### Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, April 7, 2024

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April 7, 2024, 4:15pm ET

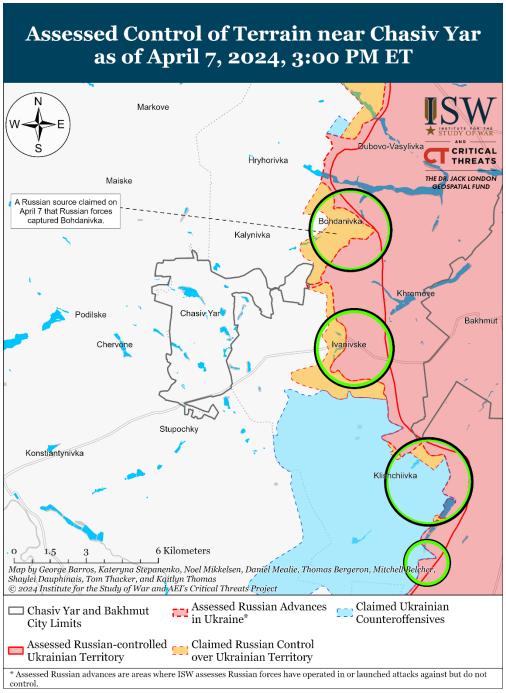
Click here to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

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 11:40am ET on April 7. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 8 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate Head Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov reported that Ukraine anticipates Russian offensive operations to intensify in and early **summer.** Budanov stated in an interview with broadcaster ARD published on April 7 that Ukraine expects that Russian offensive operations will especially intensify in the Donbas.[1] Budanov also reported that Russian forces will likely attempt to advance to Chasiv Yar (west of Bakhmut) and in the direction of Pokrovsk (about 43km northwest of Avdiivka). Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky previously stated in a CBS News interview published on March 28 that the major Russian offensive effort may start in late May or June.[2] ISW has recently observed that Russian forces intensified the tempo of their offensive operations across the theater, including by conducting a roughly reinforced company-sized mechanized assault toward Chasiv Yar on April 4, and continues to assess that the Russian military appears to be successfully mitigating likely increased manpower and materiel losses.[3] Zelensky and senior Ukrainian military officials have recently warned that delays in security assistance have forced Ukraine to cede the battlefield initiative to Russia and that the Ukrainian military cannot plan a successful counteroffensive nor defensive effort without knowing when and what kind of aid Ukraine will receive. ISW continues to assess that delays in Western military assistance have forced the Ukrainian military to husband materiel and that Ukrainian forces likely must make difficult decisions prioritizing certain aspects of its defense at the expense of contesting the initiative to constrain Russian military capabilities or plan for a future counteroffensive operations as prolonged US debates about military aid continue.[4]



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will meet with Chinese officials in China on April 8 and 9 amid Western warnings that China is increasingly helping Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) and even providing Russia with geospatial intelligence. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) stated that Lavrov will meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to discuss bilateral cooperation and "hot topics," including the war in Ukraine.[5] NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told the *BBC* on April 6 that China is "propping up the Russian war economy" and supporting the Russian DIB.[6] *Bloomberg* reported on April 6 that unspecified sources stated that China's support for Russia has "deepened" recently.[7] *Bloomberg* reported that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken briefed unspecified European allies on China's support and asked them to directly

speak to China about the issue. *Bloomberg's* sources reportedly stated that China and Russia have increased space cooperation and that China has given Russia microelectronics, optics, machine tools for tanks, and propellants for missiles. *Bloomberg* reported that White House National Security Council Spokesperson Adrienne Watson said that China has also provided Russia with nitrocellulose — an intermediary good used in producing gunpower and explosives — and turbojet engines. *Bloomberg* reported that China is also providing Russia with geospatial intelligence, including satellite imagery which the Russian military likely uses to support military operations in Ukraine. The *Atlantic* reported on March 18 that Ukrainian military sources believe that Russia may be using unspecified third parties to buy satellite imagery from US companies for targeting data to conduct longrange strikes.[8]

