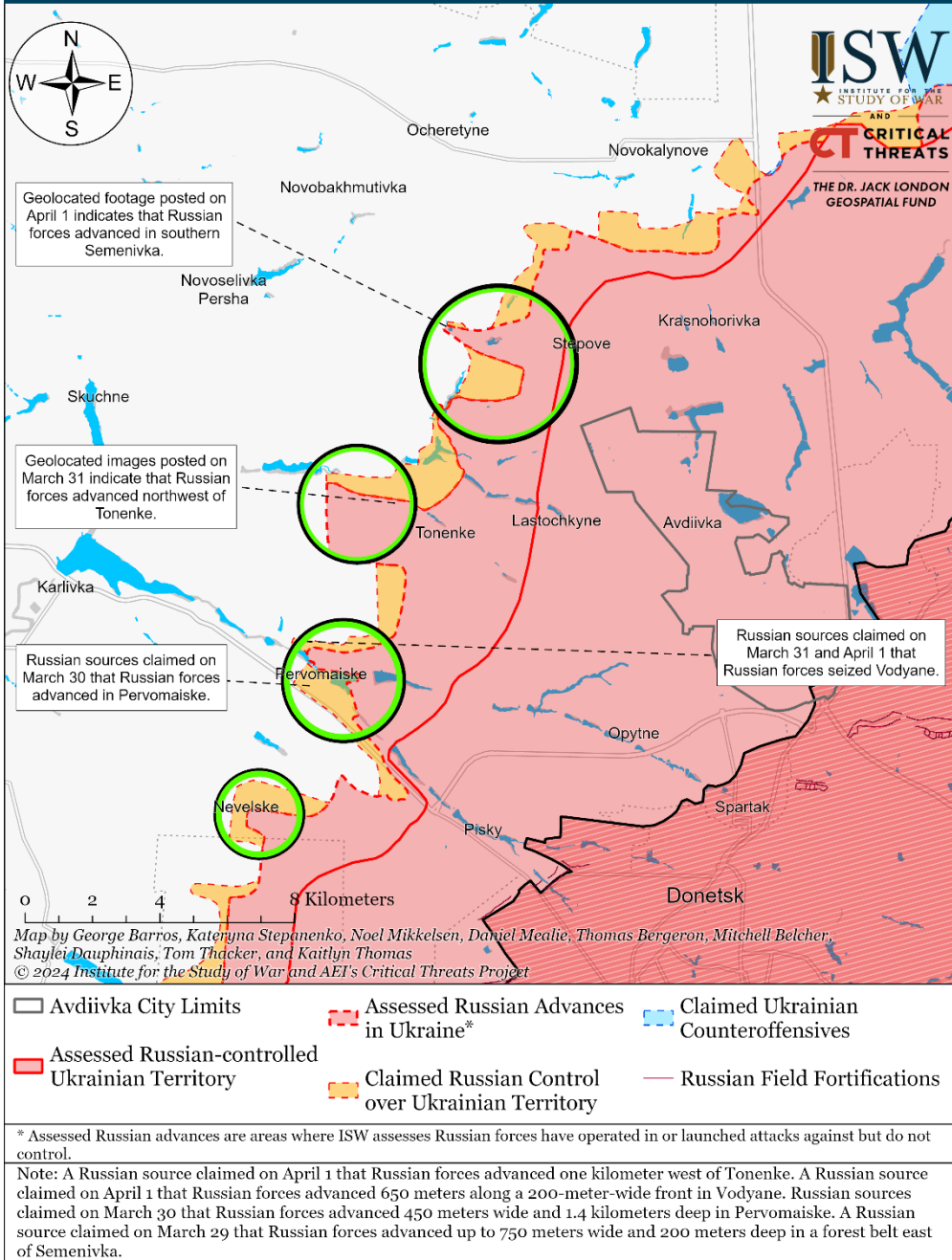
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on April 1 that Russian forces advanced 620 meters along a two-kilometer-wide front toward the Stupky-Holubivske-2 Nature Reserve. A Russian source claimed on March 30 that Russian forces seized seven square kilometers near Rozdolivka.

