



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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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 12:30pm ET on April 23. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 24 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu highlighted ongoing Russian offensive operations near Chasiv Yar, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City and announced Russia's intent to intensify its strike campaign to disrupt Ukrainian logistics. Shoigu addressed the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) collegium on April 23 and focused on the recently claimed Russian seizure of Bohdanivka (northeast of Chasiv Yar), Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka), and Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[1] ISW has not observed visual confirmation that Russian forces have seized all of these settlements yet, however. Shoigu also focused on claimed Russian gains northwest of Avdiivka near Berdychi and west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka.[2] Russian forces have yet to make significant tactical gains near Chasiv Yar after advancing up to the eastern outskirts of the settlement in early April 2024 but have recently made significant tactical gains northwest of Avdiivka and marginal advances southwest of Donetsk City.[3] Shoigu is likely trying to broadly depict the various ongoing Russian offensive operations in eastern Ukraine as equally successful despite mixed and limited tactical Russian success in these directions.[4] Russian forces will likely intensify ongoing offensive operations in the coming weeks to exploit Ukrainian materiel constraints ahead of the expected arrival of US security assistance.[5] Shoigu's focus on Russian offensive operations near Chasiv Yar, west of Avdiivka, and west and southwest of Donetsk City further indicates that Russian forces will likely intensify assaults in these areas, where Russian forces are currently prioritizing broader offensive operations, instead of elsewhere along the front.

Shoigu also announced that Russian forces will intensify strikes against Ukrainian logistics centers and storage facilities for Western-provided weapons.[6] Russian forces have heavily targeted Ukrainian energy infrastructure during missile and drone strikes through March and April 2024, exploiting already degraded Ukrainian air defense capabilities in an effort to collapse Ukraine's energy grid and cause long-term damage to Ukrainian war waging capabilities and public morale.[7] Russian forces will likely intensify drone and missile strikes in the coming weeks to maximize damage to Ukrainian infrastructure and defense industrial base capacity before the expected arrival of US security assistance begins to alleviate Ukraine's critical shortage of air defense missiles.[8] Shoigu's focus on striking Ukrainian logistics suggests that Russian forces may shift their target set to hit Ukrainian transportation infrastructure, logistics, and military storage facilities. Russian forces heavily targeted Ukrainian transportation infrastructure in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on April 19, and Russian forces may intend to replicate and expand these strikes in the coming weeks to interdict Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs).[9] The Russian military command may hope that a coordinated interdiction effort will constrain Ukraine's ability to sufficiently distribute manpower and materiel to critical sectors of the front and delay the improved capabilities that the arrival of US security assistance will afford Ukrainian forces.[10]

Shoigu also discussed ongoing Russian military reforms during his April 23 MoD collegium address, cloaking ongoing expansion efforts in an information operation meant to falsely frame all Russian military activity as inherently defensive and responsive to supposed NATO aggression.[11] Shoigu claimed that Russian forces would continue efforts to improve their composition and structure “in proportion to the threat” posed by the United States and its allies — echoing a standard Kremlin information operation that frames the West as a constant aggressor and Russia as a passive victim trying to defend itself against external attacks. Shoigu went on to discuss the Russian military's ongoing efforts to stand up the Moscow and Leningrad military districts (MMD and LMD) and accused Sweden of increasing tensions on Russia's northwestern and western flanks through its accession to NATO. Shoigu also reported that the 44th Army Corps (AC) has formed within the LMD (potentially naming the AC that Russian forces have been forming in the Republic of Karelia on the border with Finland, which borders the LMD's new area of responsibility) and confirmed that Russia is expanding three unspecified motorized rifle brigades into motorized rifle divisions.[12] Kremlin officials have frequently claimed that Finland's NATO accession forced Russia to create the LMD on Finnish borders, and Shoigu's suggestion that routine NATO defensive exercises and responses to Russian aggression in Ukraine necessitate the sort of long-term Russian military buildup that Russia is currently undertaking are both continuations of the longstanding Kremlin narrative that Russia is an innocent victim of aggressive NATO expansion.[13] Ongoing Russian military reforms and expansion are likely meant to prepare Russia for a potential future conventional confrontation with NATO, but the Russian attempt to justify the reforms as inherently passive and reactionary is an information operation that likely aims to force NATO states to self-deter from increasing their own defensive capabilities.[14]

Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Akbar Ahmadian traveled to St. Petersburg on April 23 to attend the 12th Russian International Security Summit.[15] The Iranian Embassy in Moscow announced that Ahmadian will meet with Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev while at the summit.[16] Ahmadian met with Iraqi National Security Adviser, Qasem Araj, on the sidelines of the summit on April 23, where Araj emphasized the importance of expelling United States and international coalition forces from Iraq. The two also discussed the March 2023 security agreement between Iran and Iraq that requires Iraqi authorities to

disarm and relocate members of Iranian Kurdish opposition groups away from Iran's borders. Ahmadian will also meet with his Brazilian, Chinese, Indian, Russian, and South African counterparts at the summit. High-level meetings between Iranian and Russian defense officials such as Ahmadian and Patrushev help both sides align their national security and defense strategies and bolster Russia's informational reputation as the leader of a coalition of like-minded states that counterbalance the West.

The Chechen Republic appears to be trying to align itself more closely with Iran over the backdrop of intensifying bilateral security cooperation between Russia and Iran. Russian State Duma Deputy and head of the Chechen Rosgvardia branch Adam Delimkhanov stated on April 22 that he met with Iranian Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Akbar Ahmadian during a visit to Iran on Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov's orders.[17] Delimkhanov reported that he and Ahmadian discussed security issues in Central Asia and the Middle East and the prospects of Russo-Iranian cooperation in countering national security threats to both states. Iran is pursuing its own interests in the North Caucasus, especially Muslim-majority regions, and is likely interested in strengthening bonds with Chechen officials to expand its influence in the region. Representatives of Iranian airline Mahan Air met with Chechen Prime Minister Muslim Huchiev in December 2023 to discuss the prospect of opening regular flights between Chechnya and Iran to strengthen trade, economic, and cultural ties between the two.[18]

United Kingdom (UK) Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the UK's largest ever package of military assistance to Ukraine valued at 500 million pounds (around \$662 million) on April 23.[19] Sunak announced on April 23 that the UK will provide over 400 vehicles, 4 million rounds of small arms ammunition, 60 boats, air defense equipment, and Storm Shadow missiles to Ukraine. Sunak also stated that the UK will increase its military spending to 2.5 percent of its GDP by 2030, with spending gradually increasing to 87 billion pounds (about \$108 billion) in the next six years.[20] Sunak stated that the increased defense spending will put the UK "on a war footing" as the UK is facing an "axis of authoritarian states with different values...like Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China." [21]

