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**April 8, 2025, 9:00 pm ET**

**Note: The data cut-off for this product was 11:30 am ET on April 8. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 9 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

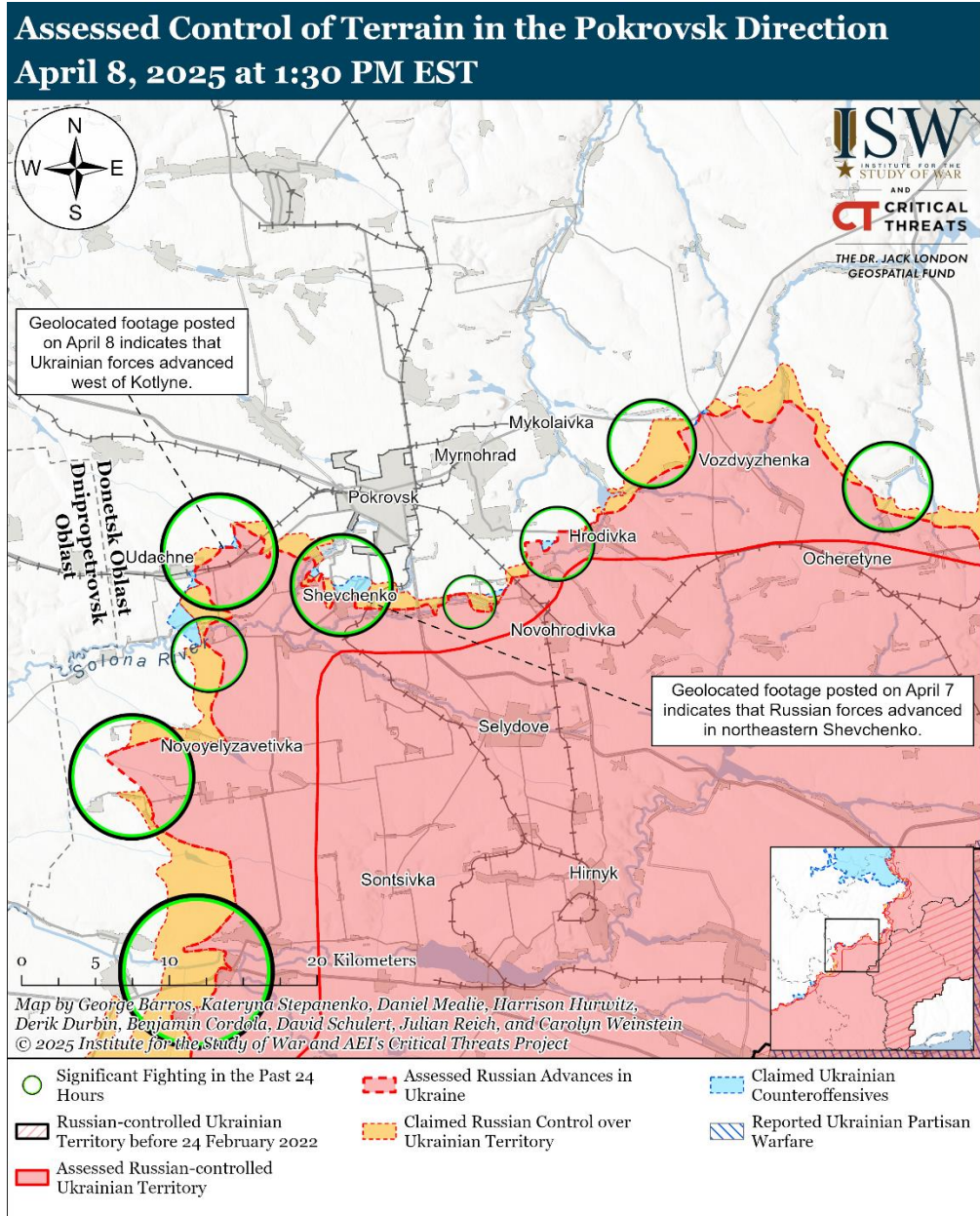
**Ukrainian forces recently captured Chinese nationals fighting in the Russian military in several areas of Donetsk Oblast.** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reported on April 8 that Ukrainian forces captured several Chinese "fighters" who were fighting for Russia near Bilohorivka (east of Siversk) and Tarasivka (northeast of Pokrovsk) in recent attacks and that Ukrainian intelligence indicated that there are "significantly more Chinese nationals" in the Russian military.[1] Zelensky noted that Ukrainian forces came into contact with a group of six Chinese fighters during several recent attacks and captured two. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha stated that the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) summoned the Chinese charge d'affairs in response to the incident.[2] US Department of State Spokesperson Tammy Bruce characterized the Chinese nationals' involvement as "disturbing" on April 8 and stated that "China is a major enabler of Russia" that "provides nearly 80 percent of the dual use items Russia needs to sustain the war." [3]

ISW has observed reports of various unspecified Russian entities recruiting vulnerable migrant workers into the Russian military to fight in Ukraine both in Russia and abroad. Indian authorities revealed in 2024 that unspecified Russian entities were managing a human trafficking network that lured Indian citizens to Russia under false pretenses and then coerced them into signing military contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense to fight in Ukraine.[4] Indian and Russian authorities partnered to repatriate Indian citizens who had involuntarily joined the Russian military in October 2024, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) could demonstrate that its government was not involved in the participation of its citizens in this war by undertaking a similar effort in the future.[5] Beijing has not yet offered any formal response to these reports.

**Russian and US authorities announced a second round of US-Russia bilateral discussions focused on normalizing diplomatic missions but not on discussing the ceasefire agreements offered jointly by the US and Ukraine will be held in Istanbul on April 10.** The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) announced on April 8 that Russian Ambassador to the United States Alexander Darchiev and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Sonata Coulter will lead their respective delegations and that the meetings will follow the same format as the February 27 meeting.[6] Unnamed diplomatic sources told Russian outlet *RBK* that the discussions will be held on April 10.[7] US Department of State Spokesperson Tammy Bruce confirmed that the bilateral discussions will occur on April 10 and will solely focus on normalizing US and Russian diplomatic operations and that discussions about Ukraine

are not on the agenda.[8] The Kremlin continues to demonstrate its refusal to substantively engage with the United States on proposed ceasefire agreements and future peace negotiations in Ukraine.[9]

**Russian forces are currently pursuing three distinct tactical objectives in the Pokrovsk direction, but Ukrainian drone operations and localized counterattacks are continuing to complicate Russian advances in the area.** Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Major Viktor Trehubov stated on April 7 that Russian forces are trying to cut the T-0504 Pokrovsk-Kostyantynivka highway northeast of Pokrovsk, bypass Pokrovsk from the west, and attack in the Novopavlivka (southwest of Pokrovsk) direction.[10] Russian forces are making limited gains northeast of Pokrovsk toward the T-0504 highway and southwest of Pokrovsk toward Novopavlivka but appear to be struggling to advance immediately south and southwest of Pokrovsk — where Ukrainian forces have focused most of their counterattacks in February, March, and early April 2025.[11]



**Russian advances northeast of Pokrovsk support both the ongoing Russian effort to envelop Pokrovsk from the east and west and the effort to pressure Kostyantynivka from the south by advancing along the T-0504 highway and eliminating the Ukrainian salient southwest of Toretsk.**[12] The Russian military command reportedly introduced additional units to offensive operations east and northeast of Pokrovsk in early 2025, but Russian forces have only made marginal gains toward Kostyantynivka (northeast of Pokrovsk) in recent months. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that Russia redeployed elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 1st Donetsk People's Republic Army Corps [DNR AC]) near Vozdvyzhenka (east of Pokrovsk) in January 2025 and elements of the 20th Motorized Rifle Division (8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) to the area in February 2025.[13] The Russian military command likely intended to leverage these units and elements of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th CAA) in Toretsk to exploit anticipated Russian breakthroughs in these areas and make significant advances towards Kostyantynivka.[14] Russian units previously operating in these two areas failed to breakthrough Ukraine's defense and culminated as the 20th and 150th motorized rifle divisions arrived near Vozdvyzhenka and in Toretsk respectively, however, prompting the Russian military command to prematurely introduce the 20th and 150th motorized rifle divisions into combat in order to maintain their operational tempo in these areas. Russian forces have not made significant advances northeast of Pokrovsk as a result and only advanced five to seven kilometers north of Vozdvyzhenka over the last two months. Russian forces recently advanced beyond the western outskirts of Toretsk and southwest of Toretsk near Panteleymonivka and Oleksandropil, and Russian forces may allocate additional troops and reprioritize offensive operations northeast of Pokrovsk if Russian forces begin to make more significant advances from Toretsk toward Kostyantynivka.[15]

**The situation immediately south and southwest of Pokrovsk remains extremely dynamic amid intensified Russian offensive operations and localized Ukrainian counterattacks and drone operations in the area.** Russian forces intensified offensive operations in the Pokrovsk direction in mid-March 2025 aimed at enveloping Pokrovsk and seizing Pokrovsk and Myrnohrad (just east of Pokrovsk) but have not made significant advances since late Fall 2024 due to localized Ukrainian counterattacks and drone operations in the area.[16] Geolocated footage published on April 8 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently marginally advanced west of Kotlyne (southwest of Pokrovsk), and additional geolocated footage published on April 7 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced in northeastern Shevchenko (south of Pokrovsk).[17] The deputy commander of a Ukrainian drone detachment operating in the area stated on April 8 that Russian forces are attacking "non-stop" in the Pokrovsk direction and occasionally attack with armored vehicles.[18] Ukrainian forces began localized counterattacks and made marginal advances south of Pokrovsk near Shevchenko and Pishchane and southwest of Pokrovsk near Kotlyne and Nadiivka in late January and early-to-mid February 2025.[19] Ukrainian forces have not been able to establish enduring positions in the area, however, and Russian forces have slowly retaken most of Ukraine's marginal advances south and southwest of Pokrovsk in recent weeks. Ukrainian forces are continuing to conduct sporadic, localized counterattacks in the area, likely in an effort to complicate Russian advances and threaten Russian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) in the Russian salient immediately southwest of Pokrovsk.