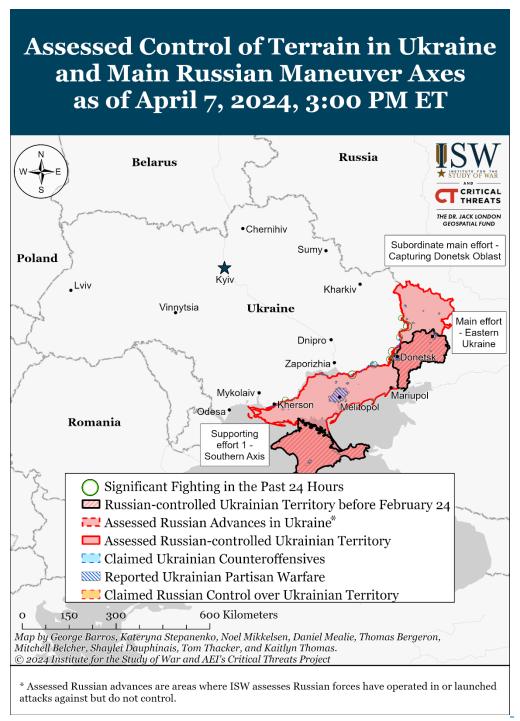
Russian forces reportedly continue to systematically use prohibited chemical weapons in Ukraine and are attacking Ukrainian positions with chemical substances almost daily **throughout the frontline.** The *Telegraph* published an investigation into the systematic use of Russian chemical weapons in Ukraine on April 6 and found that Ukrainian soldiers report near daily Russian attacks using K-51 grenades with CS-gas — a riot control agent (RCA) that causes harmful but not necessarily lethal effects and that is prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), to which Russia is a signatory.[9] Ukrainian soldiers told the *Telegraph* that these attacks are not immediately incapacitating but do usually cause panic at Ukrainian positions that Russian forces try to exploit when conducting assaults.[10] A Ukrainian commander near Robotyne, Zaporizhia Oblast reportedly stated that soldiers in his unit regularly carry gas masks due to the high frequency of Russian CS attacks in the area.[11] The *Telegraph* reported that there are unconfirmed reports that Russian forces have used chlorine, chloropicrin, and possibly even hydrogen cyanide substances against Ukrainian forces.[12] The Ukrainian Support Forces Command stated on April 5 that Ukrainian forces had recorded 371 cases of Russian forces using munitions containing chemical substances during March 2024 alone and 1,412 cases of Russian forces using chemical weapons between February 2023 and March 2024.[13] The Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade acknowledged in a now-deleted post that elements of the brigade deliberately used K-51 grenades with CS gas on Ukrainian positions near Krynky in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast in December 2023.[14]

Russian officials accused Ukraine of launching a series of drone strikes against the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) on April 7, but the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) did not attribute responsibility for the strikes. ZNPP occupation officials claimed that a Ukrainian drone struck a canteen located on the territory of the ZNPP and damaged a truck unloading food in the area.[15] ZNPP occupation officials claimed that other Ukrainian drones later struck the ZNPP's cargo port area and the dome of the 6th Power Reactor, which did not result in any critical damages or casualties.[16] Russian officials called on the international community to condemn Ukraine for "nuclear terrorism."[17] IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi stated that ZNPP occupation authorities informed IAEA experts that a drone detonated at the ZNPP and that the report is consistent with IAEA observations.[18] Grossi did not specify the party responsible for the drone strike and called on both parties to refrain from such actions in order to not "jeopardize nuclear safety."[19] Russian authorities have repeatedly attempted to use Russia's physical control over the ZNPP to force international organizations, including the IAEA, to meet with Russian occupation officials to legitimize Russia's occupation of the ZNPP and by extension Russia's occupation of sovereign Ukrainian land.[20]

Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi openly condemned and is taking action following reports that members of Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) may have purposefully intimidated a Ukrainian journalist investigating corruption journalist draft **SBU** by issuing the a **summons.** Ukrainian outlet Slidstvo.Info stated on April 6 that some SBU personnel may have instructed employees of a military registration and enlistment office to deliver draft summons to a *Slidstvo.Info* journalist who had been investigating corruption in the SBU's cybersecurity department.[21] Syrskyi condemned the reported intimidation scandal, denounced any attempts by Ukrainian military officials to harass or otherwise compromise the integrity of journalists, and ordered an official investigation into the matter on April 7.[22] ISW continues to assess that corruption is endemic to rapid wartime mobilization in any country and that Ukrainian officials are actively and openly identifying and resolving corruption problems, including by leveraging the robust and expansive Ukrainian community of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).[23]