Moldovan authorities confiscated over one million dollars from Kremlin-linked Moldovan opposition politicians at the Chisinau airport on the night of April 22 to 23, and the opposition politicians likely intended to use to bribe protestors and voters. Moldovan law enforcement officers conducted over 150 searches mostly at the Chisinau airport and in some personal homes after receiving a tip that opposition politicians who were returning from the April 21 meeting of Moldovan opposition politicians in Moscow, which resulted in the creation of the pro-Russian Moldovan Victory electoral bloc, were smuggling money into Moldova.[22] Moldovan authorities reported that they confiscated about 62,000 rubles (about \$660), 3,000 euros (about \$3,200), and over \$1.1 million during the searches. The Moldovan General Police Inspectorate Chief Viorel Cernauteau stated on April 23 that the money was meant to finance Moldovan political parties led by affiliates of US-sanctioned, pro-Kremlin Moldovan politician Ilan Shor. Unspecified actors reportedly used "couriers" to transport the money from Russia to Moldova and promised them compensation ranging from 300 to 500 euros (about \$320-520). Cernauteau noted that the "couriers" carried under 9,000 euros (about \$9,600) of cash to avoid customs laws which require people to declare amounts over 10,000 euros (about \$10,700). Shor reportedly paid demonstrators to protest Moldovan President Maia Sandu in 2022, and Moldovan authorities are investigating the Shor Party for bribing voters during the 2023 Gagauzia gubernatorial election.[23] Moldovan authorities have also detained members of Moldovan parliament who reportedly took bribes from Shor affiliates.[24] ISW previously

assessed that the creation of the Victory electoral bloc would allow the Kremlin to focus on a unified political effort as part of its efforts to destabilize Moldovan society, attack Moldova's democratic government, and prevent Moldova's accession to the European Union (EU).[25]

Russian federal censor Roskomnadzor is blocking 150 virtual private network (VPN) services in Russia, another step in the Kremlin's efforts to further censor and control the Russian information space. Roskomnadzor Department for Control and Supervision Head Yevgeny Zeitsev announced during a speech at the Safer Internet Forum in Moscow on April 23 that Roskomnadzor is currently blocking 150 popular VPN services and that Roskomnadzor began restricting access to websites and social media posts that advertised VPNs on March 1, when a federal ban on advertising ways to bypass Roskomnadzor's restrictions came into effect.[26] Zeitsev stated that Roskomnadzor has blocked roughly 700 sites that advertised VPNs since March 1 and 200,000 sites accused of spreading false information about Russia's invasion of Ukraine since February 2022. The Russian government has previously attempted to downplay its efforts to block VPNs, although the Kremlin appears increasingly unwilling to tolerate VPN usage that allows Russians to bypass censorship efforts amid ongoing efforts to further consolidate control over the Russian information space.[27]

Ukrainian drone strikes and recent flooding in Russia have reportedly brought weekly Russian oil refining to an 11-month low, although the decrease in refining output has so far been marginal.[28] *Bloomberg* reported on April 22 that as of mid-April 2024 Russia processed 5.22 million barrels of crude oil per day, 10,000 fewer barrels than the average in early April.[29] Russia has reportedly processed 1.23 million barrels of crude oil per day since January at refineries that Ukrainian forces previously struck with drones, a 280,000-barrel-per-day decrease from before Ukrainian forces started targeting Russian oil refineries in late January 2024.[30] Ukrainian drone strikes reportedly shut down 14 percent of Russia's overall oil refining capacity as of April 2.[31] Flooding in Orenburg Oblast forced the Orsk oil refinery to go offline on April 7, but *Reuters* reported that the Orsk refinery resumed full operations on April 23.[32] Decreased Russian refining capacity likely forced Russia to import gasoline from Kazakhstan and Belarus in early April to address shortages and attempt to prevent domestic gasoline prices from rising, although there are no indications that constraints on Russian gasoline production are significant to international market values.[33] Russian officials have noted that a reduction in primary oil refining in 2024 will likely lead to increases in Russian crude oil exports since Russia would not be able to refine as much as it usually does.[34] Future Ukrainian drone strikes may disable and disrupt more of Russia's refining capacity and inflict critical constraints on Russian refining that begin to substantially impact Russia's production of distillate products. Ukrainian drone strikes have yet to significantly impact Russian refining production or the domestic Russian or international supply of crude oil and distillate products, however.

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu highlighted ongoing Russian offensive operations near Chasiv Yar, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City and announced Russia's intent to intensify its strike campaign to disrupt Ukrainian logistics.**
- **Shoigu also discussed ongoing Russian military reforms during his April 23 MoD collegium address, cloaking ongoing expansion efforts in an information operation meant to falsely frame all Russian military activity as inherently defensive and responsive to supposed NATO aggression.**

- **Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Akbar Ahmadian traveled to St. Petersburg on April 23 to attend the 12th Russian International Security Summit.**
- **The Chechen Republic appears to be trying to align itself more closely with Iran over the backdrop of intensifying bilateral security cooperation between Russia and Iran.**
- **United Kingdom (UK) Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the UK's largest ever package of military assistance to Ukraine valued at 500 million pounds (around \$662 million) on April 23.**
- **Moldovan authorities confiscated over one million dollars from Kremlin-linked Moldovan opposition politicians at the Chisinau airport on the night of April 22 to 23, and the opposition politicians likely intended to use to bribe protestors and voters.**
- **Russian federal censor Roskomnadzor is blocking 150 virtual private network (VPN) services in Russia, another step in the Kremlin's efforts to further censor and control the Russian information space.**
- **Ukrainian drone strikes and recent flooding in Russia have reportedly brought weekly Russian oil refining to an 11-month low, although the decrease in refining output has so far been marginal.**
- **Ukrainian forces recently advanced near Chasiv Yar (west of Bakhmut) and Russian forces recently advanced near Donetsk City.**
- **Prominent Russian milbloggers continue to complain about the ineffectiveness of Russian drones on the battlefield.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 23, 2024, 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.

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.

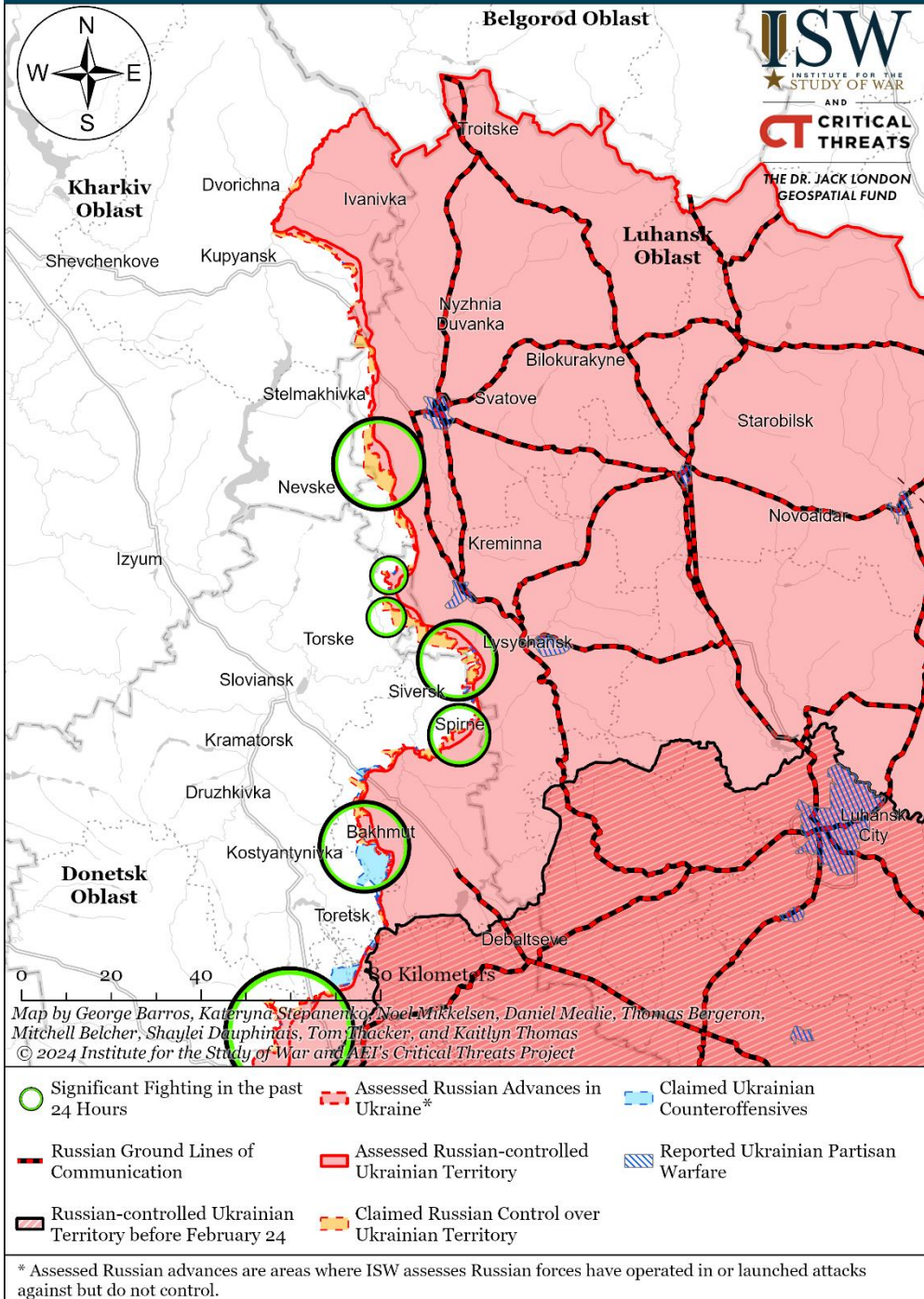
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety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