**Russian forces continue to deplete manpower and materiel in unsuccessful mechanized assaults and ongoing infantry assaults with armored vehicle support further southwest of Pokrovsk.** A Ukrainian tactical group operating in the Pokrovsk direction reported on April 8 that

Russian forces recently conducted a company-sized mechanized assault near Yasenove (southwest of Pokrovsk) in an attempt to seize Bohdanivka, Troitske, and Horikhove (all west of Yasenove) and that Ukrainian forces destroyed two tanks, two armored personnel carriers, four all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), four motorcycles, and 50 Russian troops during the assault.[20] Additional geolocated footage published on April 7 shows that Ukrainian forces repelled another company-sized Russian mechanized assault near Sribne (southwest of Pokrovsk) on April 6 and damaged three armored vehicles and five tanks during the assault.[21] The commander of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Pokrovsk direction stated on April 8 that Russian forces have recently begun using more armored vehicles in the area but have also resorted to using motorcycles and golf carts to make advances.[22] The spokesperson of another Ukrainian brigade operating in the area stated on April 2 that Russian equipment losses have tripled in the area since the start of negotiations (likely referring to mid-February 2025).[23] Russian forces have advanced marginally closer to the Donetsk-Dnipropetrovsk administration border as a result of mechanized assaults in the area in recent weeks, particularly west of Preobrazhenka (southwest of Pokrovsk), but Russian forces have not advanced the remaining three kilometers into Dnipropetrovsk Oblast as of this report.[24]

**Russian forces have only made marginal advances throughout the Pokrovsk direction due to localized Ukrainian counterattacks and improved integration of Ukrainian ground and drone forces.** The Russian military command has historically struggled to conduct and connect multi-directional offensive operations in Ukraine, and Ukrainian drone operations are further complicating this effort. Russian milbloggers have repeatedly claimed that Ukrainian drones have low altitude air superiority and are forcing Russian forces to conduct rotations on foot over 10 kilometers and complicating Russian supplies of ammunition, water, and gasoline.[25] One Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian drones are preventing Russian forces from operating more than three kilometers north and west of Selydove (currently 10 kilometers south and 30 kilometers east of the frontline) and that Ukrainian drones are monitoring and restricting access to all roads in this direction.[26] A Ukrainian battalion command operating in the Pokrovsk direction reported in February 2025 that Ukrainian drone operators hold some areas of their defense lines in the Pokrovsk direction almost completely independently from infantry support.[27] ISW previously noted that Ukrainian drone operations have been key in defending against Russian advances in the Pokrovsk direction and throughout the frontline over the last year, although Ukraine must address its morale, force generation, and training issues to completely stall the Russian advance in Donetsk Oblast.[28]

**Russian forces have spent the last 13 months and lost over five divisions' worth of tanks and thousands of troops attacking towards Pokrovsk and trying to seize the town. Ongoing Russian offensive operations to seize Pokrovsk and attack Kostyantynivka highlight Russian President Vladimir Putin's determination to seize all of Ukraine through military means at whatever cost if he cannot do so through negotiations.** Trehubov estimated in February 2025 that Russian forces were losing 14,000 to 15,000 casualties, including roughly 7,000 killed in action (KIA), each month in the Pokrovsk direction — suggesting that Russian forces lost up to 45,000 casualties in the Pokrovsk direction in the first three months of 2025.[29] The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Toretsk direction stated that Russian forces have lost over 15,000 Russian KIA in Toretsk since mid-July 2024 and estimated that Russian forces have lost over 50,000 total casualties in this direction.[30] ISW previously reported that Russian forces had lost at least five divisions' worth of armored vehicles and tanks in Pokrovsk Raion

as of early October 2024, and Russian forces have only sustained further losses over the last six months.[31] ISW has previously assessed that Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) cannot produce new armored vehicles and artillery systems at rates that can offset Russia's current tempo of losses in the medium- to long-term.[32] Russian forces temporarily fielded fewer armored vehicles in the Pokrovsk and Kurakhove direction in late 2024, likely in response to concerns about dwindling armored vehicle supplies, although the recent uptick in Russian armored vehicle use in these areas highlights Russia's desperation to make further gains at any cost. Future Russian attacks on and into Pokrovsk and Kostyantynivka would only generate greater manpower and materiel losses if the Russian military is even capable of conducting such operations after having suffered significant armored vehicle and personnel losses over the last three years of fighting.

Putin and the Russian military command appear determined to seize Pokrovsk and attack Kostyantynivka despite these losses, however. Ongoing Russian attacks towards Kostyantynivka from several directions highlight Russia's ongoing efforts to seize the fortress belt, despite the fact that an offensive operation against the wider Ukrainian fortress belt in Donetsk Oblast would likely take Russian forces several years to complete, assuming that the West continues to provide aid to Ukraine.[33] ISW previously assessed that Russian commanders are likely willing to undertake these long-term operations because they are operating under the assumption or with direct knowledge that Putin does not intend to end the war in Ukraine in the near future.[34] Putin has previously articulated a theory of victory that assumes that the Russian military will be able to continue gradual, creeping advances in Ukraine indefinitely and has repeatedly indicated that he has no interest in a resolution of the war on any terms but those he dictates.[35] The US Office of the Director of National Intelligence's (ODNI) 2025 Annual Threat Assessment assessed in March 2025 that Putin remains committed to pursuing Ukrainian surrender through both diplomatic and military means.[36] ISW continues to assess that Putin has no interest in ending the war and intends to continue fighting until he accomplishes his objectives in Ukraine, which are the toppling of the current Ukrainian government and the categorical destruction of the Ukrainian military.[37]

**Russian forces renewed long-range missile and drone strikes against Ukraine overnight on April 7 to 8 following a brief pause on April 6 to 7.[38]** The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched an Iskander-M ballistic missile from Kursk Oblast and 46 Shahed and decoy drones from the direction of Primorsko-Aktarsk, Krasnodar Krai.[39] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed nine drones over northern and eastern Ukraine and that 31 decoy drones were "lost," likely due to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference. Ukrainian sources reported that the Iskander-M missile struck a recreation center in Vysoky, Kharkiv Oblast.[40] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces also struck Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk oblasts.[41]

**Russian forces continue to innovate with long-range Shahed strike drone tactics to maximize the impact of strikes against Ukraine.** Ukrainian military journalist and aviation expert Vadim Kushnikov gave an interview to Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* published on April 8 noting that Russian forces are now attempting to fly Shahed drones in the densest possible formations to hit targets simultaneously, whereas Russian forces previously dispersed Shahed drones widely to make it more difficult for Ukrainian air defenses to intercept the drones.[42] Kushnikov stated that Russian forces will concentrate a group of 10 to 15 Shahed drones outside of a city before striking the city, and

that Russian forces launch a set number of drones, accumulate them in a group, and fly the drones along a set route in that formation. German outlet *BILD* recently reported that Russian forces have altered their strike drone tactics and are loitering drones several kilometers from their targets at high altitudes before conducting synchronized strikes with multiple drones.[43] Kushnikov stated that Russian forces have also increased the number of drone launch sites from three to five and are focusing on Ukrainian targets closer to the border in northeastern Ukraine, giving Ukrainian air defenses less time to react and intercept the drones. Kushnikov noted that Ukrainian forces are developing countermeasures against Russian drone strikes, including using first person view (FPV) drones as interceptors along with combat lasers. Russian forces may be leveraging increased Shahed production rates to facilitate denser and more focused strike tactics as part of ongoing Russian efforts to innovate their long-range strike packages.[44]

**European states continue to provide financial and military aid to Ukraine.** The Norwegian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Prime Minister's Office announced on April 7 that Norway will provide four billion kroner (approximately 365.3 million USD) in grants to Czechia's artillery ammunition initiative for Ukraine in 2025, as well as one billion kroner to the European Peace Facility (EPF) financing mechanism.[45] The Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever stated on April 8 that the Belgian government will allocate one billion euros to Ukraine in 2025.[46] De Wever also stated that Belgium will deliver two F-16s to Ukraine in 2025 to be used for spare parts and will deliver at least two operational F-16s to Ukraine in 2026.[47] De Wever stated that Ukrainian and Belgian military industrial companies signed four unspecified contracts and that Belgian entities are interested in starting the production of unspecified weapons in Ukraine.[48]

