# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, April 6, 2024

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Date cut-off: 10:15pm ET

Click <u>here</u> 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 <u>here</u> 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 <u>here</u> 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 2pm ET on April 6 ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 7 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky indicated that Ukraine does not have enough materiel to contest the battlefield initiative. Zelensky stated during an interview aired on April 6 that Ukrainian forces currently do not have enough ammunition to initiate and sustain future counteroffensive operations and reiterated that Ukrainian forces are currently using drones to partially compensate for artillery ammunition shortages across the theater.[1] Zelensky stressed that Ukraine must conduct countermeasures to deprive Russian forces of the ability to prepare and conduct significant offensive efforts and not only rely on defensive operations. Zelensky stated that striking Russian force concentrations is one such countermeasure but that Ukrainian forces lack long-range weapons to strike Russian force concentrations and other targets necessary to undermine Russian operations. Senior Ukrainian officials have long called for timely and sustained Western military assistance that would enable Ukraine to conduct both defensive and counteroffensive operations when the timing is optimal for Ukraine to undertake such efforts, as opposed to having materiel shortages constrain Ukraine's ability to plan and execute operations and losing opportunities to exploit Russian weaknesses.[2] Zelensky recently stated that delays in security assistance forced Ukraine to cede the battlefield initiative to Russia, and Ukrainian officials have warned that Ukraine cannot plan either a successful counteroffensive or defensive effort without knowing when and what kind of aid Ukraine will receive. ISW continues to assess that shortages in Western military assistance have forced Ukrainian forces to husband materiel, and Zelensky's statement suggests that Ukrainian forces are now having to make difficult decisions about prioritizing certain aspects of its defense over constraining Russian military capabilities or preparing for counteroffensive operations.[3] The New York Times similarly reported on April 5 that Ukrainian forces are close to running out of some types of munitions and that Ukrainian officials have observed a five-to-one Russian artillery advantage throughout the frontline.[4] Ukrainian soldiers reportedly told the New York Times that Ukrainian forces currently have enough cluster munitions that are effective at repelling Russian infantry assaults but are low on high-explosive artillery shells needed repel mechanized assaults.[5] to

Zelensky stressed that additional Western security assistance is necessary for Ukrainian forces to effectively defend Ukraine's airspace against the intensified Russian strike campaign and increased Russian aviation operations along the frontline. Zelensky stated that Ukraine will need an additional 25 Patriot air defense systems, likely meaning launchers, to extend full air defense coverage to all of Ukraine's territory.[6] Zelensky warned that if Russian forces sustain the tempo of their current missile and drone strikes then Ukraine will likely lack the air defense missile stocks needed to protect Ukrainian cities and critical infrastructure.[7] Russian forces appear to be exploiting Ukraine's already degraded air defense umbrella in an attempt to collapse Ukraine's energy grid, likely in an effort to constrain Ukraine's long-term defense industrial capacity.[8] Russian missile and drone strikes have consistently pressured Ukraine's limited air defense and have forced Ukraine to make difficult decisions about providing air defense coverage between large population centers in the rear and active areas of the frontline.[9] Sparse and inconsistent air defense coverage along the front has likely facilitated Russia's intensification of guided and unguided glide bomb strikes, which Russian forces used to tactical effect in their seizure of Avdiivka in mid-February 2024.[10] Zelensky stated that the previous downing of Russian aircraft has temporarily constrained glide bomb strikes and that Russian forces are now conducting glide bomb strikes from further away, increasing the need for longrange air defense systems.[11]