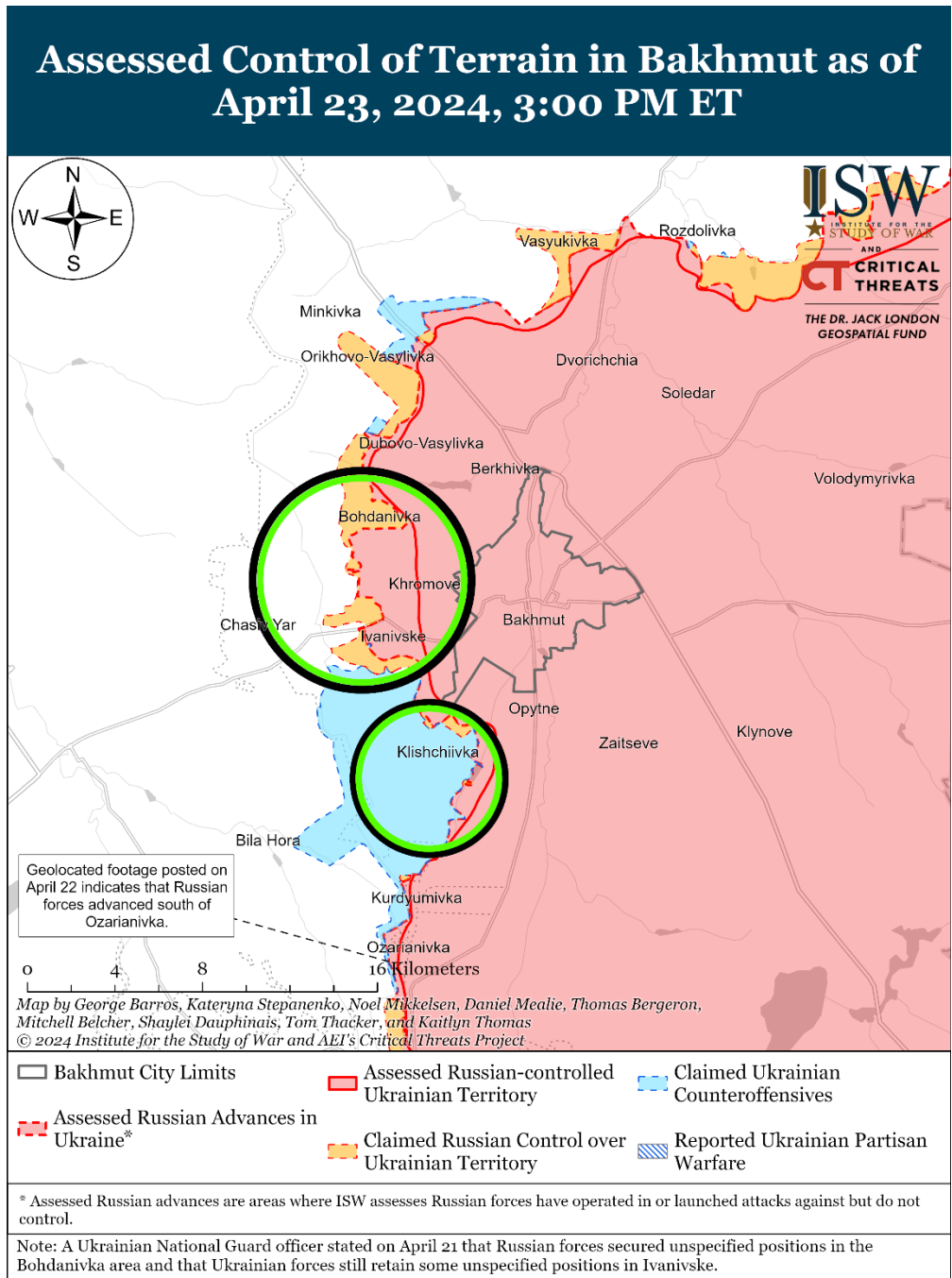
Russian forces maintained a relatively intensified rate of ground attacks between Svatove and Kreminna on April 23 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks northwest of Svatove near Berestove; southwest of Svatove near Nadiya, Novoyehorivka, and Hrekivka; west of Kreminna near Terny, Torske, and Yampolivka; southwest of Kreminna in the Serebryanske forest area; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[35] The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked southwest of Kreminna near Hryhorivka.[36] Elements of the 2nd Artillery Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic Army Corps [LNR AC]) are reportedly operating near Bilohorivka.[37]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of April 23, 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)