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate Head Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov reported that Ukraine anticipates Russian offensive operations to intensify in late spring and early summer.
- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will meet with Chinese officials in China on April 8 and 9 amid Western warnings that China is increasingly helping Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) and even providing China with geospatial intelligence.
- Russian forces reportedly continue to systematically use prohibited chemical weapons in Ukraine and are attacking Ukrainian positions with chemical substances almost daily throughout the frontline.
- Russian officials accused Ukraine of launching a series of drone strikes against the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) on April 7, but the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) did not attribute responsibility for the strikes.
- Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi openly condemned and is taking action following reports that members of Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) may have purposefully intimidated a Ukrainian journalist investigating corruption within the SBU by issuing the journalist a draft summons.
- Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Avdiivka amid continued positional fighting along the entire line of contact on April 7.
- Chieftan of the All-Russian Cossack Society and Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Nationalities Nikolai Doluda claimed on April 7 that more than 30,000 Cossack personnel have fought in Ukraine.



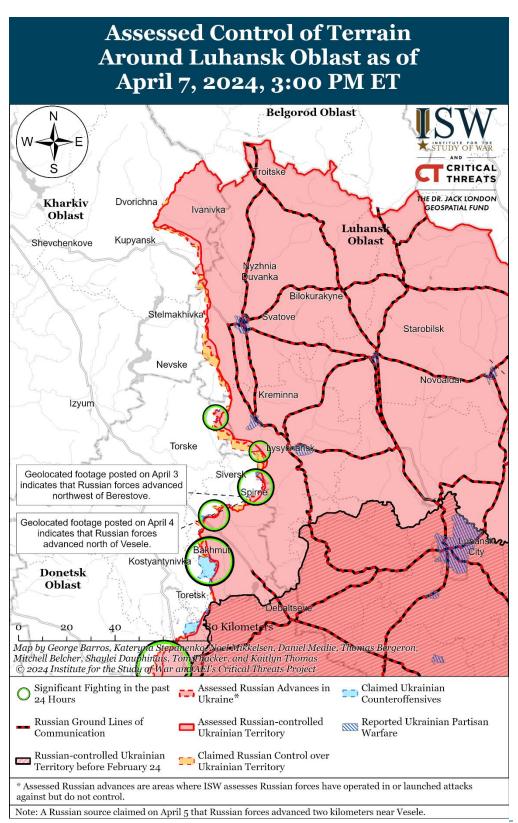
We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military 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

#### <u>Russian Main Effort - Eastern Ukraine</u>

# <u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

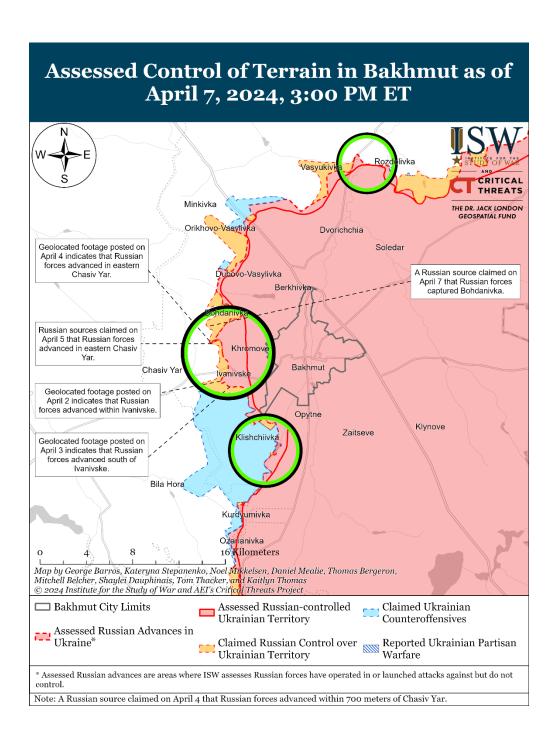
Positional fighting continued west of Kreminna near Terny and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka on April 7.[24] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the 20th Combined Arms Army ([CAA], Moscow Military District [MMD] [formerly Western Military District]) are attacking near Terny and that the Russian command may have withdrawn elements of the 25th CAA (Central Military District [CMD]) from the area, though it remains unclear if any redeployments of elements of the 25th CAA have occurred.[25] A Ukrainian brigade reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed 11 Russian armored vehicles during a roughly reinforced platoon-sized assault near Terny on April 3.[26] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have recently significantly increased glide bomb strikes in Kharkiv Oblast and conducted 100 glide bomb strikes in the area on April 5 alone as compared to 900 glide bomb strikes per month previously.[27]