Zelensky cautioned that the arrival of all promised F-16 fighter jets from Ukraine's Western partners in 2024 will provide Ukraine with only 10 percent of the fighter aircraft Ukraine would need to completely defeat Russian aviation and restore Ukraine's ability to operate effectively in the air domain. [12] Zelensky stated that Ukraine will need a combination of air defense systems and fighter aircraft to combat the Russian aviation threat, namely to prevent the Russian use of KAB guided glide bombs. [13] Zelensky also added that Ukraine is currently developing new weapons to defend against Russian KAB guided glide bombs as part of this combined air defense. The further degradation of Ukraine's air defense umbrella would not only limit Ukraine's ability to protect critical elements of its war effort in the rear but would also likely afford Russian aviation prolonged secure operation along the frontline. Such security would allow Russian forces to significantly increase glide bomb strikes at scale and possibly even allow Russian forces to conduct routine large-scale aviation operations against near rear Ukrainian logistics and cities to devastating effect. [14] Western security assistance that allows Ukraine to establish a robust combined air defense system will enable Ukraine to protect its cities while providing air defense to potentially operationally significant defensive and counteroffensive operations.

Continued delays in US security assistance are specifically impacting the capabilities that Ukrainian forces need to respond to the increased tempo of Russian mechanized assaults in eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi warned on April 6 that a particularly difficult situation has emerged east of Chasiv Yar and west of Avdiivka in Donetsk Oblast, both areas where ISW has observed a recent intensification of Russian mechanized assaults ranging from platoon-sized to battalion-sized attacks.[15] Syrskyi also observed that Russian forces are conducting platoon-, company-, and sometimes battalion-sized infantry assaults in separate directions. The Press Service of the Ukrainian Airborne Forces stated that Russian forces with massed armored vehicle support are still attempting to break through Ukrainian defenses west of Avdiivka despite not yet repeating mechanized assaults as large as the ones that they conducted in the area between March 29 and March 31.[16] Geolocated footage published on April 6 indicates that elements of the Russian 90th Guards Tank Division (41st Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) recently conducted a likely company-sized mechanized assault southeast of Umanske (west of

Avdiivka), and a Ukrainian airborne assault brigade reported that its personnel destroyed 10 Russian tanks, five BMP infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), and a MT-LB IFV during 11 mechanized assaults in the area.[17] Ukrainian forces have so far successfully repelled intensified Russian mechanized assaults throughout eastern Ukraine in the past week but have done so despite persisting materiel shortages.

The Kremlin explicitly threatened its long-term ally Armenia on April 5 over Armenian outreach to the West following Russia's failure to prevent Armenia's loss of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Union (EU) High Representative Josep Borell, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and US Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Samantha Powers met on April 5 in Brussels to discuss continued Western support of Armenian democratic and economic development.[18] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) released a statement later on April 5 responding to the meeting, in which the Russian MFA claimed that the West is attempting to "drag the South Caucasus [region] into a geopolitical confrontation" between Russia and the West.[19] The Russian MFA stated that "extra-regional interference" in the South Caucasus region is "irresponsible" and "destructive" and aims to drive a wedge between the South Caucasus countries and Russia. The Russian MFA threatened that Western interference could result in the "most negative consequences for [regional] stability, security, and economic development" and an "uncontrollable increase in tension" in the region. The Russian MFA explicitly threatened the Armenian government and warned that Armenia could "go down the wrong path," which the MFA claimed is fraught with security and economic issues, could result in an "outflow of the population," and is reminiscent of the issues that Russia's invasion has caused Ukraine. The Russian MFA accused the West of attempting to "deceive" Armenia into withdrawing from the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and requesting that Russia withdraw from Russia's military base in Armenia and from the Yerevan International Airport.

The Russian MFA's April 5 statement follows several months of Kremlin threats against Armenia in response to ongoing Armenian efforts to secure new, Western security guarantees and efforts to blame Armenia for deteriorating Russian-Armenian relations.[20] Armenian officials recently stated that Armenia is considering withdrawing from the CSTO and applying to join the EU and recently asked Russia to withdraw Russian border guards from the Yerevan International Airport.[21] The Russian MFA's statement insinuates that the Armenian government is not independently making decisions about its security, and that Western countries are somehow guiding the Armenian government's decisions. The Kremlin has made similar ridiculous claims that the West controls the Ukrainian government as part of Kremlin efforts to question and undermine Ukrainian sovereignty.[22] The Kremlin has previously conducted hybrid wars against former Soviet states that have sought EU accession.