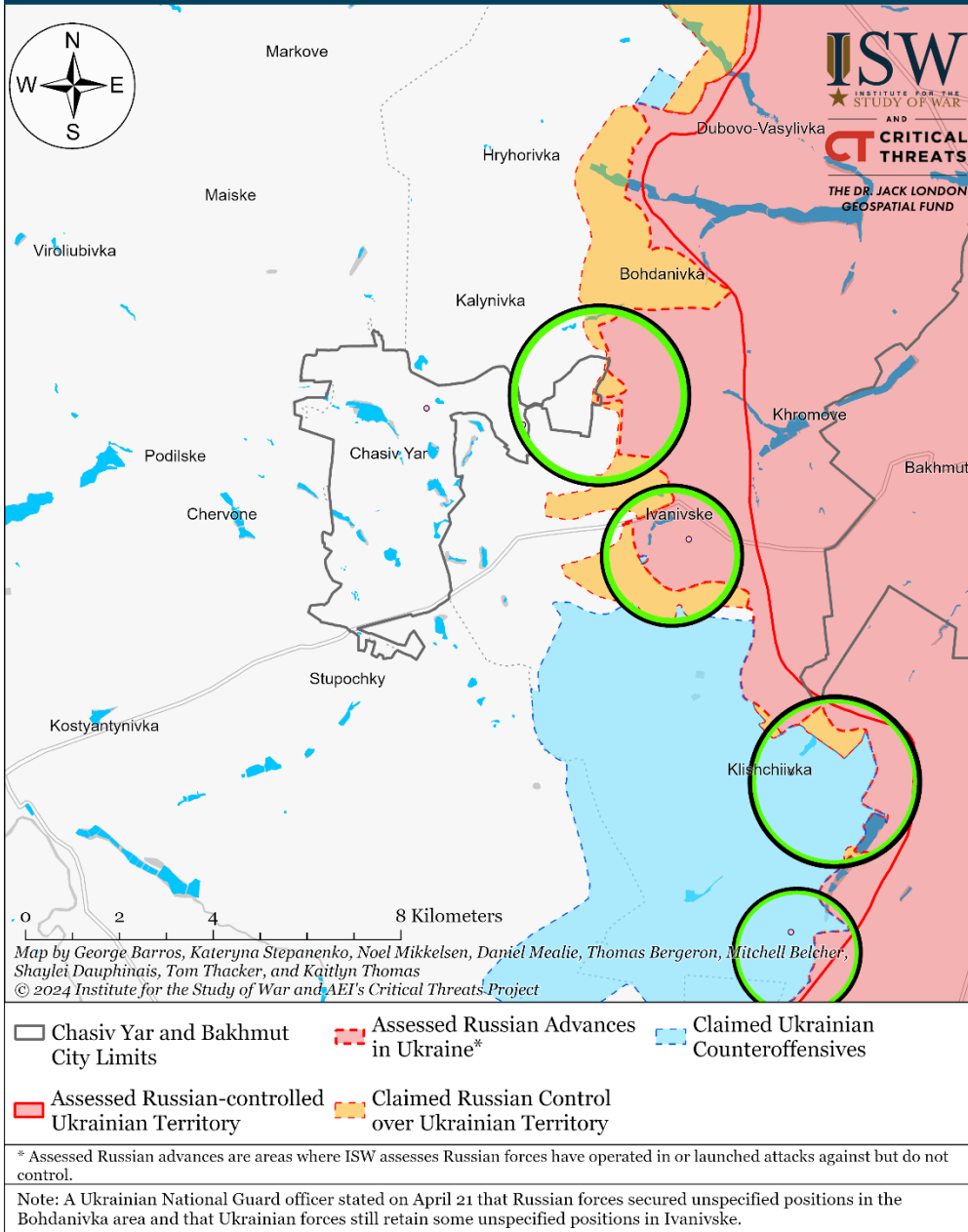
Russian forces continued ground attacks in the Siversk direction (northwest of Bakhmut) on April 23, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled several Russian attacks east of Siversk near Zolotarivka and Verkhokamyanske and southeast of Siversk near Spirne and Vyimka.[38] Elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) are reportedly operating near the Vyimka-Rozdolivka area (south of Siversk).[39]



Ukrainian forces recently regained lost positions east of Chasiv Yar as Russian forces continued offensive operations in the area on April 23. Geolocated footage published on April 22 indicates that

Ukrainian forces recently marginally advanced southeast of Ivanivske (east of Chasiv Yar).[40] Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz Commander Apty Alaudinov claimed that elements of the “Akhmat” Spetsnaz and the Russian 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd LNR AC) captured several Ukrainian positions on the western outskirts of Klishchiivka (southeast of Chasiv Yar), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[41] Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division and the “Sarmat” battalion of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) “Pyatnashka” international volunteer brigade attacked the eastern outskirts of Chasiv Yar.[42] One Russian milblogger urged Russian forces to prioritize seizing the Novyi Microraion in eastern Chasiv Yar instead of continuing what they described as tactically insignificant efforts to advance towards Chasiv Yar from Bohdanivka (northeast of Chasiv Yar).[43] Positional engagements continued near Bohdanivka, in the Novyi Microraion, east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske, and southeast of Chasiv Yar near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[44] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Voloshyn stated that the Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Novopavlivka (west and southwest of Donetsk City) directions are currently the most intense directions in eastern Ukraine.[45]

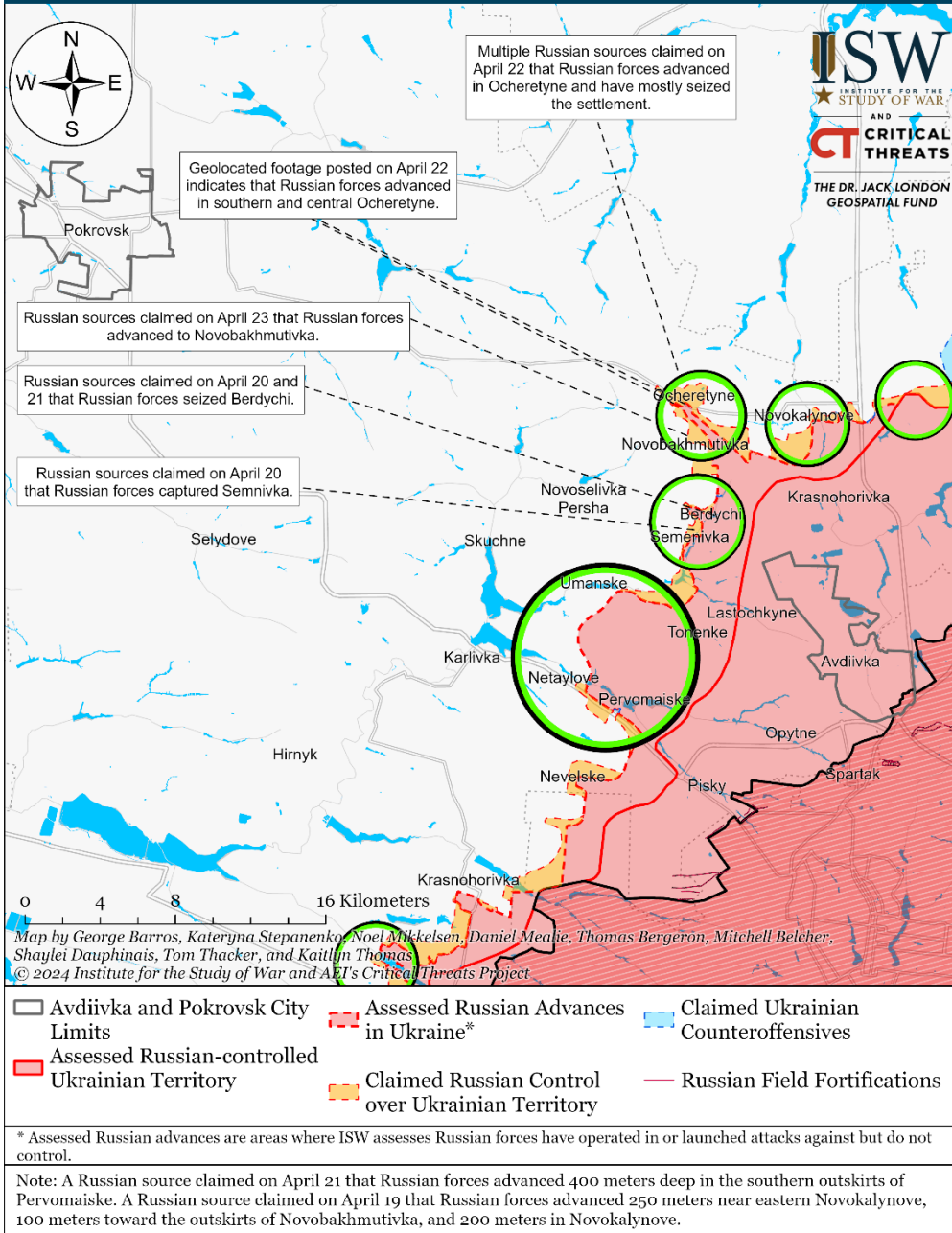
Assessed Control of Terrain near Chasiv Yar as of April 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian and Ukrainian sources continued to debate the extent of claimed Russian advances northwest of Avdiivka on April 23, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Most Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Ocheretyne (northwest of Avdiivka), although some milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have more limited positions in the southern half of the settlement and that Ukrainian forces maintain a presence on the western outskirts.[46] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces had penetrated a Ukrainian defensive line that reportedly stretches from Ocheretyne to Netailove (northwest to southwest of Avdiivka), including one Russian