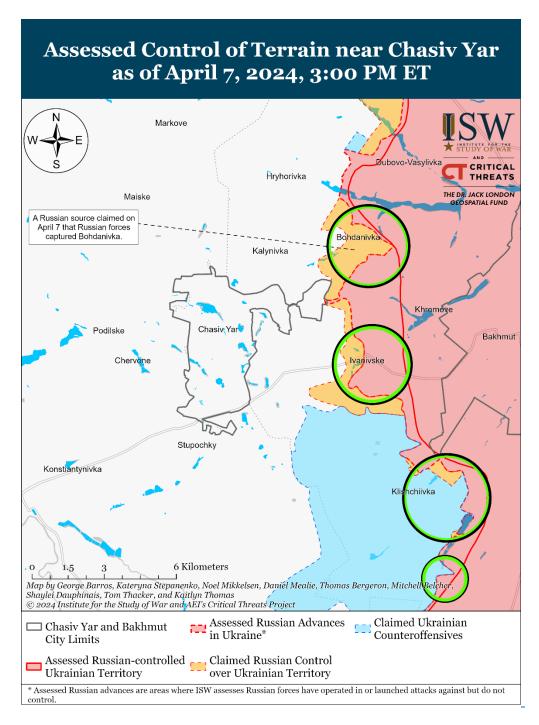


<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

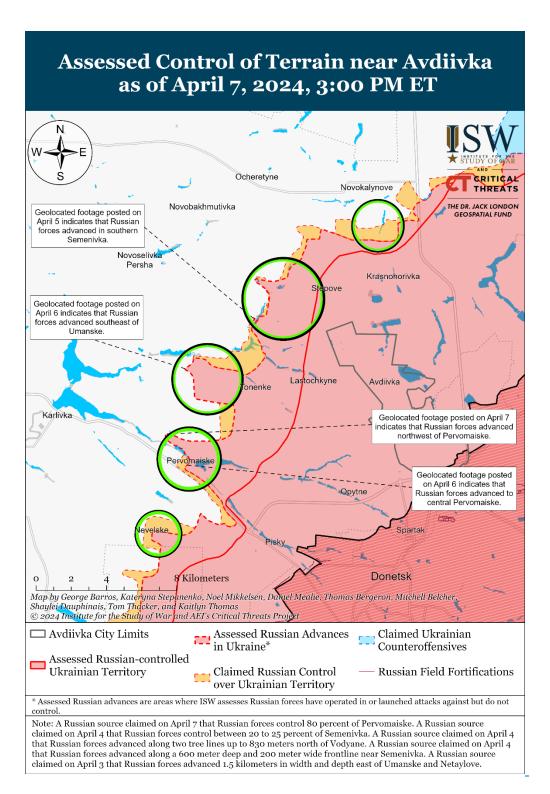
The Ukrainian General Staff reported on April 7 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks in the Siversk direction (northeast of Bakhmut) near Spirne, Vyimka, Rozdolivka, Fedorivka, and Vesele.[28]

Russian forces reportedly advanced northwest and west of Bakhmut on April 7, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut), while other Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting is ongoing in Bohdanivka and that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in the western outskirts of the settlement.[29] ISW has not yet observed visual evidence indicating that Russian forces entirely seized Bohdanivka. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces, namely elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division, with support from elements of the 11th Separate VDV Brigade and 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]), advanced in the Kanal Microraion on the eastern outskirts of Chasiv Yar (west of Bakhmut), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[30] Positional engagements continued northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka, west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske, and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[31] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported on April 7 that elements of the Russian 7th Reconnaissance and Assault Brigade (Volunteer Corps) and 331st VDV Regiment (98th VDV Division) are operating near Bohdanivka and attempting to advance in the direction of Kalynivka (northeast of Bakhmut).[32] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 11th Separate VDV Brigade, 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD), and 217th and 299th VDV Regiments (98th VDV Division) are conducting the most aggressive attacks near Ivanivske and east of Chasiv Yar. Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 6th Motorized Rifle Division and 72nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (both of the 3rd Army Corps) and elements of the 88th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps) are attempting to bypass Klishchiivka and push Ukrainian forces west of the Siverskyi-Donets Donbas Canal.