The Russian MFA also continues to threaten Finland and claimed that Finland has "lost its independence in making foreign policy decisions" since its accession to NATO — a narrative that the Kremlin routinely used to falsely claim that NATO was controlling Ukraine and using Ukraine to threaten Russia. Russian Ambassador to Finland Pavel Kuznetsov stated during an interview with Kremlin newswire *TASS* on April 6 that Finland is on a "destructive course" in its relationship with Russia and that Finland's accession to NATO is making the Baltic region a "zone of potential escalation."[23] Kuznetsov threatened Finland and the NATO alliance broadly, claiming that Russia would have to respond to a buildup of NATO material and manpower or the

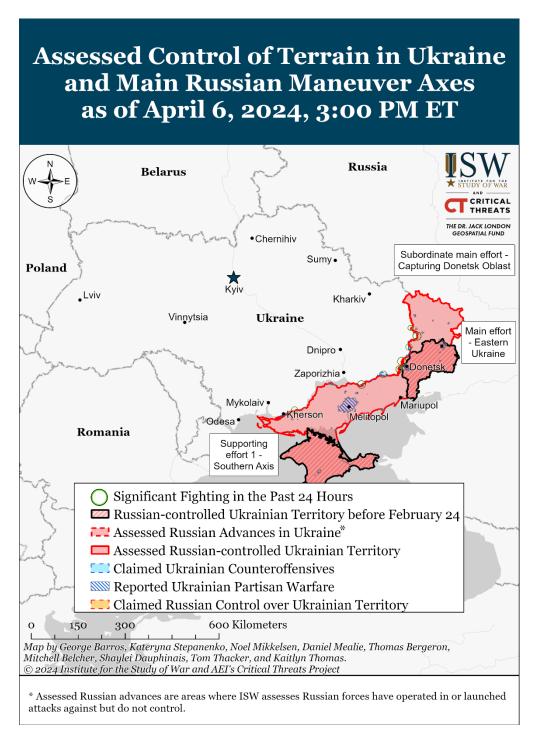
deployment of a nuclear weapon in Finland and that Russia's response would be "adequate but not necessarily symmetrical." Kuznetsov claimed that Finland has joined the "party of war until victory over Russia" by joining NATO and accused perceived Finnish "Russophobia" of causing a complete breakdown of the Russian-Finnish relationship. Kuznetsov insinuated that Finland has no option but to improve its relationship with Russia, given that "we can't escape geography," but blamed Finland unilaterally for the poor state of Russian-Finnish relations, despite the artificial migrant crisis that Russia created on the Russian-Finnish border in fall 2023 and repeated Russian threats against Finland and the wider NATO alliance.[24] ISW continues to assess that Russian threats against NATO member states are aimed at leading the West to deter itself and that Russian claims of imagined threats originating from NATO are aimed at setting informational conditions to justify and support an envisioned long-term geopolitical confrontation with the West.[25]

Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov announced on April 5 that 3,000 former Wagner Group personnel will join the Akhmat Spetsnaz unit following successful negotiations between Akhmat and Wagner commanders.[26] Kadyrov claimed that Commander of the Akhmat Spetsnaz (and deputy commander of the 2nd Luhansk People's Republic's [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) Apty Alaudinov reached an agreement with Wagner leadership that Wagner commander Alexander Kuznetsov (call sign "Ratibor") will join Akhmat Spetsnaz along with 3,000 Wagner personnel. Kadyrov added that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) already allocated a required number of vacancies within the Akhmat Spetsnaz unit to accommodate the Wagner personnel, and that Wagner personnel can start combat missions after resolving all organizational issues. Kadyrov's mention of the Russian MoD indicates that these Wagner elements will be subordinated under the Russian MoD's authority rather than Rosgvardia. Alaudinov also amplified a Kremlinaffiliated milblogger's claim that the main group of Wagner commanders and 5,000 Wagner personnel are transferring to the 2nd AC under the Russian MoD.[27] The milblogger added that the Russian military is still discussing whether these 5,000 Wagner personnel will form a regiment like the unit under Kuznetsov, form a new separate brigade, or be distributed among existing brigades.