milblogger who claimed that Russian forces had advanced as far as five kilometers in depth past the Ukrainian defensive line in Ocheretyne.[47] The Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces emphasized that Ukrainian forces still control the majority of Ocheretyne and maintain fire control over the southern part of the settlement where Russian forces are attempting to advance, however.[48] The Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces also stated that Russian forces are using all available means and weapons, including unspecified chemical weapons, to advance near Ocheretyne.[49] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also advanced up to and within Novobakhmutivka (northwest of Avdiivka and just south of Ocheretyne) and that Ukrainian forces are withdrawing from positions in central Novobakhmutivka and Solovyiove (northwest of Avdiivka).[50] ISW has not yet observed evidence of Russian forces operating in, or Ukrainian forces withdrawing from, Novobakhmutivka. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces do not currently control Novobakhmutivka, but claimed that Russian forces will likely capture Novobakhmutivka and Solovyiove in rapid succession.[51] Fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Keramik, Novokalynove, Berdychi, and Semenivka; west of Avdiivka near Umanske and Yasnobrodivka; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Netaylove.[52] Elements of the Russian 30th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]), 27th Motorized Rifle Division (2nd CAA, CMD), and 35th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, CMD) are reportedly operating in Ocheretyne.[53]

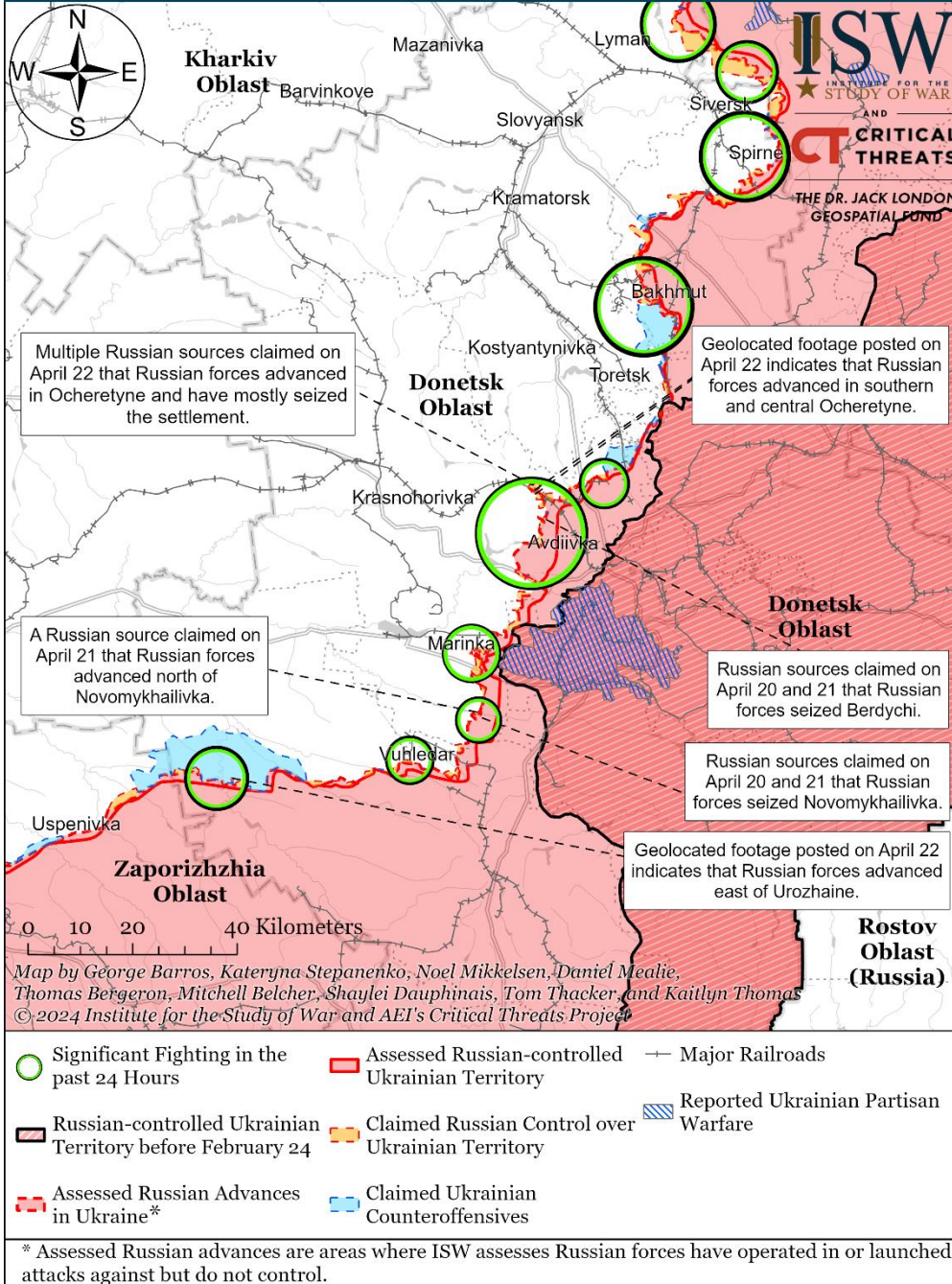
Assessed Control of Terrain Northwest of Avdiivka as of April 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces recently marginally advanced west and southwest of Donetsk City amid continued fighting in the area on April 23. Geolocated footage published on April 23 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced south of Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City).[54] Geolocated footage published on April 22 shows elements of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) planting a flag in western Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City), indicating that Russian forces recently advanced further westward in the settlement. [55] Russian milbloggers reiterated claims on