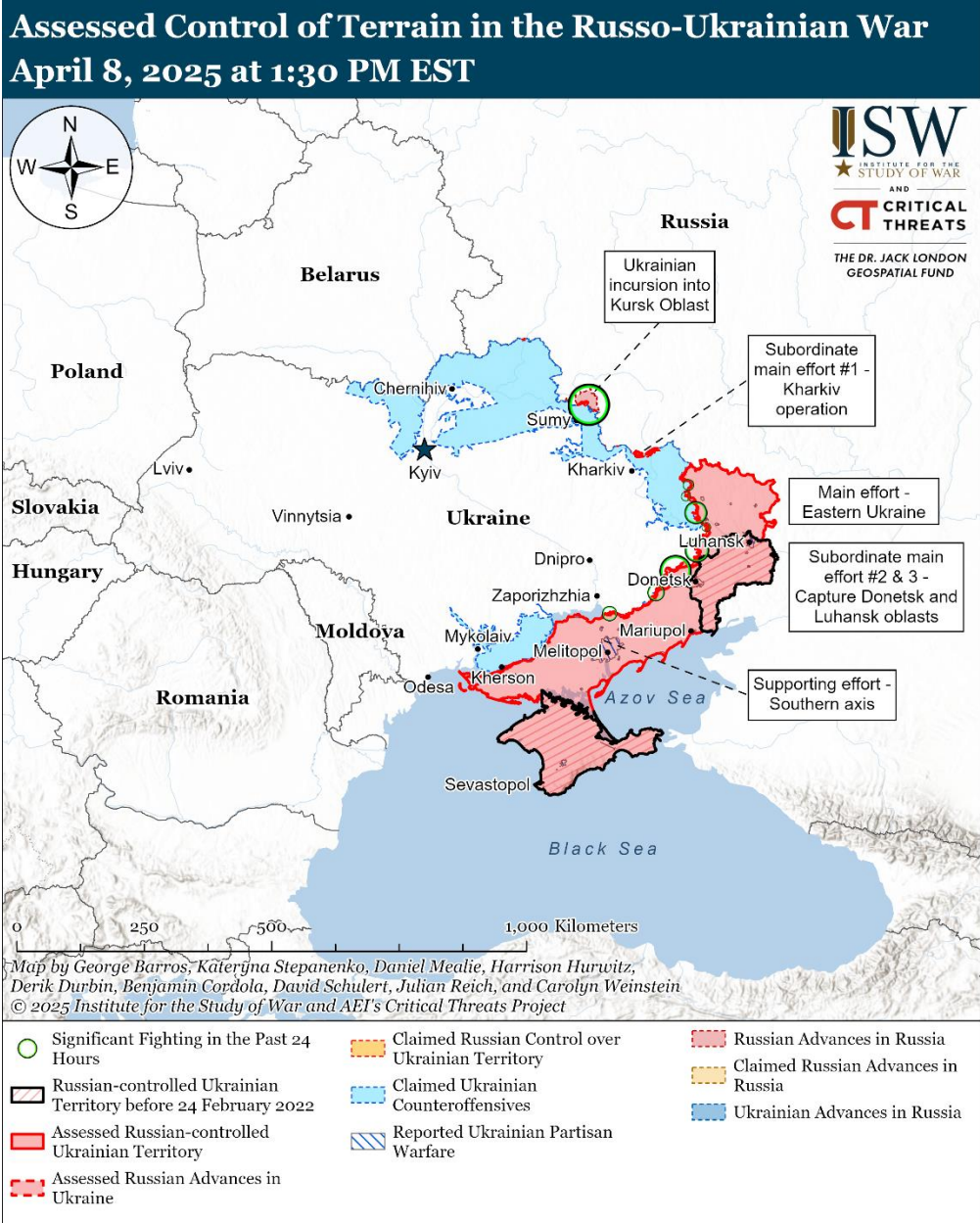
**The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced an initiative ostensibly aimed at securing medical treatment and rehabilitation for wounded Russian troops, but the MoD may weaponize this initiative against wounded servicemembers in practice.** Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov signed a decree on April 8 ordering the establishment of mobile medical commissions to examine wounded Russian forces in frontline positions and identify soldiers requiring treatment and rehabilitation.[49] The Russian MoD noted that the mobile medical commissions will include senior medical specialists, surgeons, therapists, neurologists, and nurses. Russian authorities may be introducing this initiative to portray that the MoD is working to resolve long-standing front-line issues related to the pervasive allegations of abuse of wounded Russian personnel.[50] Ukrainian Southern Defense Forces Spokesperson Colonel Vladyslav Voloshyn stated that Russian military command is currently forming a battalion of mobilized prisoners with incurable diseases to conduct future assaults in the Zaporizhia direction.[51] Ukrainian officials have repeatedly reported that the Russian military command is sending wounded and medically unfit soldiers on assaults to draw Ukrainian fire and expose Ukrainian positions before better trained Russian forces attack.[52] Belousov could issue an order to stop all such abuses if the Russian MoD prioritized addressing this issue. The Kremlin may also be attempting to mitigate budgetary concerns by centralizing control over medical evaluations for wounded servicemembers and possibly limiting the number of future veterans of the war in Ukraine who qualify for state support.

### **Key Takeaways:**



- **Ukrainian forces recently captured Chinese nationals fighting in the Russian military in several areas of Donetsk Oblast.**
- **Russian and US authorities announced a second round of US-Russia bilateral discussions focused on normalizing diplomatic missions but not on discussing the ceasefire agreements offered jointly by the US and Ukraine will be held in Istanbul on April 10.**
- **Russian forces are currently pursuing three distinct tactical objectives in the Pokrovsk direction, but Ukrainian drone operations and localized counterattacks are continuing to complicate Russian advances in the area.**
- **Russian advances northeast of Pokrovsk support both the ongoing Russian effort to envelop Pokrovsk from the east and west and the effort to pressure Kostyantynivka from the south by advancing along the T-0504 highway and eliminating the Ukrainian salient southwest of Toretsk.**
- **The situation immediately south and southwest of Pokrovsk remains extremely dynamic amid intensified Russian offensive operations and localized Ukrainian counterattacks and drone operations in the area.**
- **Russian forces continue to deplete manpower and materiel in unsuccessful mechanized assaults and ongoing infantry assaults with armored vehicle support further southwest of Pokrovsk.**
- **Russian forces have only made marginal advances throughout the Pokrovsk direction due to localized Ukrainian counterattacks and improved integration of Ukrainian ground and drone forces.**
- **Russian forces have spent the last 13 months and lost over five divisions' worth of tanks and thousands of troops attacking toward Pokrovsk and trying to seize the town. Ongoing Russian offensive operations to seize Pokrovsk and attack Kostyantynivka highlight Russian President Vladimir Putin's determination to seize all of Ukraine through military means at whatever cost if he cannot do so through negotiations.**
- **Russian forces renewed long-range missile and drone strikes against Ukraine overnight on April 7 to 8 following a brief pause on April 6 to 7.**
- **Russian forces continue to innovate with long-range Shahed strike drone tactics to maximize the impact of strikes against Ukraine.**
- **European states continue to provide financial and military aid to Ukraine.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced an initiative ostensibly aimed at securing medical treatment and rehabilitation for wounded Russian troops, but the MoD may weaponize this initiative against wounded servicemembers in practice.**

- **Ukrainian forces recently advanced near Pokrovsk and Russian forces recently advanced in Kursk and Belgorod oblasts and near Lyman, Toretsk, Pokrovsk, and Velyka Novosilka.**
- **The Kremlin is considering passing a bill that may incentivize volunteer recruitment for conscription-age men ages 18 to 30 years old.**



***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.***

- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – 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
- Significant Activity in Belarus

### **Alleged Ceasefire Violations**

*Ukraine and Russia have not yet concluded a maritime ceasefire agreement due to ongoing Russian demands for Western sanctions relief. Negotiations regarding the conditions of the ceasefire on strikes against energy infrastructure are ongoing, and the resolution of these negotiations remains unclear.*

The Russian MoD claimed on April 8, without evidence, that Ukrainian forces struck Russian energy infrastructure facilities in Kursk Oblast and occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.[53]

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) claimed on April 8 that Ukrainian forces conducted roughly 300 strikes per day against civilian infrastructure in Russia and occupied Ukraine, including energy infrastructure, between March 31 and April 8.[54] Russian authorities have not provided evidence to support claims of Ukrainian strikes against Russian energy infrastructure facilities.