The claimed transfer of 3,000 Wagner personnel into MoD's Akhmat Spetsnaz indicates that the Russian MoD is successfully formalizing control over some elements of the remaining Wagner Group force - an objective it has been pursuing since 2023. ISW previously assessed that the Russian MoD launched a campaign in early-to-mid-2023 which aimed to directly subordinate Wagner forces under the Russian MoD. ISW also assessed that deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and Wagner personnel started the mutiny in June 2023 in protest of the Russian MoD's efforts to consolidate control over Wagner forces.[28] The transfer of Wagner personnel to Akhmat Spetsnaz units sparked some criticism from Wagner-affiliated irregular formations, such as the Rusich Sabotage Assault Reconnaissance Group which accused these Wagner personnel of selling out to the Russian MoD.[29] One Russian milblogger also accused Kadyrov of exaggerating the number of transferred Wagner personnel, claiming that most Wagner personnel hate Kuznetsov and are located in Africa.[30] Kremlin-affiliated milbloggers largely celebrated the claimed transfer, claiming that Wagner personnel had two options: to either hold on to their past grudges or let them go to serve the Russian state.[31] One Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that former Wagner forces previously formed the Kamerton detachment under Akhmat Spetsnaz and that the Russian MoD did not ban this detachment from using Wagner symbology, networks, and management systems.[32]

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky indicated that Ukraine does not have enough materiel to contest the battlefield initiative.
- Zelensky stressed that additional Western security assistance is necessary for Ukrainian forces to effectively defend Ukraine's airspace against the intensified Russian strike campaign and increased Russian aviation operations along the frontline.
- Zelensky cautioned that the arrival of all promised F-16 fighter jets from Ukraine's Western partners in 2024 will provide Ukraine with only 10 percent of the fighter aircraft Ukraine would need to completely defeat Russian aviation and restore Ukraine's ability to operate effectively in the air domain.
- Continued delays in US security assistance are specifically impacting the capabilities that Ukrainian forces need to respond to the increased tempo of Russian mechanized assaults in eastern Ukraine.
- The Kremlin explicitly threatened its long-term ally Armenia on April 5 over Armenian outreach to the West following Russia's failure to prevent Armenia's loss of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023.
- The Russian MFA also continues to threaten Finland and claimed that Finland has "lost its independence in making foreign policy decisions" since its accession to NATO a narrative that the Kremlin routinely used to falsely claim that NATO was controlling Ukraine and using Ukraine to threaten Russia.
- Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov announced on April 5 that 3,000 former Wagner Group personnel will join the Akhmat Spetsnaz unit following successful negotiations between Akhmat and Wagner commanders.
- Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Avdiivka and Donetsk City.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin passed two laws on April 6, offering Russian society some concession for its sacrifices to support Russia's war 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)

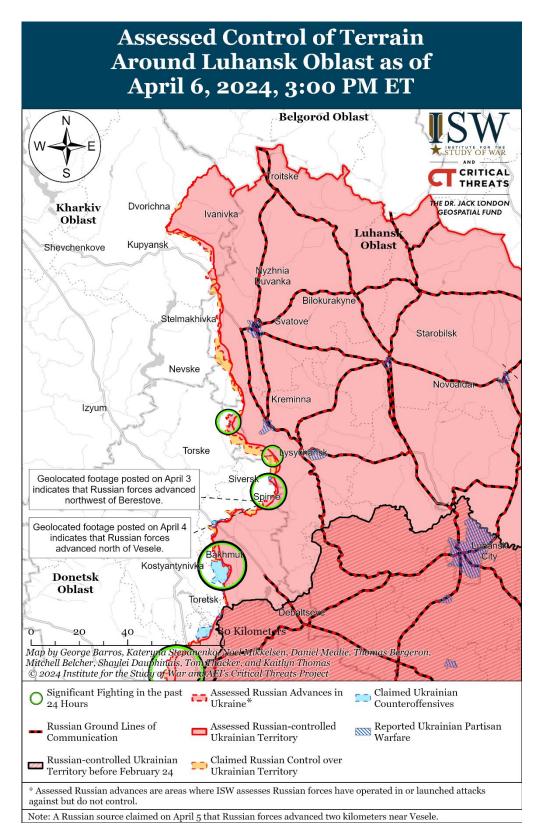
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiy Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, 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
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# <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)