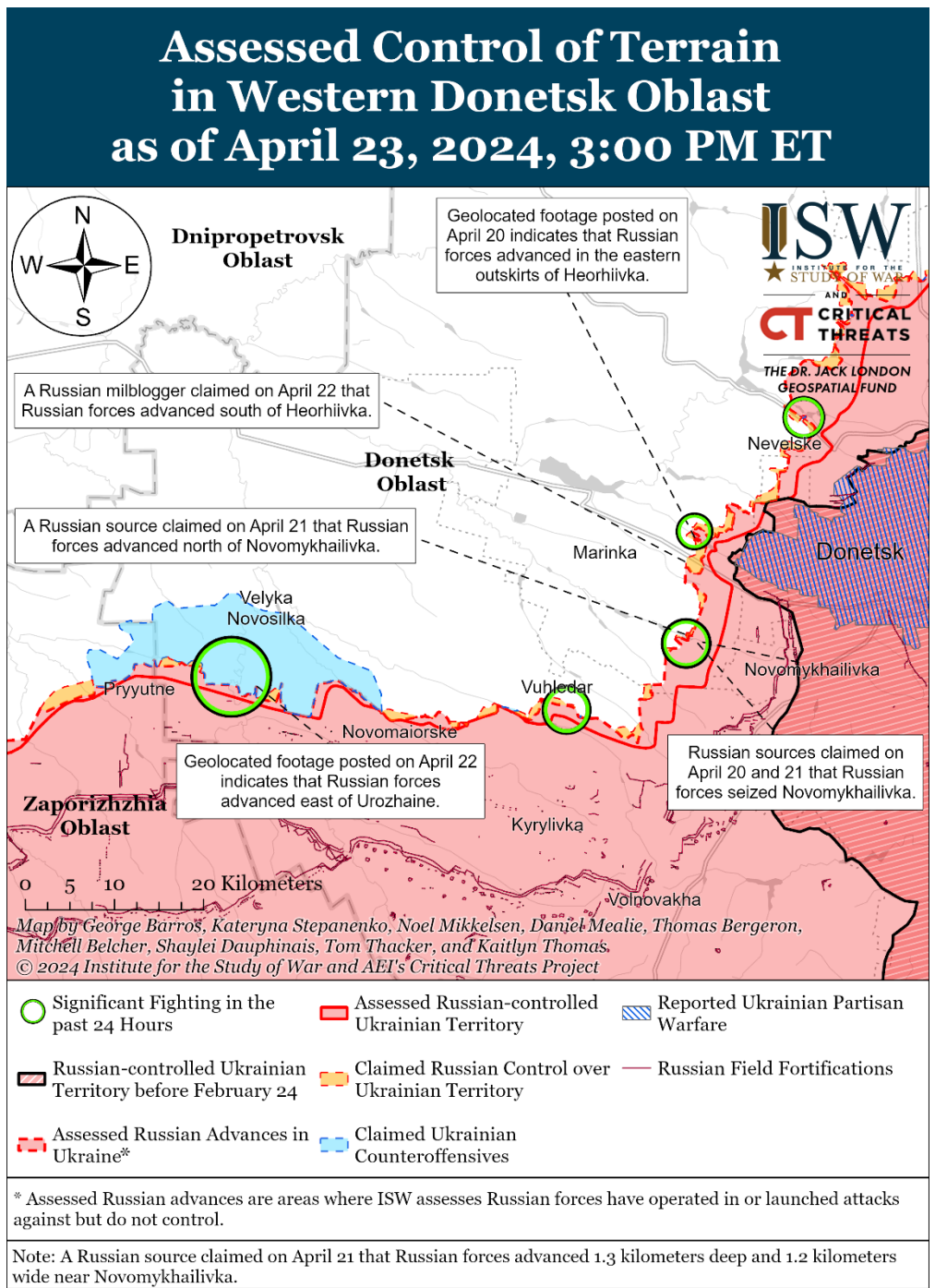
April 23 that Russian forces seized Novomykhailivka.[56] The Ukrainian Airborne Assault Forces stated that Russian forces are committing a large number of forces to operations aimed at breaking through the Ukrainian line near Novomykhailivka.[57] A Ukrainian commander serving in the area stated that Russian forces have concentrated roughly 10 unspecified units, including two brigades and several regiments, in the area and are conducting more than 10 assaults with infantry and heavy equipment daily.[58] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also advanced within Heorhiivka (southwest of Donetsk City), although ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims.[59]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of April 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



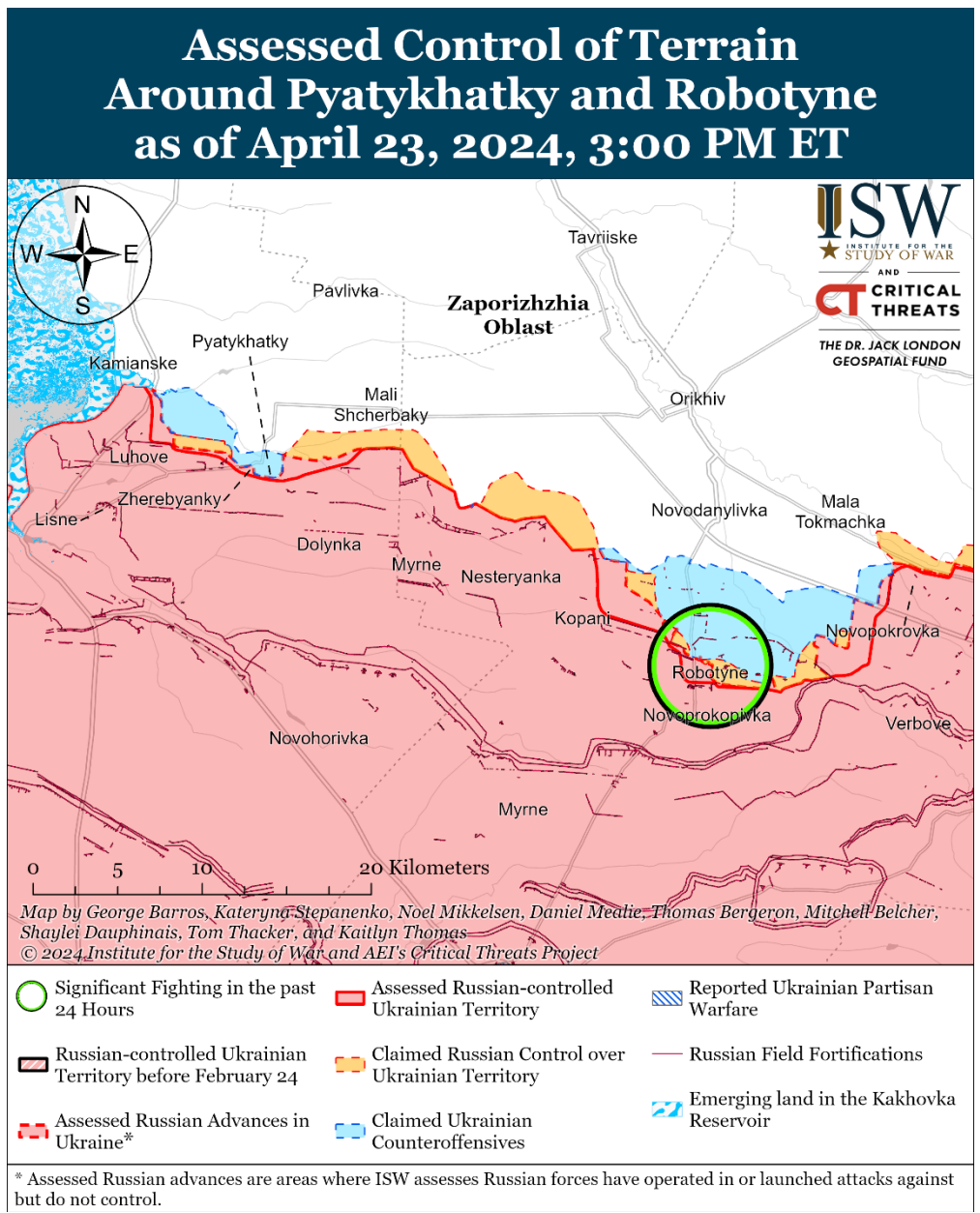
Fighting continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on April 23, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. A Russian milblogger claimed that likely elements of the Russian 1430th Motorized Rifle Regiment (Russian Territorial Troops [TRV]) advanced up to 200 meters in depth east of Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka).[60] Fighting continued near Urozhaine

and Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka).[61] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) and 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th CAA, EMD) are unsuccessfully attacking southwest of Staromayorske and south of Urozhaine.[62] Mashovets stated that Russian forces are transferring elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR AC) to the area, which Mashovets stated indicates the Russian military command's intent to resume operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area. Elements of the Russian 36th Motorized Rifle Brigade (29th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Volodymyrivka (southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[63]