### **Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation**

**Russian forces recently advanced in Kursk Oblast amid continued fighting in the Kursk-Sumy Oblast border area.**

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 7 indicates that Russian forces advanced along a road northwest of Guyevo (south of Sudzha) during a reinforced platoon-sized mechanized assault.[55]

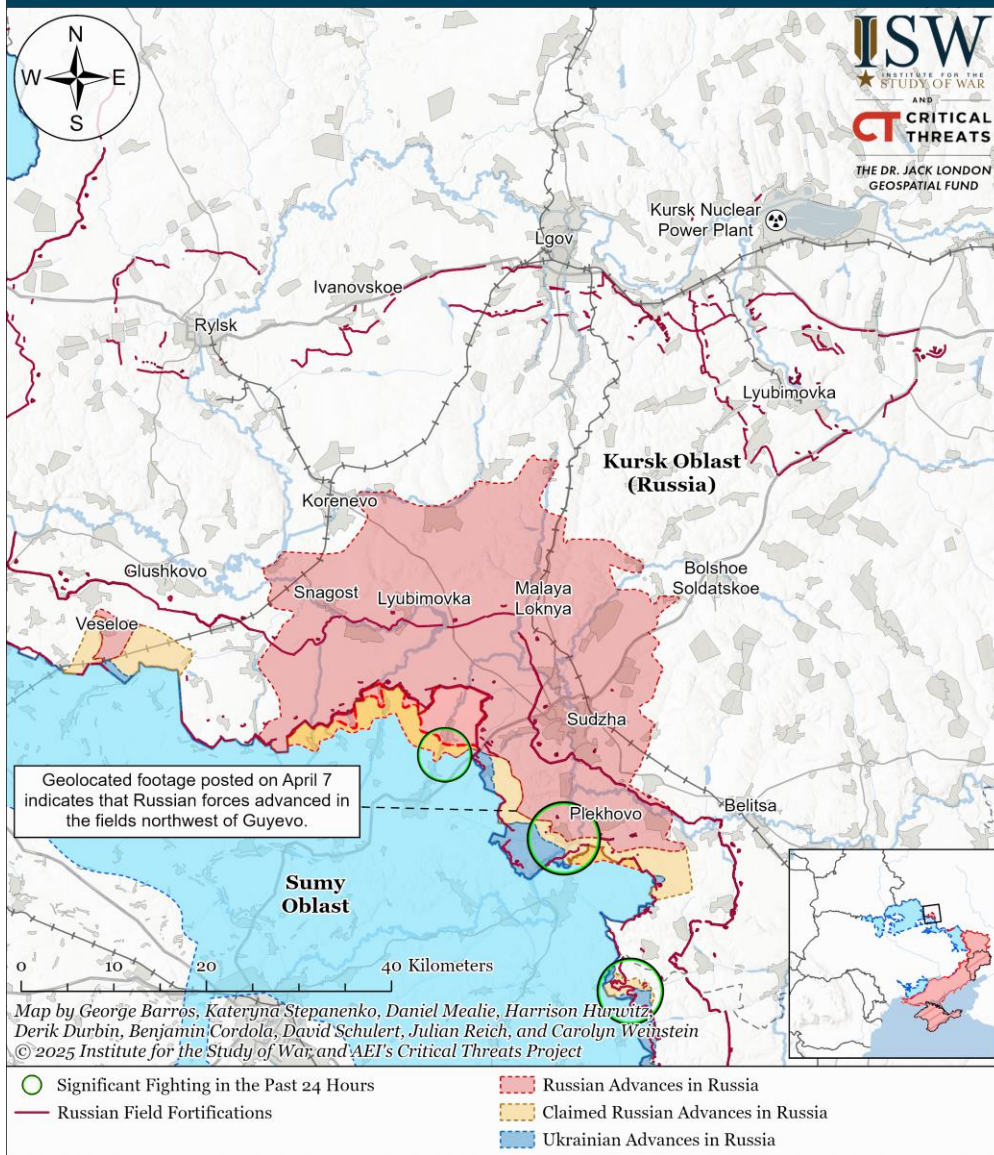
Unconfirmed claims: The Russian MoD and other Russian sources claimed on April 8 that elements of the 22nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (72nd Motorized Rifle Division, 44th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]), possibly alongside elements of the 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) or 177th Naval Infantry Brigade (Caspian Flotilla), seized Guyevo.[56] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Gornal (southwest of Guyevo) and reached Oleshnya (west of Sudzha), but that Ukrainian forces still maintain positions in both settlements.[57] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also advanced near Basivka (northeast of Sumy City across the international border) toward Loknya (south of Basivka) in Sumy Oblast.[58]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces continued ground attacks near Oleshnya, Guyevo, and Gornal in Kursk Oblast and Loknya in Sumy Oblast.[59]

Russian forces recently conducted a raid further into northern Sumy Oblast but likely did not establish new positions. Geolocated footage published on April 8 shows that Russian forces temporarily advanced into northern Loknya on April 6.[60] A Ukrainian source reportedly affiliated with Ukrainian military intelligence reported that Russian forces conducted a raid with eight personnel on all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) on the morning of April 6 and that Ukrainian forces repelled the raid.[61] A Russian milblogger similarly claimed that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces from Loknya during a subsequent counterattack.[62]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 106th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating fiber-optic drones along the H-07 Sudzha-Yunakivka highway.[63]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kursk Direction April 8, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



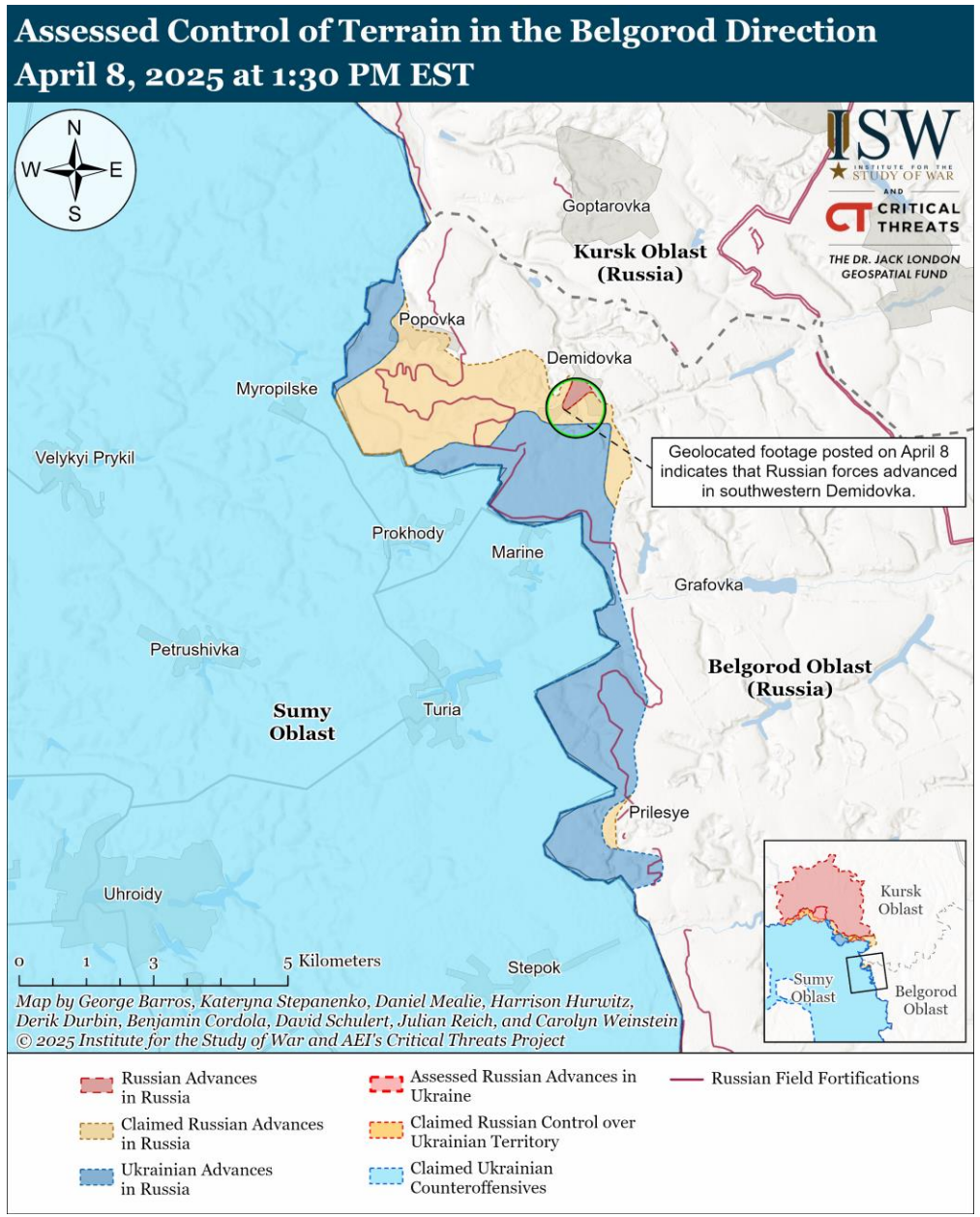
### Russian forces recently marginally advanced in Belgorod Oblast.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 8 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced in southwestern Demidovka (northwest of Belgorod City).[64]

Russian sources claimed that fighting continues near Demidovka and Popovka (northwest of Demidovka).[65]

A Ukrainian regiment operating in the Belgorod direction published footage on April 8 of Ukrainian forces destroying Russian bridges near Grafovka (southeast of Demidovka) and Nadezhevka (east of Demidovka), and the regiment reported that elements of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are holding positions in the area.[66]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian forces near Popovka.[67]



**Ukrainian forces continue striking Russian air defense assets, including within Russia.**

A Ukrainian drone group operating near the Belgorod Oblast border published footage of Ukrainian drones striking a Russian Zoopark radar station in an unspecified location in Belgorod Oblast.[68] A Ukrainian drone regiment published footage of Ukrainian drones destroying two Russian Pantsir-S1 air defense systems in an unspecified location in either Russia or occupied Ukraine, and the Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian Buk air defense system's radar station in an unspecified location.[69]

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

### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)**

#### **Russian forces reportedly did not conduct assaults in the Kharkiv direction on April 7 or 8.[70]**

The deputy commander of a Ukrainian mechanized infantry company reported that Russian forces are trying to improve their tactical positions near Vovchansk (northeast of Kharkiv).[71] The officer reported that Russian forces are using KAB glide bombs, multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS), and artillery and are attacking in small infantry groups of five to six soldiers. The officer also reported that Russian forces were taking cover in sewage systems. The officer stated that Russian forces have increased drone strikes, including fiberoptic drone strikes, against Ukrainian positions and logistical routes and that Russian forces are using "scorched earth" tactics in Vovchansk to destroy all remaining buildings and communications.