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated in a televised interview on April 6 that there is currently no threat of a Russian ground invasion towards Kharkiv City and that all discussions about Russia's plans to capture the city are information operations aimed at inciting panic in Ukraine.[33]

Ukrainian forces reportedly achieved unspecified tactical successes in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions amid continued positional engagements along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on April 6. Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated that Ukrainian forces have achieved unspecified tactical successes in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions. [34] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Terny (west of Kreminna) and Bilohorivka (south of Kreminna), although Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are advancing on the outskirts of Terny and near the chalk quarry in Bilohorivika. [35]

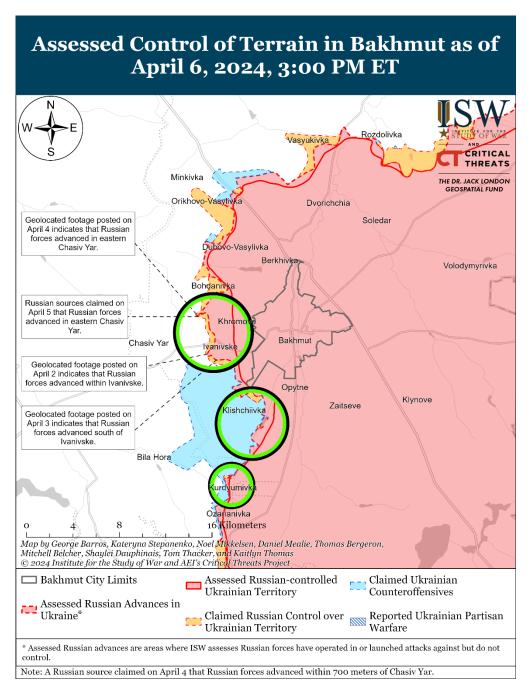


## <u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued efforts to advance west of Bakhmut towards Chasiv Yar on April 6, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian 8 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2024

forces, chiefly elements of the 98th Airborne (VDV) Division, continued attacks northeast and southeast of Chasiv Yar and captured positions in forest areas along the railway to the east and in the Stupky-Holubovski 2 nature preserve to the southeast.[36] The milbloggers claimed that Russian forces conducted heavy tube artillery, rocket, and airstrikes against Ukrainian positions in and around Chasiv Yar. A milblogger also claimed that elements of the Russian "Sever-V" Volunteer Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) pushed back some Ukrainian forces from Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut) towards Chasiv Yar and Kalynivka (between Bohdanivka and Chasiv Yar).[37] Another Russian milblogger claimed that vulnerable logistics will likely complicate Russian efforts to advance towards Chasiv Yar and that Russian forces need to prioritize additional measures to defend against Ukrainian drone strikes and stabilize their supply lines over rushing to pressure Bohdanivka and Ivanivske (between Bakhmut and Chasiv Yar).[38]