Russian forces recently advanced near Avdiivka amid continued positional engagements in the area on April 2. Geolocated footage published on March 31 indicates that Russian forces advanced west of Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka).[53] Geolocated footage published on April 1 also indicates that Russian forces advanced in southern Semenivka (northwest of Avdiivka).[54] Additional geolocated footage published on April 2 indicates that Russian forces advanced west of Tonenke (west of Avdiivka), although it is unclear if this is older footage from the previous Russian attack west of Tonenke on March 30 or footage from more recent renewed Russian pushes in this area.[55] Select Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced one kilometer west from Tonenke towards

Umanske (west of Avdiivka and west of Tonenke).[56] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces made further advances near Berdychi and Semenivka and near Umanske (west of Avdiivka), Vodyane (southwest of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[57] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued northwest of Avdiivka near Berdychi and Semenivka; west of Avdiivka near Umanske and Tonenke; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[58] A Ukrainian officer serving in a brigade in the Avdiivka direction stated that Russian forces sometimes launch tactical attacks in two directions at once, such as when Russian forces conducted a mechanized assault near Pervomaiske while a group of up to 30 Russian infantry attacked in Nevelske on an unspecified date.[59]

# Assessed Control of Terrain near Avdiivka as of April 2, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

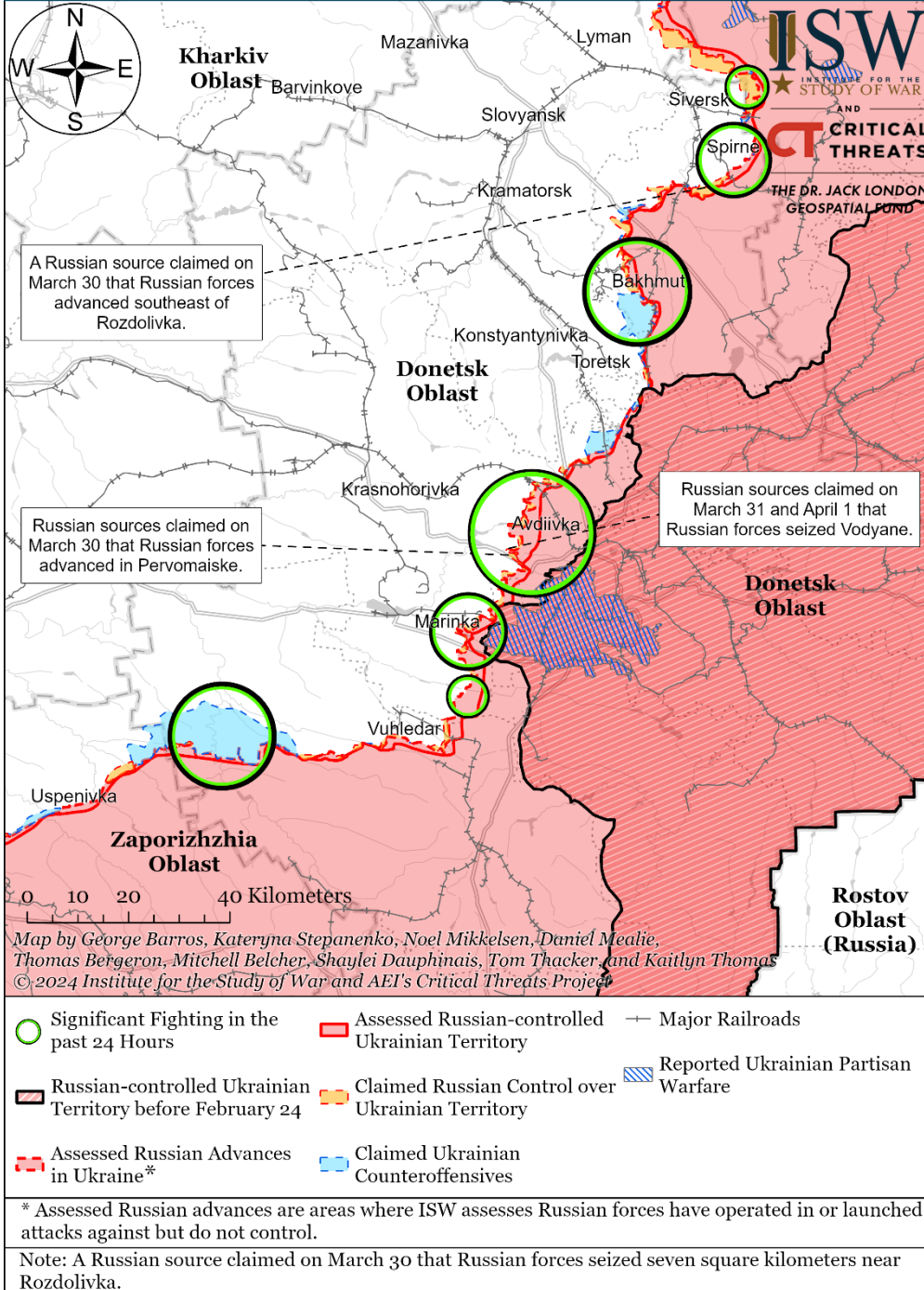


A Russian Storm-Z instructor claimed that Russian forces had some tactical successes but lacked adequate operational-level coordination between units during the failed battalion-sized Russian mechanized assault west of Avdiivka on March 30. The instructor claimed that the March 30 assault that resulted in 12 tank and eight infantry fighting vehicle losses occurred in multiple waves over multiple days.[60] ISW has not observed footage of destroyed or damaged Russian equipment in the