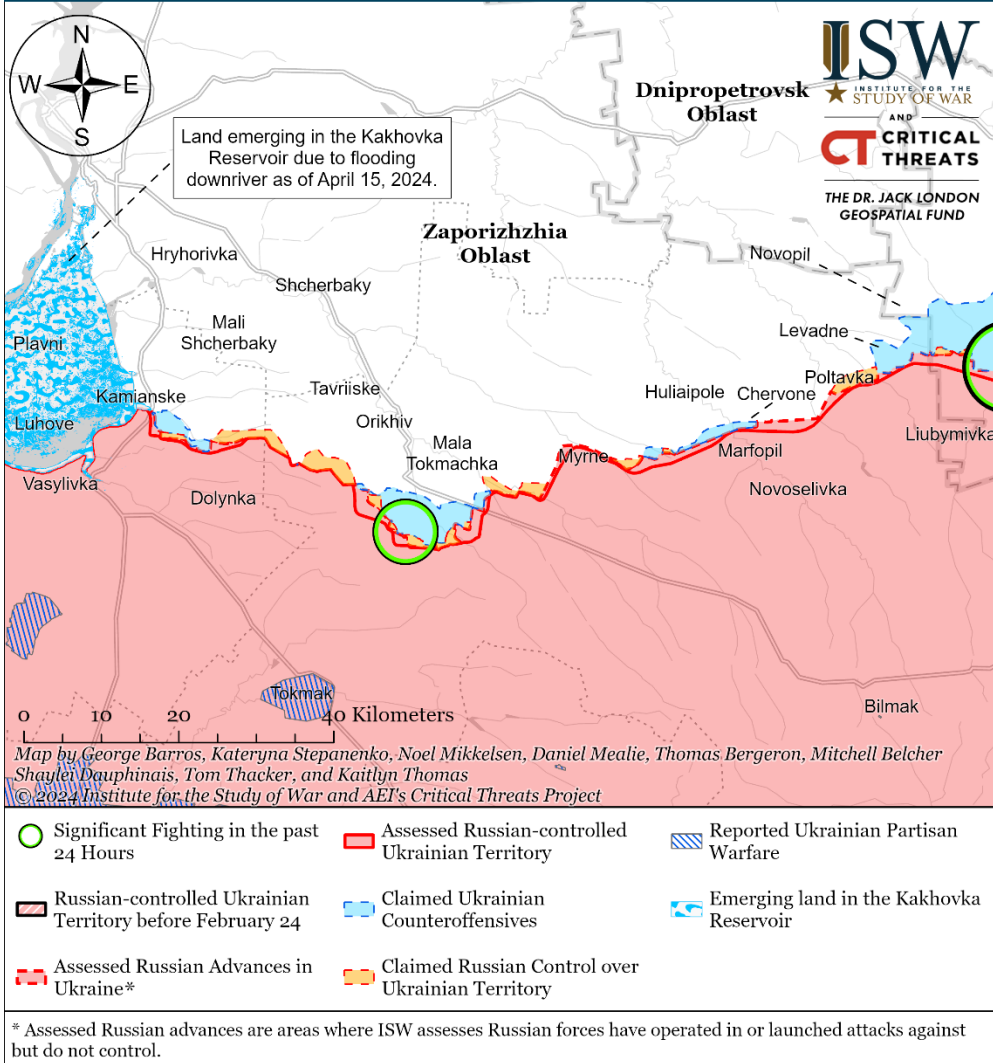


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional fighting continued near Robotyne and Verbove (east of Robotyne) in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on April 23.[64] Zaporizhzhia Oblast occupation deputy Vladimir Rogov claimed that Russian forces advanced up to a kilometer in depth near Robotyne, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[65] Elements of the Russian 429th Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], and Southern Military District [SMD]) and likely elements of the 56th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) are reportedly operating in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast.[66]

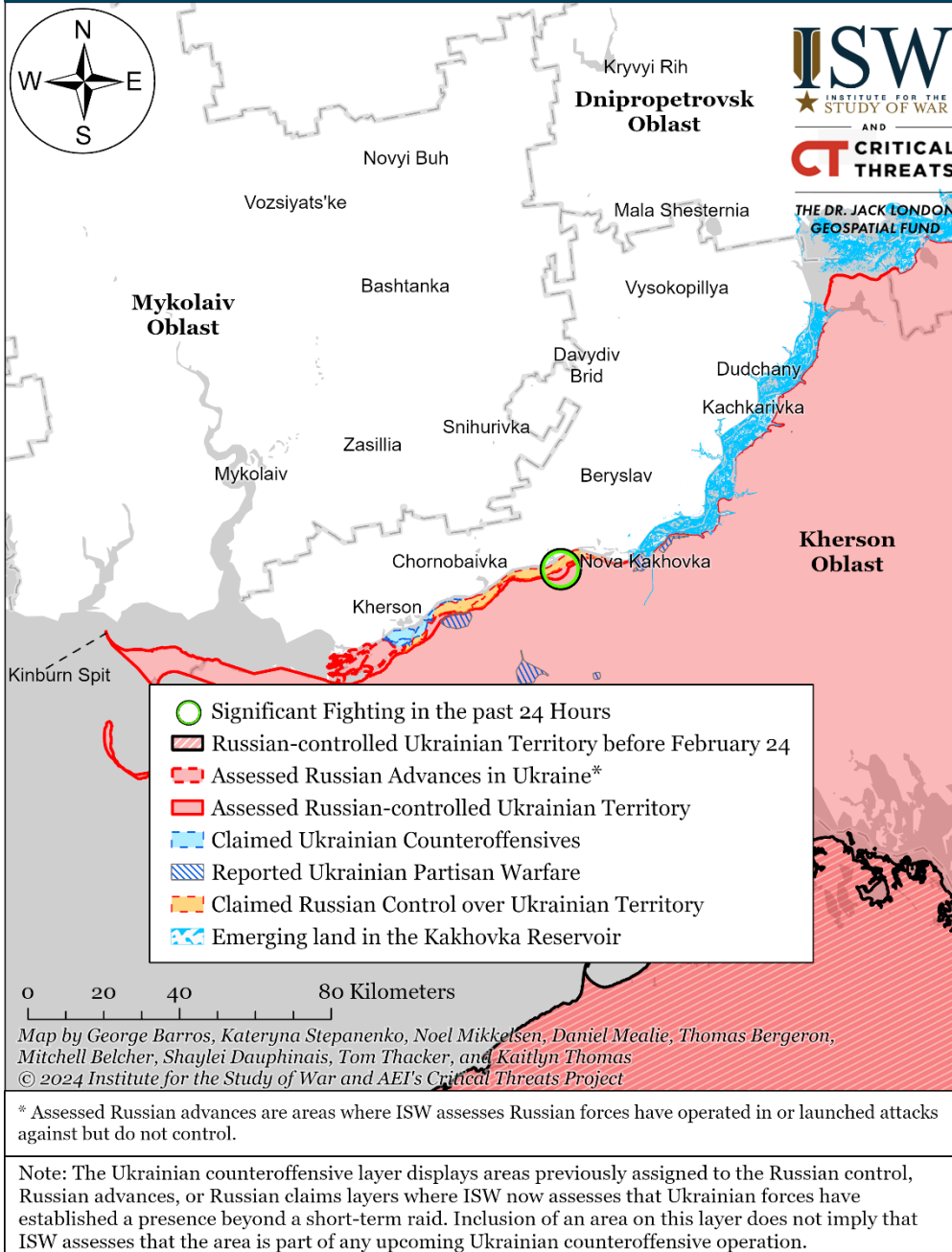


Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of April 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional engagements continued in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast, including near Krynky, on April 23.[67] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces intensified offensive operations within Krynky but did not specify the size or character of the Russian assaults.[68] Likely elements of the Russian 61st Naval Infantry Brigade (Leningrad Military District [LMD], formerly Northern Fleet) are reportedly operating near the Dnipro River in the Kherson direction.[69]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian forces conducted a limited series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of April 22 to 23. Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk reported that