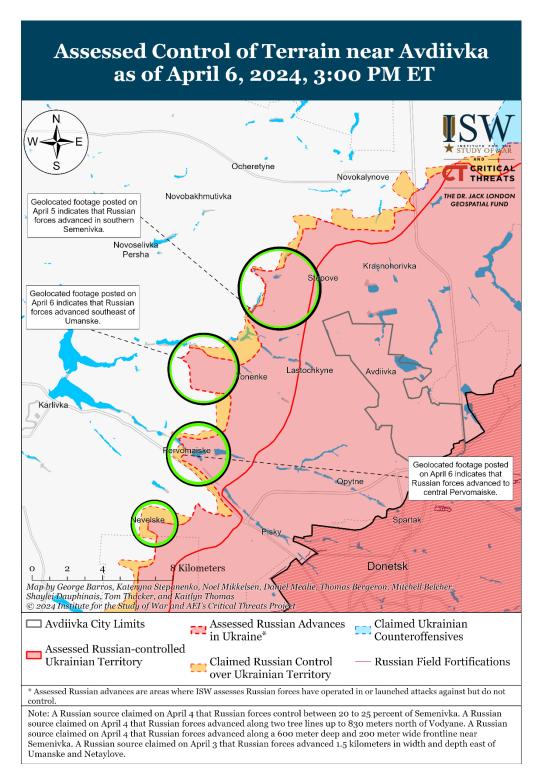
Positional fighting also continued northeast, southwest, and south of Bakhmut. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced near Vesele (northeast of Bakhmut near Siversk) on April 6, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims. [39] Positional fighting continued northeast of Bakhmut near Spirne, Rozdolivka, and Vyimka; southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka, Andriivka, and Zelenopillya; and south of Bakhmut near Niu York. [40]



Russian forces continued to advance west of Avdiivka amid continued attacks on April 6. Geolocated footage published on April 6 shows that Russian forces advanced southwest of Umanske (west of Avdiivka) during a likely company-sized mechanized assault and into central Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka).[41] Additional geolocated footage published on April 6 shows that Russian forces advanced further into northern Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka) but likely did not make this advance within the past day.[42] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in and north of Berdychi and into southern and central Semenivka (west of Avdiivka).[43] Milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces are clearing forest areas between Tonenke (west of Avdiivka) and Vodyane (southwest of Avdiivka). ISW is unable to confirm these Russian claims of advance, however. Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are trying to push Ukrainian forces from Pervomaiske and advance towards Umanske (both southwest of Avdiivka).[44] Russian milbloggers posted footage

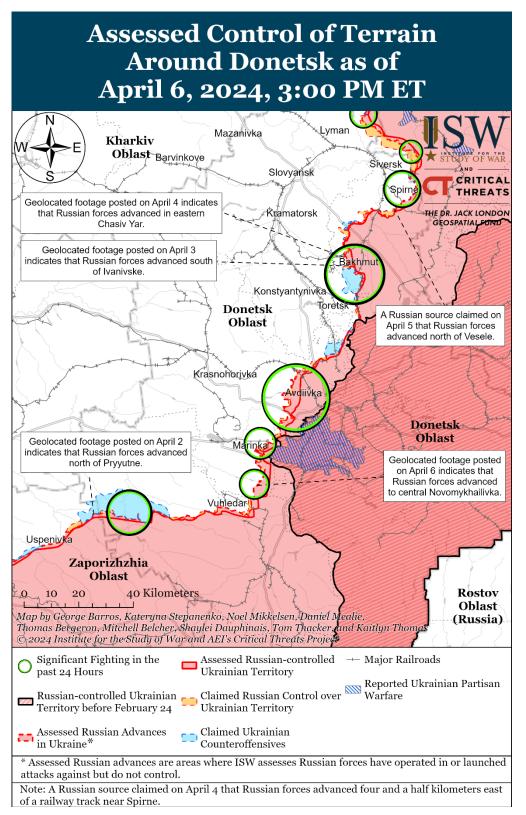
on April 6 of Russian forces conducting an airstrike against a dam bridge allegedly across the Durna River near Umanske. [45] Fighting also continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novokalynove; west of Avdiivka near Orlivka, Nevelske, and Yasnobrodivka; and southwest of Avdiivka near Netaylove. [46] Elements of the Russian 90th Guards Tank Division (41st Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly fighting southeast of Umanske, elements of the "Yastreb" private military company (reportedly created by Russian state energy operator Gazprom) are reportedly fighting near Semenivka, and elements of the "Vega" Special Purpose Detachment (reportedly of the 24th Guards Spetsnaz Brigade) are reportedly fighting in the Avdiivka direction. [47]

The Ukrainian Airborne Forces Press Service reported on April 6 that Russian forces are still conducting large numbers of infantry-led assaults and are using combat vehicles to drive infantry to the front. [48] A Ukrainian servicemember operating in the Avdiivka direction noted that Russian forces are trying to cut off and capture settlements on the flanks of Avdiivka but that Russian forces are now attacking strong Ukrainian defensive lines. [49]