area prior to the March 30 attack that would indicate that this attack occurred over multiple days, however. The instructor also claimed that Russian forces successfully employed combined arms techniques in the first waves of the attack and used armored vehicles to transport infantry with artillery and air support, but that Russian artillery cover decreased in subsequent waves, resulting in significant Russian vehicle losses. The instructor claimed that the last wave of Russian assaults did not result in losses, however. The instructor claimed that Russian forces could ultimately "overload" Ukrainian forces' strike capabilities if Russian forces could send forward more waves of armored vehicles — possibly referring to windows of opportunity that Russian forces can exploit given dwindling Ukrainian artillery shell supplies. The instructor noted that continuous offensive pressure requires sufficient fire, anti-drone, and engineering support, without which Russian forces will continue to suffer from disproportionately high losses and be unable to exploit tactical successes for a broader operational breakthrough. A Ukrainian officer in a brigade operating in the Avdiivka direction also commented on the March 30 large-scale Russian attack near Tonenke, stating that Ukrainian artillery first struck Russian heavy equipment, consistent with the Storm-Z instructor's description of Russian armored vehicle use in this attack.[61]

Positional engagements continued west and southwest of Donetsk City on April 2, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued west of Donetsk near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka.[62] Elements of the Russian 255th Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) are reportedly operating near Pobieda (southwest of Donetsk City).[63]