Order of Battle: Drone elements of the Russian 41st Motorized Rifle Regiment (72nd Motorized Rifle Division, 44th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly operating in the Kharkiv direction.[72]

### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)**

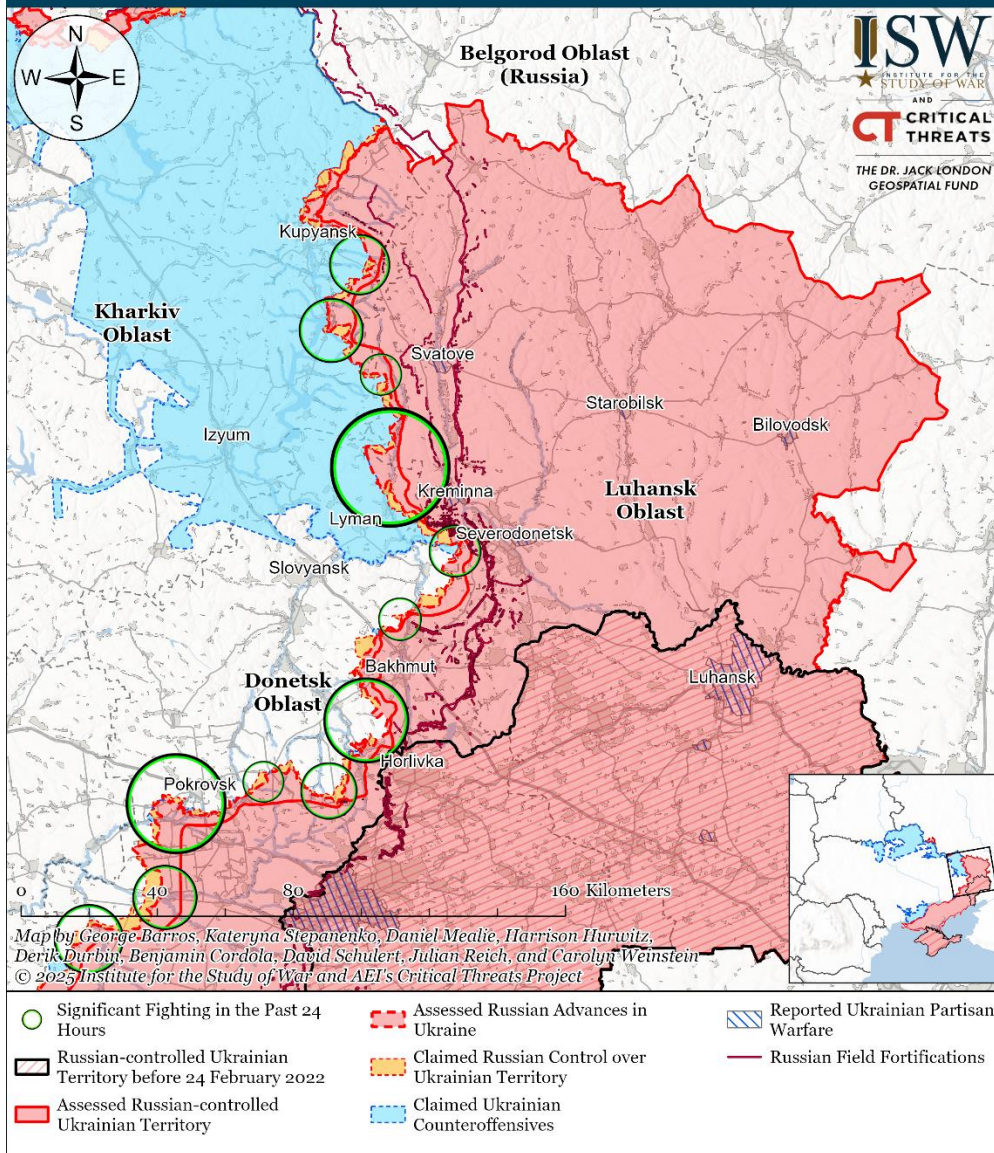
#### **Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction on April 8 but did not make confirmed advances.**

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in fields southwest of Zapadne (north of Kupyansk) and 300 meters east of Petropavlivka (east of Kupyansk).[73]

Russian forces continued ground assaults northeast of Kupyansk near Kindrashivka and Mala Shapktivka, east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka, and southeast of Kupyansk near Pishchane and Stepova Novoselivka on April 7 and 8.[74]



## Assessed Control of Terrain in Luhansk Oblast April 8, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



**Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Borova direction on April 8 but did not advance.**

Russian forces continued ground assaults north of Borova near Bohuslavka, Kruhlyakivka, and Novoplatonivka; northeast of Borova near Zahryzove; east of Borova near Pershotravneve toward Shykyivka and Nadiya; and southeast of Borova near Hrekyivka and Olhivka on April 6 and 7.[75]

**Russian forces recently advanced in the Lyman direction.**

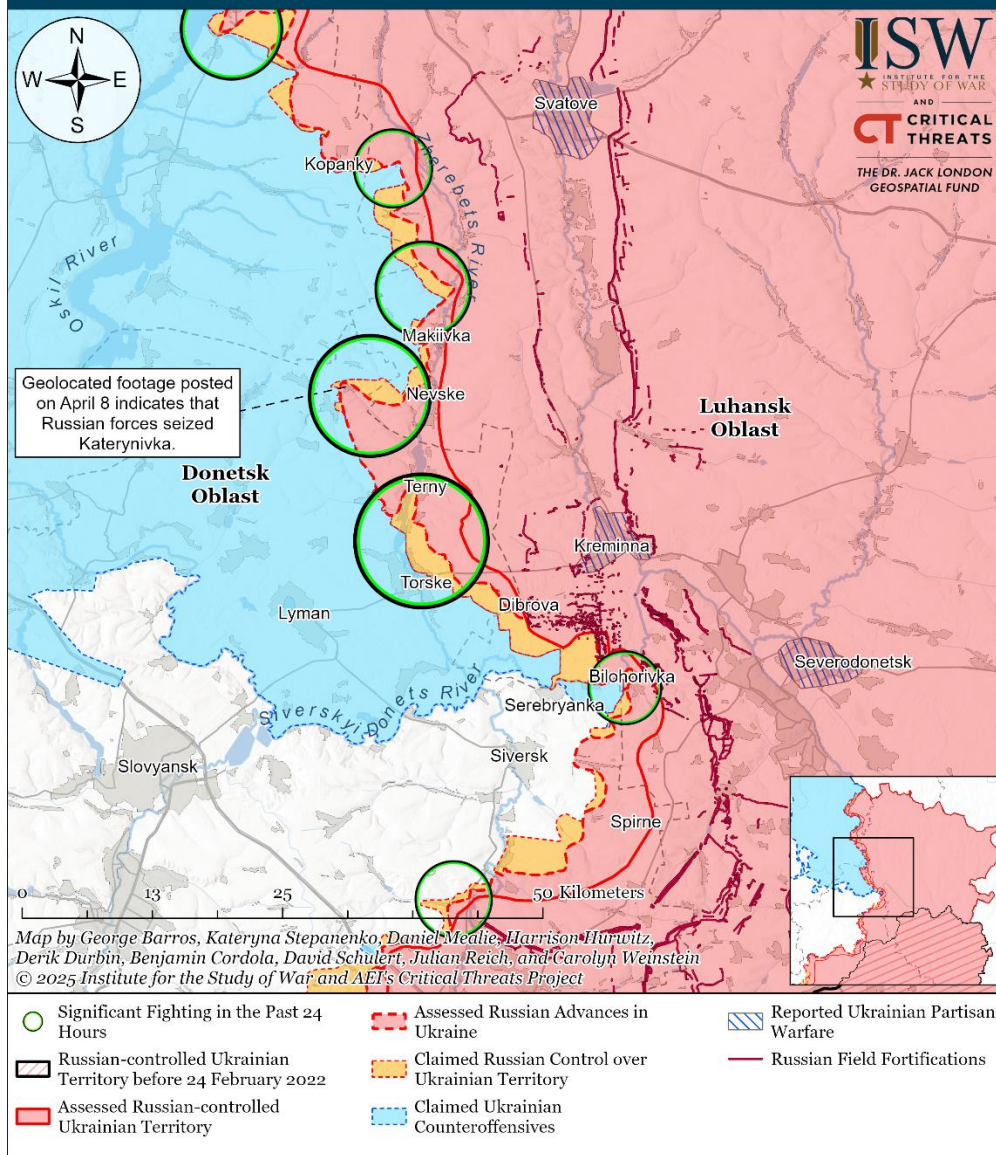
Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 8 shows elements of the Russian 144th Motorized Rifle Division, 20th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) raising a flag in northwestern Katerynivka (northeast of Lyman), indicating that Russian forces have likely seized Katerynivka.[76]