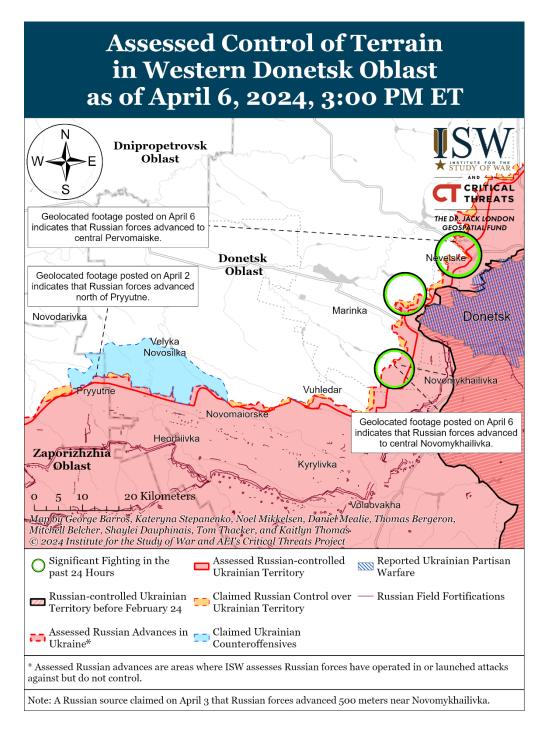


Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Donetsk City amid continued fighting in the area on April 6. Geolocated footage published on April 6 shows that Russian forces advanced on the northern outskirts of Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City) and further west into central Novomykhailivka.[50] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also advanced into a field southeast of Novomykhailivka, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[51] Positional fighting also continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and

southwest of Donetsk City near Kostyantynivka. [52] Elements of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) 105th Infantry Regiment (1st DNR Army Corps) are reportedly fighting in Novomykhailivka. [53]



Positional fighting continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area near Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka) on April 6.[54]