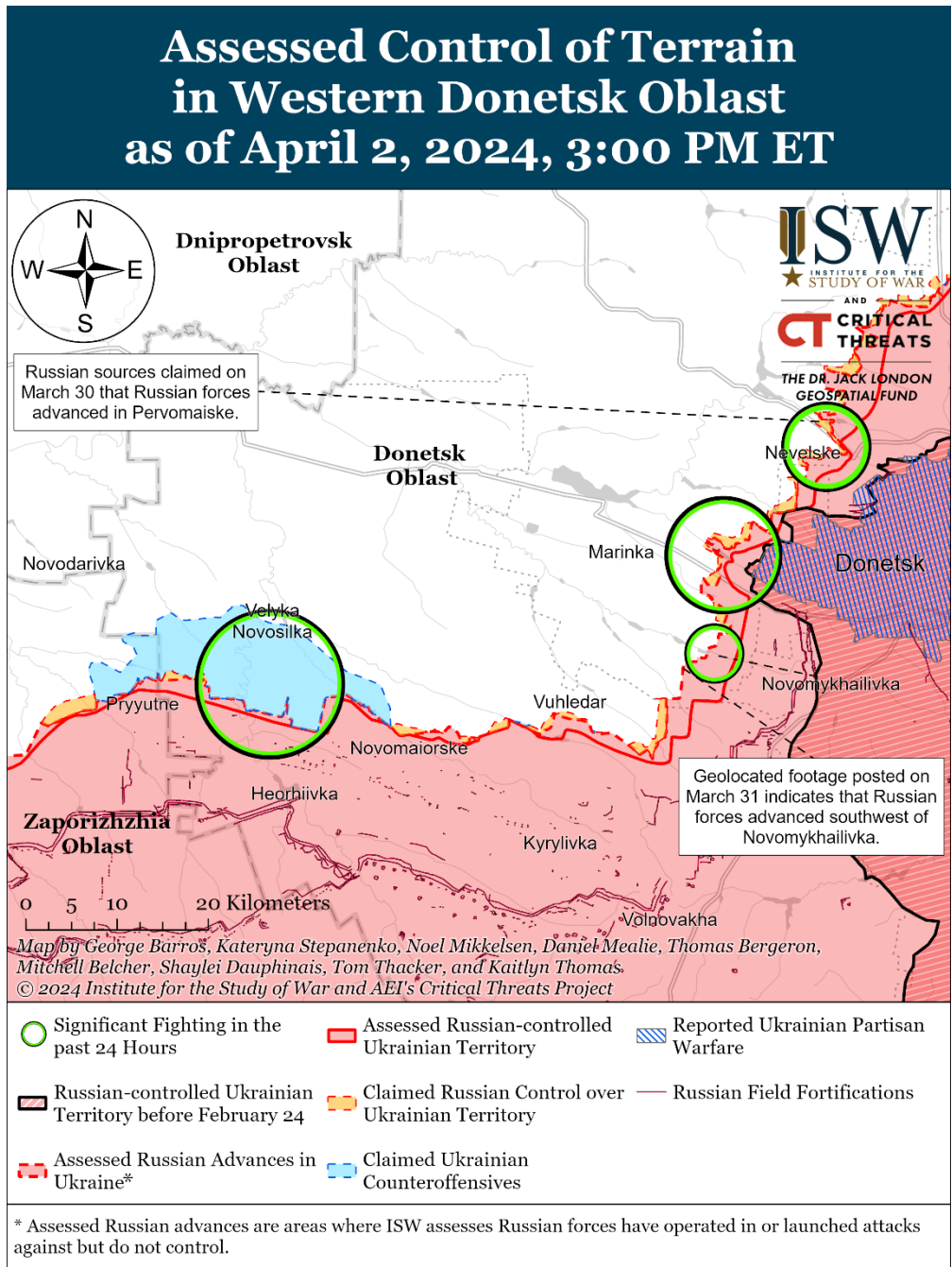
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of April 2, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on April 2, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that



positional engagements continued near Mykilske (southeast of Vuhledar), Velyka Novosilka, Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka), and Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka).[64]