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also advanced in fields northwest, west, and east of Katerynivka; in fields northwest of Novolyubivka (northeast of Lyman); and within Nove (northeast of Lyman).[77] One milblogger claimed that Russian forces cleared most of Torske (east of Lyman).[78]

Russian forces continued ground assaults northeast of Lyman near Novomykhailivka, Katerynivka, Nove, Ridkodub, Zelena Dolyna, and Yampolivka and east of Lyman near Torske on April 7 and 8.[79]

Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Viktor Trehubov reported that Russian forces in the Lyman direction are attempting to retake positions following Ukrainian counterattacks and stated that Russian forces are using light vehicles to try to penetrate Ukrainian positions before transporting forward infantry.[80] The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Lyman direction reported that Russian forces conduct infantry assaults in broad daylight and do not attempt to conceal their positions and that Russian infantry often conduct attacks without body armor.[81] The spokesperson of another Ukrainian brigade operating in the Lyman direction reported that Russian forces have increased drone operations in the area over the past week and are using fiber optic drones to interdict Ukrainian logistics routes.[82]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Svatove-Kreminna Direction April 8, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

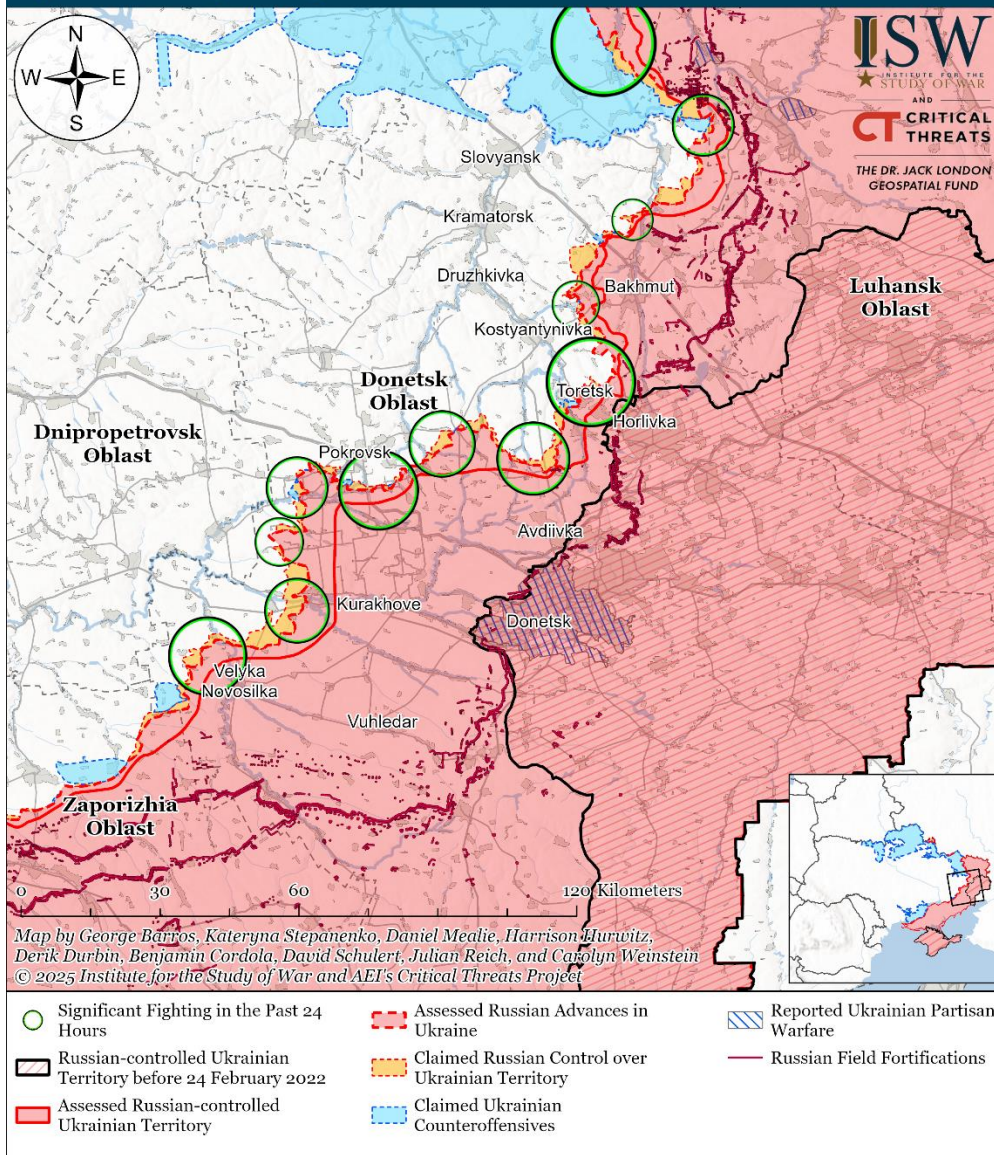
**Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Siversk direction on April 8 but did not make confirmed advances.**

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed on April 7 and 8 that Russian forces advanced east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske along a ridge north of the settlement.[83]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Siversk near Hryhorivka and Bilohorivka and southwest of Siversk near Vasyukivka on April 7 and 8.[84]



## Assessed Control of Terrain in Donetsk Oblast April 8, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



### Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Chasiv Yar direction on April 8 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: Russian sources claimed on April 8 that Russian forces seized the northern shore of Dniprovskyy Pond in northwestern Chasiv Yar.[85]

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Chasiv Yar itself, southeast of Chasiv Yar near Kurdyumivka, and south of Chasiv Yar toward Bila Hora on April 7 and 8.[86] Ukrainian forces reportedly attempted to counterattack in central Chasiv Yar.[87]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 27th Artillery Regiment (6th Motorized Rifle Division, 3rd AC) are reportedly operating near Predtechyne (south of Chasiv Yar).[88] Elements of the Russian 217th

Airborne (VDV) Regiment and 215th Separate Reconnaissance Battalion (both of the 98th VDV Division) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar.[89]

**Russian forces recently advanced in the Toretsk direction.**

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 7 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in fields northwest of Toretsk.[90]

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed on April 7 and 8 that Russian forces advanced northeast of Toretsk near Ozaryanivka and advanced a total of one kilometer west of Panteleymonivka (southwest of Toretsk), as well as in the western outskirts of the settlement.[91]

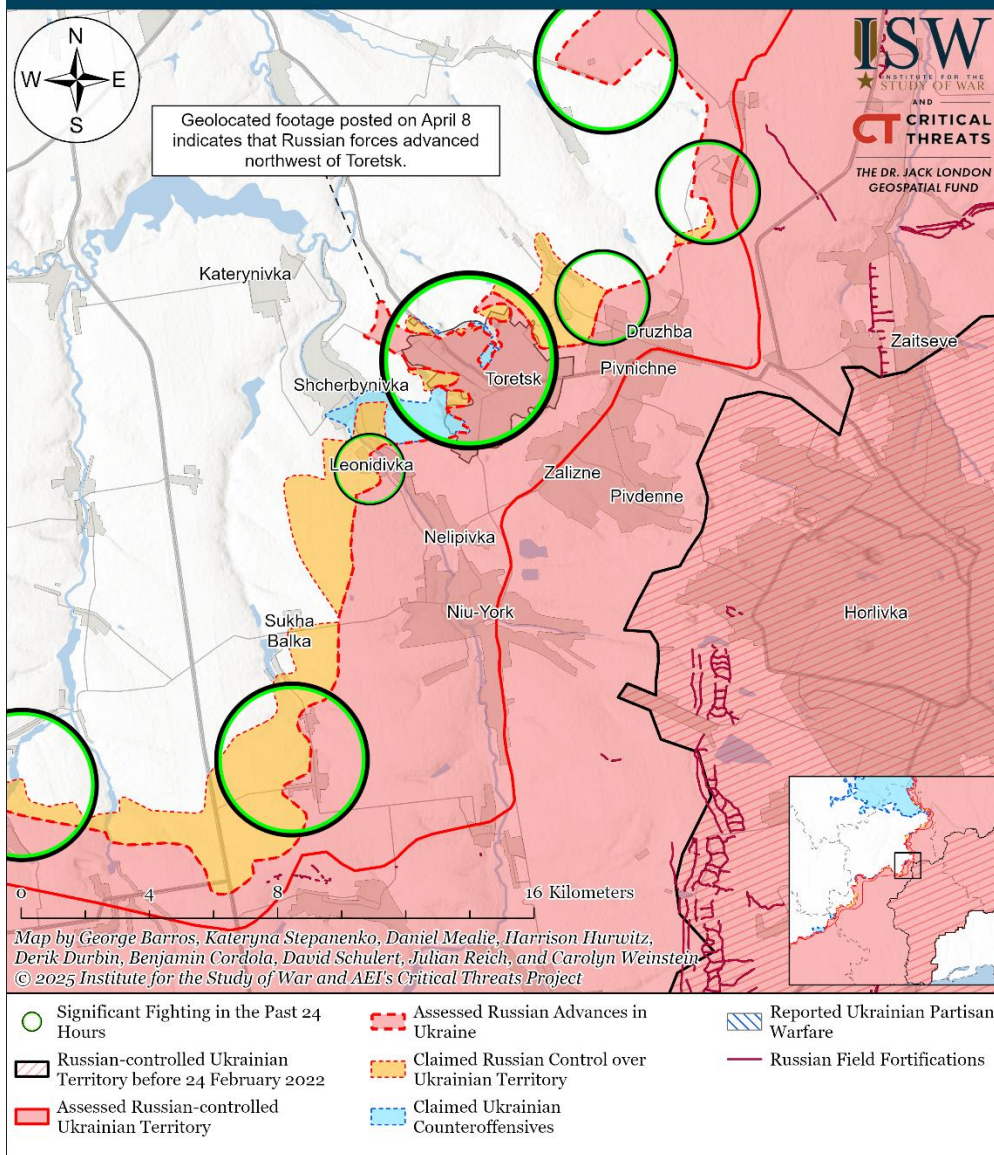
Russian forces continued offensive operations near Toretsk itself; north of Toretsk toward Dyliivka and Dachne; northeast of Toretsk near Ozaryanivka; east of Toretsk near Druzhba; and west of Toretsk toward Petrivka, Leonidivka, and Shcherbynivka on April 7 and 8.[92] Ukrainian forces are reportedly counterattacking in the western outskirts of Toretsk itself.[93]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Toretsk.[94]