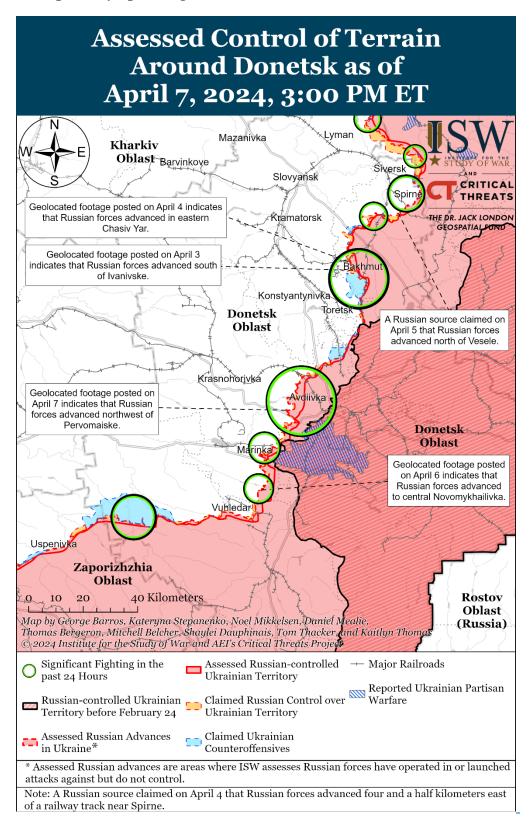


Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance west of Avdiivka on April 7, amid ongoing positional fighting in the area. Geolocated footage published on April 7 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced northwest of Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka).[33] A prominent Kremin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces currently control at least 80 percent of Pervomaiske, which is consistent with ISW's current assessment of Russian advances into the settlement.[34] Positional engagements continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novokalynove, Novobakhmutivka, and Berdychi; west of Avdiivka near Tonenke and Semenivka; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske, Nevelske, and Vodyane.[35]

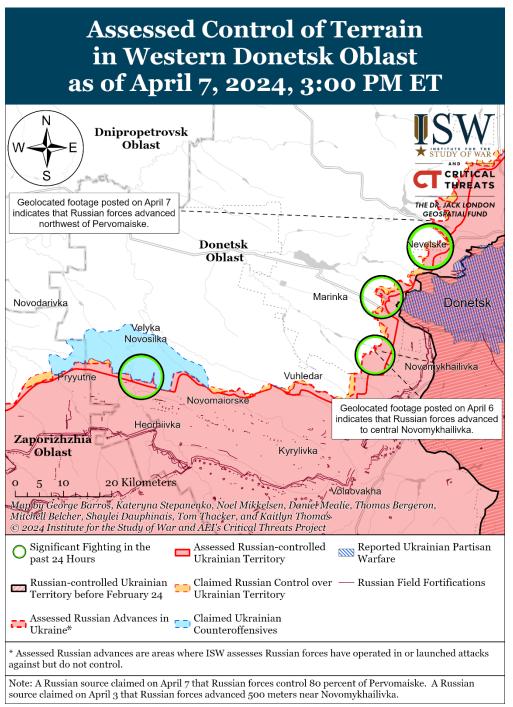


Russian forces reportedly advanced southwest of Donetsk City amid continued positional engagements west and southwest of Donetsk City on April 7. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in central Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City) and north and south of the settlement, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[36] Positional engagements continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near

Pobieda and Novomykhailivka.[37] Elements of the Russian 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating near Krasnohorivka.[38]