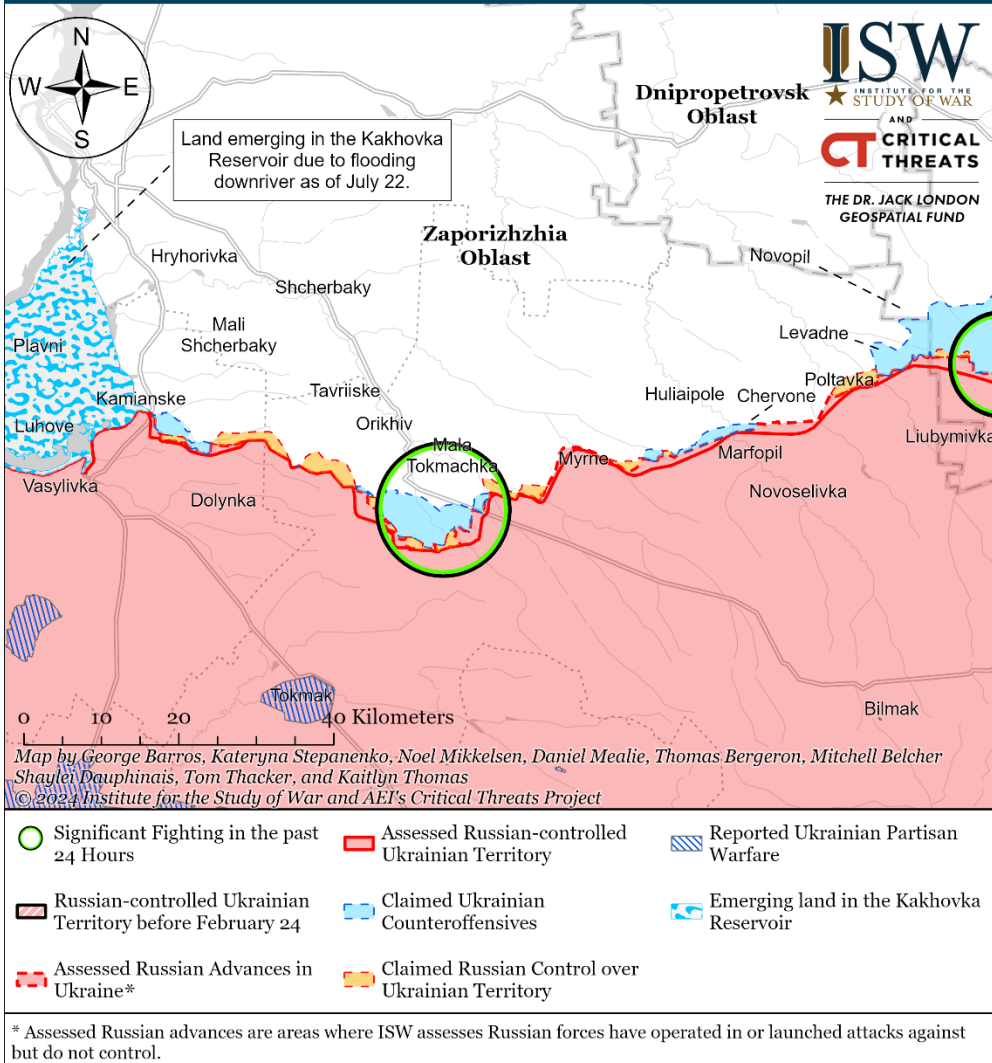
### **Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

Limited positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on April 2, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. A prominent Russian milblogger noted that Russian offensive efforts in Zaporizhzhia Oblast have “stalled” due to lowland terrain features in the Robotyne area.[65] Ukrainian and Russian sources reported continued positional fighting near Robotyne, northwest of

Verbove (east of Robotyne, and Mala Tokmachka (northeast of Robotyne).[66] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are holding positions in southern Robotyne on Silska Street and the Robotyne post office.[67] Elements of the 247th Guards Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) are reportedly operating near Verbove.[68]