*See topline text for reports of Russian activity in the Pokrovsk direction.*



## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Toretsk Direction April 8, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



### Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kurakhove direction on April 8 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed on April 7 and 8 that Russian forces advanced west of Rozlyv (southwest of Kurakhove) and 300 meters near Kostyantynopil (west of Kurakhove).[95]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations west of Kurakhove near Andriivka and Kostyantynopil and toward Ulakly and Oleksiivka and southwest of Kurakhove near Rozlyv and Burlatske on April 7 and 8.[96]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 36th Motorized Rifle Brigade (29th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian forces in Bahatyr, and drone operators of

the Russian 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are reportedly striking Ukrainian forces in Odradne (southwest of Kurakhove).[97]

**Russian forces recently advanced in the Velyka Novosilka direction.**

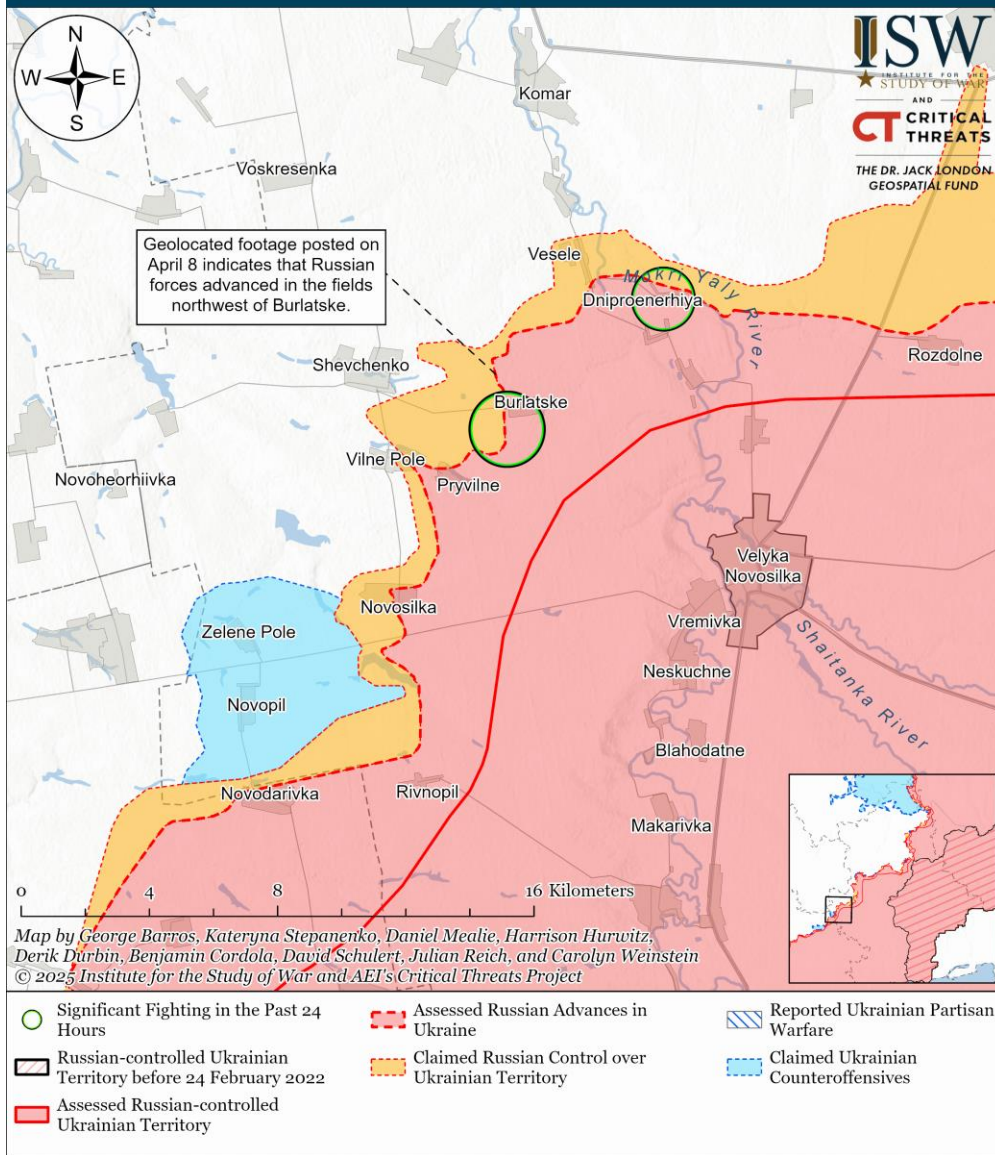
Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 8 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced northwest of Burlatske (northwest of Velyka Novosilka).[98]

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed on April 7 and 8 that elements of the Russian 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD) advanced from Burlatske toward Shevchenko (northwest of Velyka Novosilka), that elements of the Russian 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th CAA, EMD) advanced north of Noyvi Komar (north of Velyka Novosilka), and that unspecified Russian forces advanced 200 meters near Vesele (northwest of Velyka Novosilka).[99]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations north of Velyka Novosilka near Skudne and Dniproenerhiya and northwest of Velyka Novosilka near Vilne Pole, Burlatske, Pryvilne, and toward Shevchenko on April 7 and 8.[100]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 656th Motorized Rifle Regiment (29th CAA, EMD) and 430th Motorized Rifle Regiment (likely a mobilized unit, reportedly of the 29th CAA), and elements of the Russian 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's Main Directorate [GRU]) and 200th Artillery Brigade (29th CAA) are reportedly operating in the Shakhtarske (Velyka Novosilka) direction.[101]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Velyka Novosilka Direction April 8, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



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

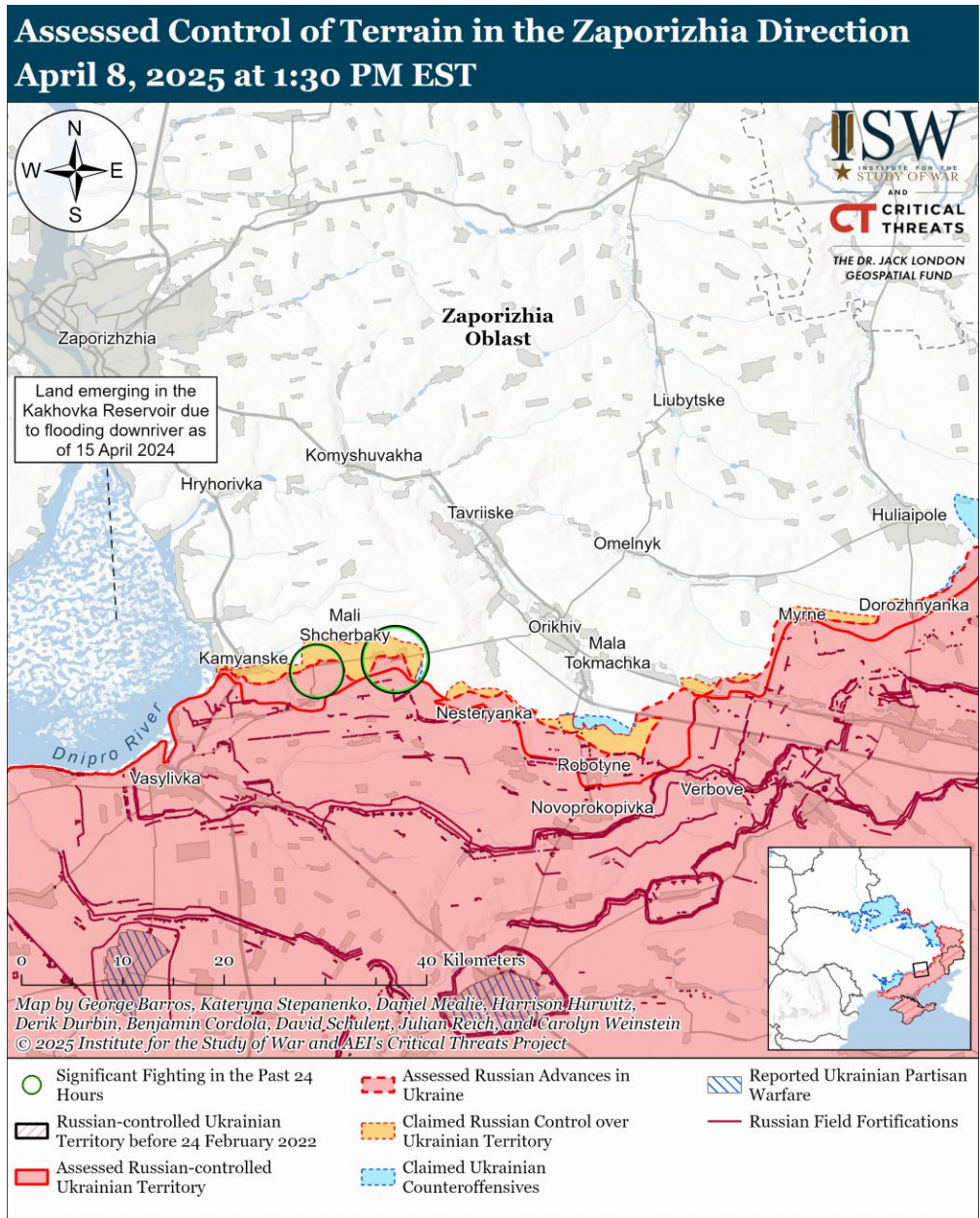
**Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on April 8 but did not advance.**