Russian forces launched two Iskander-M ballistic missiles from Belgorod Oblast and 16 Shahed-136/131 drones from occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea, and Kursk Oblast.[70] Oleshchuk reported that Ukrainian forces downed 15 Shahed drones over Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kyiv, and Cherkasy oblasts.[71] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces struck Dnipro City with an unspecified type and number of missiles and Odesa City with a drone.[72] Ukrainian Air Forces Spokesperson Major Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces used different tactics during the Shahed strikes by launching one or two Shahed drones in different directions at different frequencies.[73] Yevlash added that Russian Shahed drones were likely attempting to conduct reconnaissance on the deployment of Ukrainian mobile fire groups.[74]

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

Prominent Russian milbloggers continue to complain about the ineffectiveness of Russian drones on the battlefield. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian drones are preventing Russian forces from conducting effective assaults near Krynky in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and are complicating Russian offensive operations in the Zaporizhia Oblast direction.[75] The milblogger complained that Russian forces in the Chasiv Yar direction in Donetsk Oblast have far fewer drones than Ukrainian forces and that most Russian drones fail to reach their intended targets. The milblogger complained that Russian commanders are ordering their subordinates to not report problems with drones to higher command and that the Russian military is not providing soldiers with the necessary resources to resolve these issues. A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger agreed with the first milblogger, claiming that these problems are not new.[76] The Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that the main supplier of Russian first-person view (FPV) drones has a monopoly on production so Russian forces only have one main model of FPV drone. The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces have long known the frequencies on which this model of drone operates and are jamming them. Another Russian milblogger who previously fought in occupied Ukraine made similar complaints on April 22 about Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) threatening Russian FPV drones that operate on the same frequency.[77] The Russian government designated the State Transport Leasing Company as the sole supplier of drones under government contracts for 2024 through 2025 on April 16.[78]

A Ukrainian military observer reported that leaked documents and emails indicate that Russian agricultural companies RusAgro and AssistAgro, which are connected to Russian oligarch Vadim Moshkovich, are assisting in the manufacturing processes for drones for the Russian military under the cover of their registration as agricultural enterprises.[79]

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

Deputy General Director for Scientific and Technical Development of the Russian state-owned Almaz-Antey Corporation Sergei Druzin stated on April 23 that Almaz-Antey specialists can change algorithms for anti-aircraft missile systems directly at the systems' locations to improve their counter-drone capabilities.[80]

Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)

ISW is not publishing coverage of Ukrainian defense industrial efforts today.

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

Russia is furthering efforts to forcibly absorb occupied Ukraine into the Russian economic sphere. The Kremlin previously introduced a “free economic zone” (FEZ) in occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhia oblasts in June 2023, which introduced special insurance and tax benefits for participating enterprises starting on January 1, 2024.[81] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on April 23 that since the FEZ began operating, Russian occupation authorities have forcibly nationalized over 37 enterprises in occupied Donetsk Oblast in order to include them in the FEZ.[82] The Resistance Center noted that the Russian government is “siphoning” money from enterprises in the FEZ and warned that prices are rising throughout occupied Ukraine. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation head Yevgeny Balitsky reported on April 23 that the Zaporizhia Iron Ore Plant, one of the largest mining and metallurgical complexes in Ukraine, has entered the FEZ and will receive over 1.85 billion rubles (\$20 million) in capital investments as a member of the FEZ.[83] The plant will receive tax benefits and other funds for social and environmental projects. Such funding streams will likely allow Russian occupation authorities more financial control over the plant and its output.

Russian occupation authorities continue to encourage Russians to resettle in occupied Ukraine through employment incentives. Russian opposition investigative outlet *Vazhnye Istorii* reported on April 23 that there is a shortage of doctors, teachers, managers, engineers, and industry specialists in occupied Ukraine, likely in part due to population outflows from occupied areas in the early months of the war, and a reticence amongst residents of occupied areas to work with Russian occupation administrations.[84] *Vazhnye Istorii* stated that in order to fill labor shortages, Russian occupation officials are offering higher salaries than for the same job in Russia. *Vazhnye Istorii* found that as of the end of March, the largest Russian job-listing platforms were publishing 800 job vacancies for positions in occupied Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts, over 6,000 for positions in occupied Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, and over 12,000 for positions in occupied Crimea.[85] Russian officials are particularly hiring truck drivers and technical engineers, and promising engineers an income of 250,000 rubles compared to the average Russian income of 95,000 rubles. The influx of Russians to occupied Ukraine to staff such jobs is likely in part meant to increase the economic productivity of occupied Ukraine, but also to change the demographic makeup of occupied areas by replacing Ukrainians with Russians, as ISW has previously reported.[86] Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko noted, however, that many of the labor migrants attracted to larger occupied cities like Mariupol were initially migrant laborers in Russia before they came to Ukraine and reported that migrants from Central Asian republics face high levels of discrimination and xenophobia from ethnic Russians who have settled in occupied Ukraine.[87] Migrant workers who have arrived in occupied Ukraine due to the promise of high salaries are likely to continue to face unequal treatment and discrimination at the hands of Russians living in occupied Ukraine.

A story by *Time* details Russia's persecution of religious minorities, especially Evangelical communities, in occupied Ukraine.[88] *Time* noted that Ukrainian Protestants represented 34 percent of cases of religious prosecution, 48 percent of which occurred in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast alone, and that Ukrainian Baptists suffered in 13 percent of reported religious persecution cases. ISW has reported at length on Russia's systemic repression of both Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Protestant communities in occupied Ukraine and noted that repressions against Protestant communities are particularly intense throughout southern Ukraine.[89]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian officials and milbloggers continued to promote narratives about the likely provision of US aid to Ukraine, possibly meant to assuage domestic fears in Russia and within the Russian military about the aid's positive impacts on Ukraine. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu implied that the US provision of aid to Ukraine will not have an effect on the war and claimed that Russia has shown that Western weapons are not superior to Russian ones and that Ukrainian forces have failed on the battlefield.[90] Russian occupation officials and milbloggers also claimed that US aid will not help Ukraine and that Russian forces are able to combat the US weapons.[91]

Kremlin officials continue efforts to push the West to self-deter and not take actions against Russia. Russian Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matvienko claimed that the Russian State Duma is ready to respond if the West seizes frozen Russian assets and claimed that Western economies will suffer more than the Russian economy.[92]

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

Nothing significant to report.

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.

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