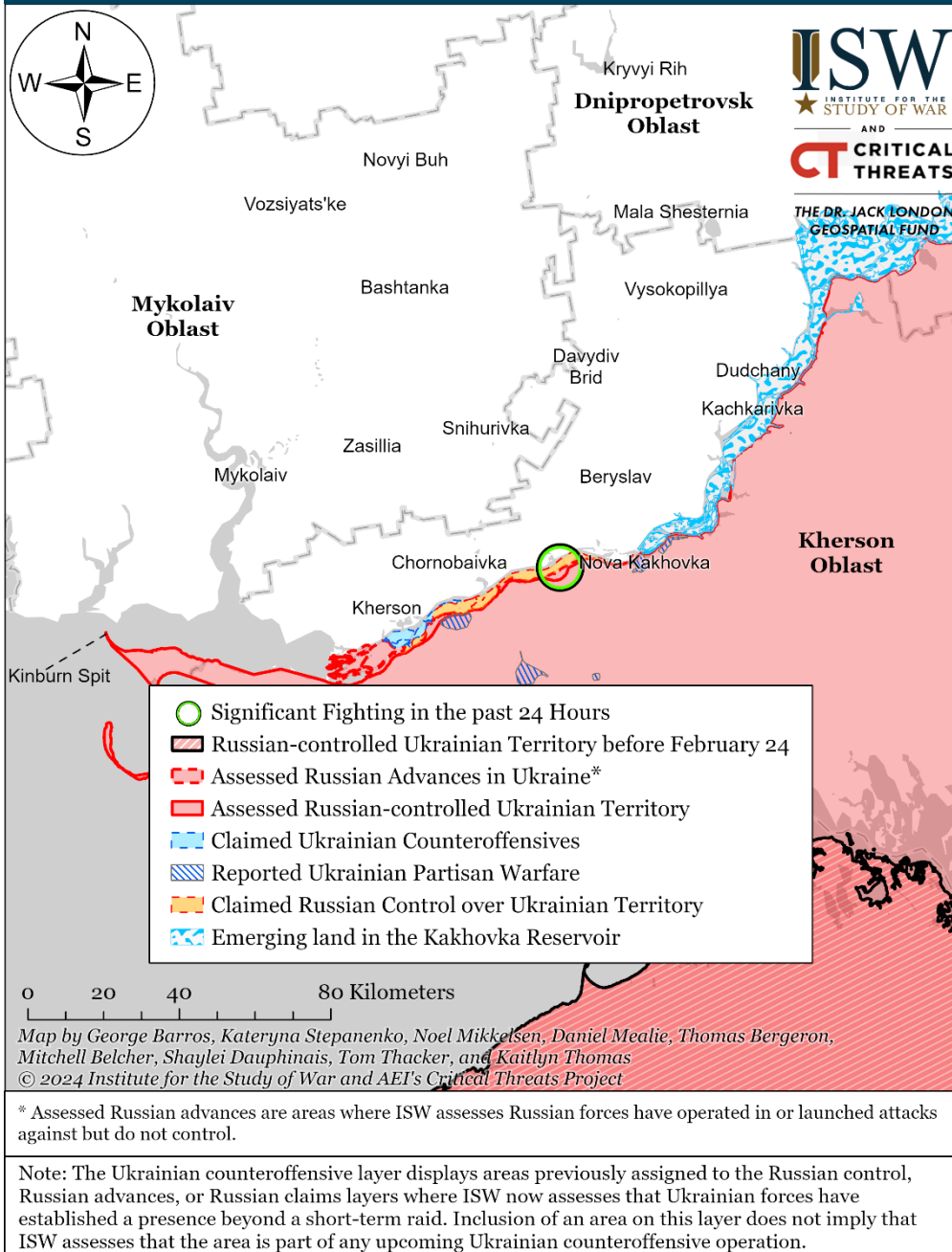


# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of April 2, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional engagements continued in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on April 2, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area.[69] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are unsuccessfully counterattacking in Krynyky, but that Russian artillery fire is preventing them from gaining additional territory in the settlement.[70] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk reiterated that Russian forces are unable to use armored vehicles for assaults on Krynyky due to heavy equipment losses and that Russian forces are conducting two to three attacks on Ukrainian positions per day while conducting drone and artillery strikes between assaults.[71] Humenyuk also noted that Russian forces are rotating units from eastern Ukraine to southern Ukraine in order to compensate for personnel losses sustained in attacks in the east bank of Kherson Oblast.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 2, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that it blew up an electrical substation in occupied Sevastopol, Crimea, on the night of April 2.[72] Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne Crimea* stated that the attack caused temporary localized power outages in part of Sevastopol.[73] GUR sources did not specify how the GUR agents damaged the substation. Sevastopol occupation governor Mikhail Razvozhaev denied reports of an incident at the substation and claimed that power outages were the result of an accidental short-circuit.[74]

## **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 limited series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on April 2. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched a Kh-59 cruise missile from occupied Zaporizhia Oblast and 10 Shahed-136/131 drones from occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea, and that Ukrainian forces destroyed nine of the Shahed drones within Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.[75] Ukrainian officials reported that a Russian drone strike damaged an energy facility in Kirovohrad Oblast.[76]