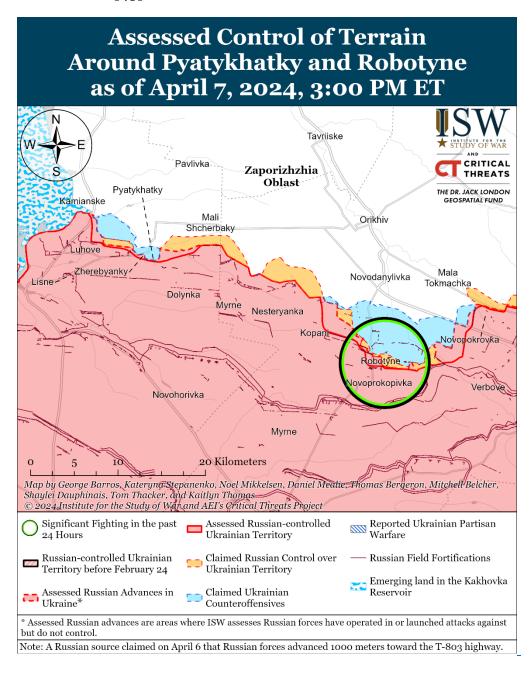


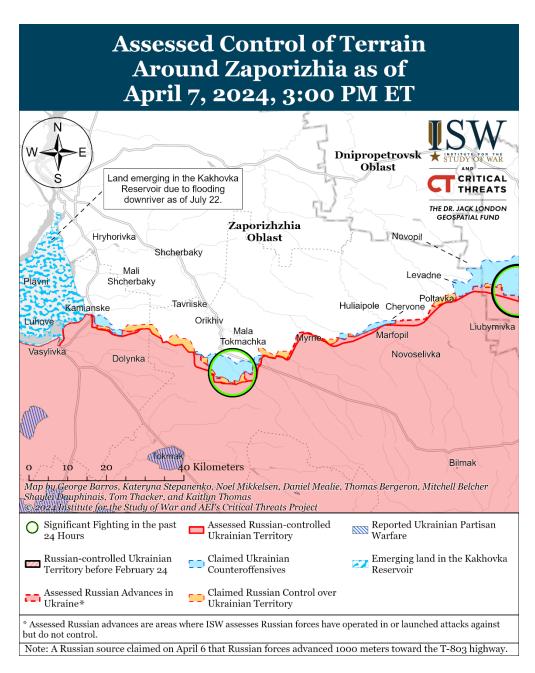
Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on April 7, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Positional engagements continued near Staromayorske and Urozhaine (both south of Velyka Novosilka).[39] Elements of the Russian 38th Motorized Rifle Brigade (35th CAA, Eastern Military District) are reportedly operating in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.[40]



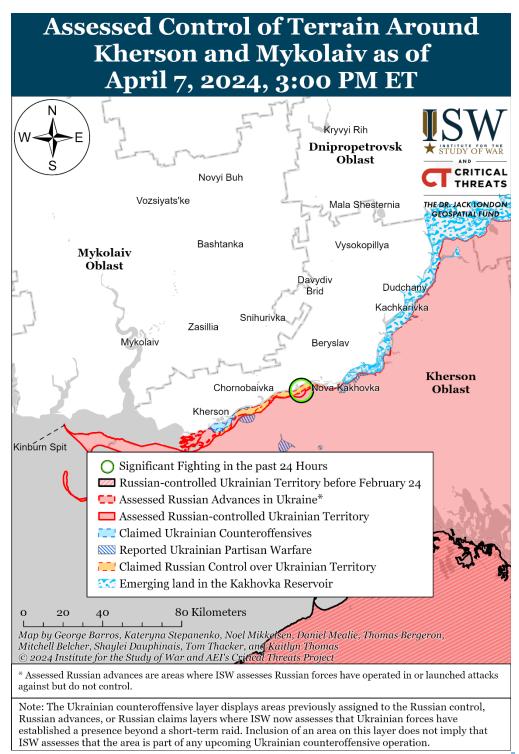
<u>Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhia Oblast near Robotyne and northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne) on April 7 but did not result in any confirmed frontline changes.[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces captured an unspecified Ukrainian position northwest of Verbove, advanced one kilometer in a windbreak, and nearly pushed Ukrainian forces towards the To8o3 (Novodanylivka-Pavlivske) highway.[42] ISW has not observed visual evidence confirming these claims. A Russian milblogger implied that elements of a reconnaissance detachment of the Russian 56th Guards Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th Guards VDV Division) are operating in the Verbove area.[43]