Russian forces conducted offensive operations northwest of Robotyne near Mali Shcherbaky, Shcherbaky, Stepove, Kamyanske, and Lobkove on April 7 and 8.[102]

Ukrainian Southern Defense Forces Spokesperson Colonel Vladyslav Voloshyn stated on April 8 that Russian forces continue to attack with small groups and drone support to exert fire control over Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) from Zaporizhzhia City to the east of Zaporizhia Oblast.[103]

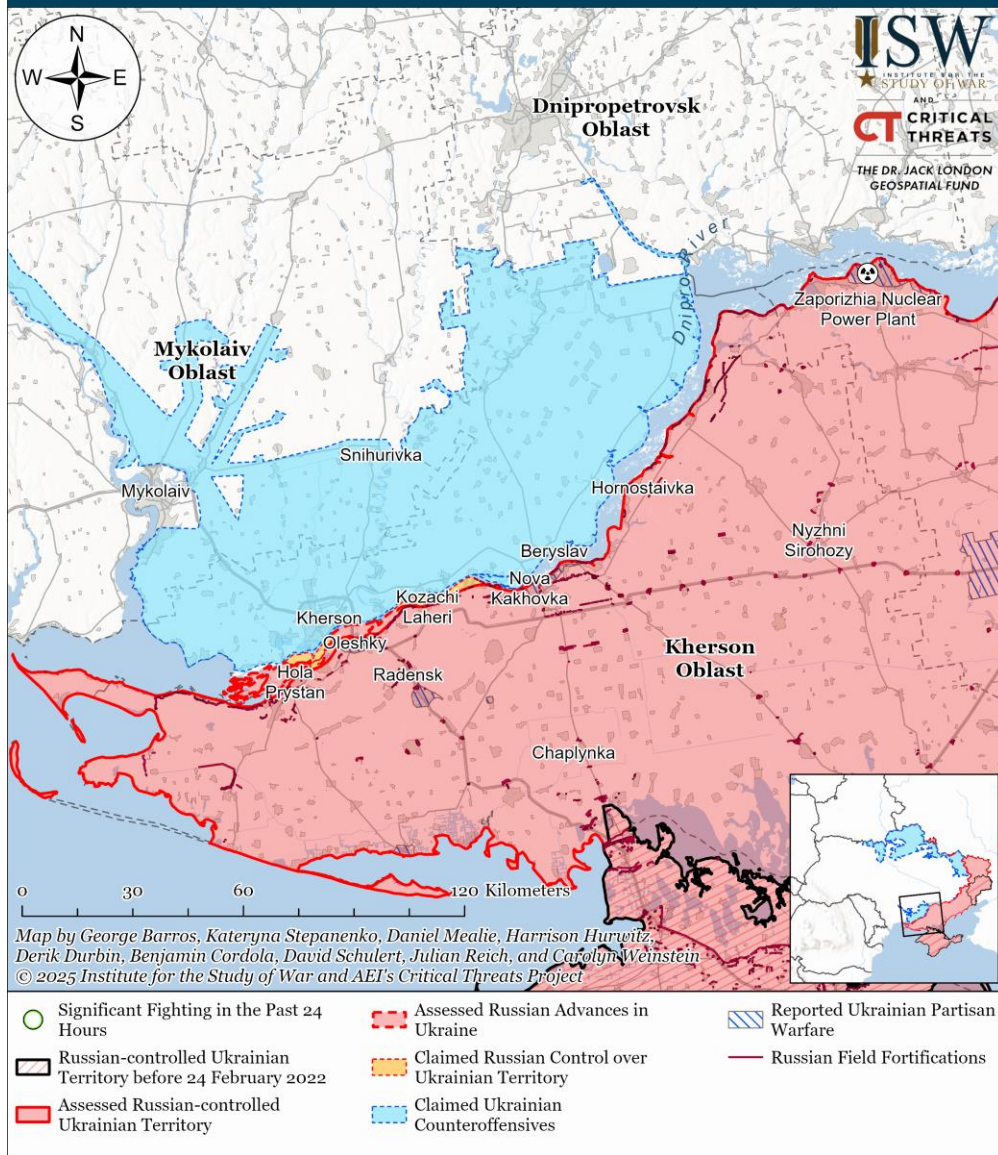


Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhia direction.[104]



**Neither Russian nor Ukrainian sources reported ground activity in the Dniro direction on April 8.**

**Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kherson Direction**  
**April 8, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST**



**Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)**

See topline text.

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

The Kremlin is considering passing a bill that may incentivize volunteer recruitment for conscription-age men ages 18 to 30 years old. Kremlin newswire TASS reported on April 4 that it obtained a copy of a recommendation from the Russian State Duma Defense Committee suggesting that Duma deputies adopt an amendment to the "On Military Duty and Military Service" federal law that would exempt Russian volunteers who fought in Ukraine or likely Kursk Oblast for longer than six months from



Russia's compulsory conscription for men aged 18 to 30 years old.[105] The Committee supported an additional amendment that would similarly exempt Russian citizens who are not in Russia's *zapas* (general mobilizable human resource composed of men who could be mobilized regardless of prior military experience) but are who are veterans of the armed forces, military formations, and other bodies of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) from conscription. The Kremlin may be attempting to incentivize recruitment efforts directed at a younger demographic to augment more immediate Russian force generation needs by passing such laws that promise to stave off conscription.

TASS reported on April 7 that the Russian Ministry of Justice proposed a bill that would introduce amendments to the "On Military Duty and Military Service" federal law, enabling stateless persons to sign military contracts with the Russian MoD.[106] TASS reported that the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Federal Penitentiary Service, and the MoD as well as the Governmental Legislative Commission already approved the proposed bill. The bill would apply corresponding amendments to the laws "On the Status of Military Personnel," "On Defense," "On State Pension Provision in the Russian Federation," "On the System of Civil Service in the Russian Federation," and several other unspecified laws if it passes. Chairperson of Russia's Association of Lawyers Board, Vladimir Gruzdev, stated that the bill would grant stateless persons who signed a military contract with the MoD the same rights and obligations as foreign citizens. Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed decrees, including a decree on March 20 called "On the Peculiarities of the Legal Status of Certain Categories of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons in the Russian Federation" which grant Russian authorities the ability to classify Ukrainian citizens living in occupied Ukraine who refuse or have not obtained Russian citizenship as "foreigners." [107] These provisions may grant Russia additional legal tools to force Ukrainians living in Russian-occupied Ukraine into military service. Russian news organization *Vedomosti* noted on April 7 that this proposed bill would provide stateless persons a mechanism for obtaining Russian citizenship through a simplified process.[108] Russian officials may be attempting to leverage legislative powers to offset low recruitment rates by expanding Russia's recruitment pool, including by coercing Ukrainians in Russian-occupied Ukraine into serving in the Russian military.

Russia continues to leverage its "Time of Heroes" program to appoint veterans of its war in Ukraine to governmental positions and state-owned entities as part of a long-term effort to militarize Russian society and form a cadre of Russian officials loyal to the Kremlin alone. Russian authorities appointed "Time of Heroes" participant Artem Nikolaev as Deputy Chairman of the Penza Oblast regional government on April 7.[109] Authorities appointed "Time of Heroes" participant Vasily Vinnikov on April 8 Director of the Kemerovo Oblast branch of Rostelecom PJSC — one of Russia's largest telecommunications operators.

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

Nothing significant to report.

### **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)**

*ISW is suspending occupation coverage in its daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessments. ISW is introducing a new product line tracking activities in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine. The occupation updates will examine Russian efforts to consolidate administrative control of annexed areas and forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems. Click here to read the April 8 Russian Occupation Update.*

### **Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks)**

Russian President Vladimir Putin held a phone conversation with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on April 7 to discuss upcoming bilateral meetings in Volgograd City, the upcoming Russian-Belarusian "Zapad-2025" combined military exercise, and the situation in Ukraine.[110]

**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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