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

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stated on April 2 that the Russian military intends to finish and deploy several newly constructed small missile and patrol ships in 2024. Shoigu stated that the JSC Zelenodolsk Shipyard in the Republic of Tatarstan will hand over three new Karakurt-class missile carriers to the Russian Navy in 2024.[77] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that the Russian military intends to transfer three Project 228000 *Karakurt*-class ships to the Black Sea Fleet (BSF), two to the Pacific Fleet, and one to the Baltic Fleet.[78] Shoigu added that the Zelenodolsk Shipyard is also constructing a Project 22160 patrol ship that it intends to transfer to the BSF in 2024.[79] Ukrainian forces have reportedly disabled roughly 33 percent of the BSF's warships as of early February 2024 and subsequently conducted further strikes against BSF assets, and the Russian military may be prioritizing the construction of small missile carriers and patrol boats to replenish some BSF losses.[80]

Shoigu also stated that the Russian military is prioritizing the expansion of the training infrastructure. Shoigu claimed that the Russian military has increased the number of training grounds and facilities from 100 to 240 since 2012, and that Russian forces are currently constructing two new training grounds in occupied Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.[81] Shoigu stated that Russian forces plan to build an additional five training grounds in unspecified locations by the end of 2024.[82] Russian forces likely lack the military infrastructure and training capacity to properly staff several planned new divisions and armies to their full doctrinal end strengths in the immediate to medium term, and Russian forces will likely have to expand training infrastructure to support the Russian military's ongoing expansion efforts.[83]

Russian officials reportedly continue coercive efforts to collect personal information on potential recruits. Russian opposition outlet *Mobilization News* reported on April 2 that Russian officials are requiring Moscow university students to sign consent forms to transfer their information to military registration and recruitment offices in exchange for receiving their Moscow Social Card.[84] The Moscow Social Card gives university students discounts on public transport in Moscow City and Moscow Oblast. Activists from the Russian human rights organization "Military Lawyers" stated that Russian officials may be collecting the students' information to create a database of Moscow residents eligible for military service within the Unified Military Registry.[85]

Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov reported on March 31 that Russia has almost completed the construction of a railway line connecting Rostov-on-Don, Krasnodar Krai, and occupied Crimea through occupied Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts.[86] Budanov stated that Russia has been building this railway line for over a year and that the railway line could pose a problem for Ukrainian forces, likely referencing how the



Russian military could easily use such a railway line to rapidly transit materiel and manpower in the Russian rear.

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

Nothing significant to report.

**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 its coverage of Ukraine 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)**

The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) is increasing its law enforcement presence in occupied Ukraine to intensify Russian control over Ukrainian civilians and critical infrastructure. MVD Head Vladimir Kolokoltsev stated at the April 2 MVD Collegium that the MVD is establishing territorial units in occupied Ukraine and that almost 14,000 police officers have assumed positions in occupation police forces, most of whom previously served in local law enforcement.[87] Kolokoltsev claimed that the MVD has transferred over 800 employees from Russia to occupied Ukraine and that 1,500 new personnel entered the police service in occupied Ukraine. Kolokoltsev stated that the MVD established separate units to maintain order, counter extremism, and protect state and transit infrastructure in occupied Ukraine. Kolokoltsev stated that MVD has dedicated increased attention to protecting critically important railway transit facilities and has increased mobile police patrol teams in occupied Ukraine from an unspecified previous number to 700 personnel who inspect about 2,500 objects per day. Kolokoltsev also noted that the MVD has participated in 3,000 joint events with Rosgvardia, the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), and Federal Security Service (FSB), in occupied Ukraine. Russia also has deployed at least 35,000 Rosgvardia personnel in occupied Ukraine, many of which likely perform law enforcement tasks.[88] ISW previously noted that the influx of Russian law enforcement personnel in occupied Ukraine is likely also in part intended to artificially alter the demographics of occupied Ukraine by bringing more Russian citizens to occupied areas.[89]