Russian forces reportedly recently attempted to attack Ukrainian positions in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast with a relatively larger number of small assault groups.[44] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian forces recently temporarily changed their tactics and attacked Krynky in the east bank of Kherson Oblast with a larger number of small assault groups from different directions. Humenyuk stated that these attacks were unsuccessful in pushing Ukrainian forces from their positions in Krynky and that Russian forces have since switched back to conducting a lower number of assaults in the area. Positional engagements continued in the east bank of Kherson Oblast near Krynky on April 7.[45]



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

Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk reported that Russian forces launched one Kh-31 air guided missile from occupied Luhansk Oblast, one Iskander-M ballistic missile from occupied Crimea, and 17 Shahed-136/131 drones from Cape Chauda on the night of April 6 to

7.[46] Oleshchuk reported that Ukrainian forces shot down all Shahed drones over Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Poltava oblasts. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated that Russian forces struck port infrastructure in Odesa City, likely with the Iskander-M missile.[47] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian drones struck Kharkiv City and damaged civilian infrastructure.[48] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces struck a fuel and lubricant warehouse and aviation school in Kharkiv City, with one Russian milblogger claiming that Russian forces used FAB glide bombs with unified planning and correction modules (UMPC).[49]

## <u>Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts</u> (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)

Chieftain of the All-Russian Cossack Society and Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Nationalities Nikolai Doluda claimed on April 7 that more than 30,000 Cossack personnel are currently fighting in Ukraine.[50] Doluda that Cossack detachments are subordinated to motorized rifle units under the authority of the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD).[51] Doluda added that almost all of Russia's 13 Cossack organizations have formed their own volunteer detachments to fight in Ukraine.[52]

Russian sources continue to report that select Russian units are plagued by drunkenness, extortion, and fratricide. Russian independent outlet *Bereg* reported on April 5 that six Russian soldiers in the 164th Motorized Rifle Brigade (25th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) deployed near occupied Hrechyskyne, Luhansk Oblast tortured another Russian soldier for 14 hours before killing him, possibly to settle a commander's personal vendetta.[53] *Bereg* reported that the six Russian personnel are part of an "extortion gang" that exploits widespread drunkenness in the unit to routinely beat, torture, and extort money from drunken colleagues.[54]

## <u>Russian Technological Adaptations</u> (Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)

General Director of Rostec subsidiary High-Precision Complexes Oleg Ryazantsev claimed on April 7 that Russian forces used the Pantsir-M naval air defense system for the first time in Ukraine when shooting down a Storm Shadow missile that targeted a Russian ship on an unspecified date.[55] Russian state newswire *RIA Novosti* stated that the *Cyclone* Karakurt-class corvette is the only ship in the Black Sea Fleet (BSF) equipped with the Pantsir-M system.

# <u>Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts</u> (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.

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

ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas today.

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

Russian officials and state media amplified a long-standing information operation on April 7 that falsely portrays Russia's 2014 military intervention and hybrid war in Donbas as a Ukrainian "insurrection." [56] This information operation seeks to convince domestic and foreign audiences that Russia was not the initiating belligerent in Ukraine, despite robust documented evidence that the Russian Main Directorate of the General Staff (GRU) astroturfed "local uprisings" in occupied Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in 2014. [57] Russian Foreign Ministry (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova falsely claimed that occupied Donetsk Oblast declared itself the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) on April 7, 2014, in response to an alleged US-backed radical "coup" in Ukraine. [58] Russian state media outlet *Sputnik News Africa* similarly claimed that Ukraine launched an anti-terrorist operation to "crush the fledging independence movement" in eastern Ukraine, deliberately misrepresenting Ukraine's efforts to defend itself against the initial Russian invasion in 2014. [59] The Kremlin has long weaponized this information operation to mask its initial invasion of Ukraine as a "local conflict" or a "civil war" to mislead the international community about Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine starting in 2014, and to obfuscate Moscow's long-term objective of regaining dominant control over all of Ukraine.

<u>Significant activity in Belarus</u> (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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[2] https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-russia-war-zelenskyy-says-putin-will-threaten-nato-quickly-if-not-stopped/

[3] https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-6-2024; https://isw.pub/UkrWar040524; https://isw.pub/UkrWar040424

[4] https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-winter-spring-2024-offensive-operation-kharkiv-luhansk-axis; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-10-

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- [14] https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-24-2023
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[27] https://t.me/rybar/58954; https://t.me/dva\_majors/; https://t.me/dva\_majors/39239

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