The Russian MVD continues to forcibly passportize Ukrainians in occupied Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that 3.2 million residents in in occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts have received Russian passports since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Kolokoltsev claimed that over 2,500 MVD employees have established 150 reception points for passportization in occupied Ukraine and have documented over 90 percent of residents in occupied areas.[90] Russian authorities have long weaponized the issuance of Russian passports in occupied Ukraine to claim special rights to residents of occupied areas and used purported statistics about Russian passport holders to justify military actions against Ukraine.[91]

Ukrainian Kherson Oblast Administration Head Oleksandr Prokudin reported on April 2 that Ukrainian authorities and the "Save Ukraine" volunteer organization returned a teenager from



occupied Kherson Oblast to Ukrainian-controlled areas.[92] Prokudin reported that the teenager feared that Russian occupation authorities would force him into Russian military service after forcing him to participate in the Russian Young Cadets National Movement (Yunarmiya), a military-patriotic movement that instills pro-Russian and militarized ideals in youth in occupied Ukraine. Prokudin stated that Ukrainian authorities have returned 48 minors from occupied Kherson Oblast since the beginning of 2024.

Russian and Ukrainian sources reported on April 1 that a vehicle explosion killed a Russian occupation official in occupied Starobilsk, Luhansk Oblast.[93] Kremlin newswire TASS stated that the explosion killed Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Center for Services for Educational Organizations of Starobilsk Raion Deputy Head, Valery Chaika, and that the LNR Investigative Committee opened a criminal case investigating his death.[94]

### **Russian Information Operations and Narratives**

Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev reiterated a number of longstanding Russian narratives about NATO on April 2.[95] Patrushev accused NATO of using unspecified "terrorist organizations" for its own interests and claimed that NATO structures its policy at the behest of the US.[96] Patrushev claimed that the US and NATO are pushing Ukraine to use extreme force, restating the commonplace Kremlin information operation that Russia is blameless in invading Ukraine. Patrushev also accused NATO and the West of instigating Russophobic policies.

Russian sources continue to further an information operation that seeks to frame Russia as the sole protector of the Orthodox faith, while posing Ukraine as an affront to Russian religious ideals. Several Russian state news outlets, commentators, and milbloggers claimed on April 2 that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and Federal Customs Service detected and eliminated an alleged smuggling ring on the Latvia–Russia border in Pskov Oblast through which unnamed actors were allegedly moving explosive devices packed into Orthodox icons and church items to Russia via European Union (EU) states and Ukraine.[97] Kremlin spokesperson Dmitri Peskov responded to the incident and claimed that is an "alarming signal" of Ukraine's "terrorist methods," but did not provide any direct evidence of Ukrainian involvement in the alleged smuggling.[98] Russian milbloggers similarly baselessly blamed Ukraine for involvement in the case, with one claiming that a smuggler was Ukrainian and wanted to blow up Russian Orthodox churches, and another claiming that the incident shows that Ukraine has fallen into "monstrous heresy" that must be eradicated.[99] Russia has continually weaponized religion to frame Ukraine as evil and heretical, while framing the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) as the ultimately protector of Orthodox Christian values.[100] The ROC, however, is a Kremlin-controlled tool of Russian hybrid warfare that is helping Russia prosecute the war and occupation of Ukraine, as ISW has frequently assessed.[101] These allegations also support the larger ongoing Russian information operation positing that Ukraine is a state sponsor of terror against Russia.

### **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)**

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko continued boilerplate rhetoric aimed at feigning conflict with the West. Lukashenko claimed on April 2 that Belarus does not want to fight but is "preparing for

war” because “if you want peace, [one has to] prepare for war.”[102] Lukashenko claimed that Belarus “does not need to threaten anyone” and does not “want any foreign territory.”

The boards of the Belarusian State Security Committee (KGB) and Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) met in Moscow on April 2.[103] The SVR press bureau claimed that the meeting focused on joint work in various areas of intelligence activities and bilateral cooperation. The SVR press bureau claimed that SVR and KGB representatives emphasized that the Russian and Belarusian special services have an increased responsibility to disclose the West’s alleged “hostile plans” towards Russia and Belarus and to protect and strengthen the defense, industrial, and technological potential of the Union State.

**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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