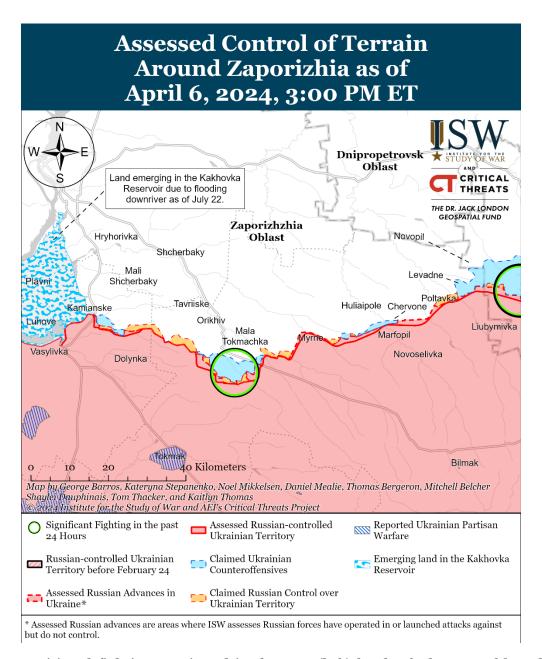


## <u>Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

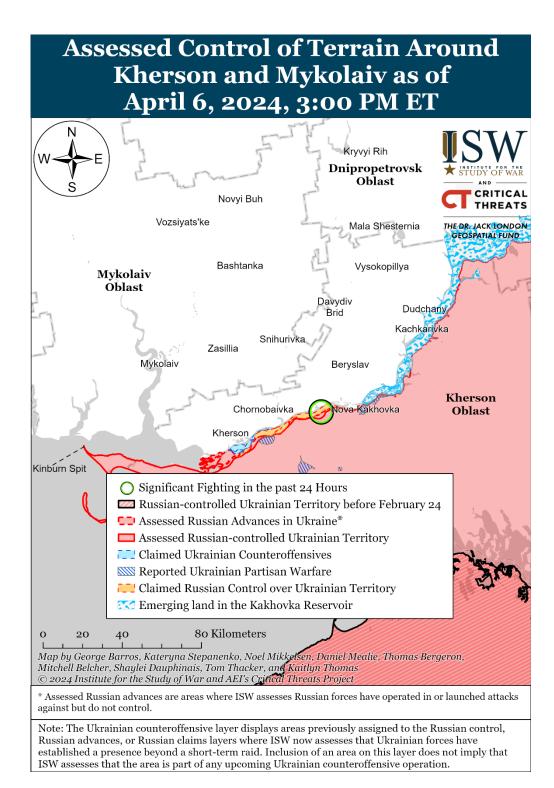
Positional fighting continued near Robotyne and northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne) in western Zaporizhia Oblast on April 6.[55] Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi described Russian assaults near Robotyne and Verbove as localized offensive operations that aim to recover previously lost territory.[56] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian and Ukrainian forces are heavily using drones in the Robotyne area.[57] Elements of the 108th Guards Airborne (VDV) Regiment and likely elements of the 56th Guards VDV Regiment (both of the 7th Guards VDV Division) are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhia direction.[58]

#### **Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne** as of April 6, 2024, 3:00 PM ET Tavriiske Pavlivka-CRITICAL Zaporizhzhia THREATS Oblast THE DR. JACK LONDON GEOSPATIAL FUND Pyatykhatky Kamianske Mali Orikhiv Shcherbaky Mala Novodanylivka Tokmachka Dolynka Nesteryanka Robotyne voprokopivka Novohorivka Myrne 20 Kilometers Map by George Barros, Kateryng Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas © 2024 Institute for the Study of Wer and AEI's Critical Threats Project Reported Ukrainian Partisan Significant Fighting in the past Assessed Russian-controlled 24 Hours Ukrainian Territory Warfare Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 Claimed Russian Control over Russian Field Fortifications Ukrainian Territory Emerging land in the Kakhovka Assessed Russian Advances in Claimed Ukrainian Reservoir Ukraine\* Counteroffensives

 $<sup>^{*}</sup>$  Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.



Positional fighting continued in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast, likely near Krynky, on April 6.[59] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces destroyed several Ukrainian groups that attempted to cross the Dnipro River near Krynky on April 5 and 6.[60] Likely elements of the Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) are operating in the Kherson direction.[61]



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

Russian forces conducted a series of drone and missile strikes overnight on April 5 to 6 and during the day on April 6 targeting civilian, industrial, and agricultural infrastructure in Ukraine. Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk reported that Russian forces launched overnight three S-300 missiles from Belgorod Oblast, two Kh-101/Kh-555 cruise missiles from strategic aircraft that took off from Saratov Oblast, one Kalibr cruise missile from the Black Sea, and 32 Shahed-

136/131 drones from Kursk Oblast and Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai.[62] Oleshchuk reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed both Kh-101/Kh-555 cruise missiles, the Kalibr cruise missile, and 28 Shahed drones.[63] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces targeted agricultural enterprises in Kherson Oblast and industrial facilities, civilian infrastructure, and residential areas in Kyiv, Zaporizhia, Odesa, and Kharkiv oblasts. [64] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian drones struck agricultural enterprises in Kherson Oblast and industrial facilities in Zaporizhzhia City and that Russian S-300 missiles struck residential areas in Kharkiv City.[65] Zaporizhia Oblast Military Administration Head Ivan Fedorov reported that Russian forces also struck a humanitarian center for internally displaced people in Zaporizhzhia City.[66] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces struck an unspecified utility facility near Odesa City with a likely Iskander-M ballistic missile later in the day on April 6.[67] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces targeted Ukrainian defense industrial base (DIB) facilities and temporary deployment points.[68]

Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko stated in an interview with *Bloomberg* published on April 6 that Ukraine needs improved air defenses to protect energy assets from Russian strikes and avoid blackouts during peak energy consumption in the summer.[69] Halushchenko stated that recent Russian strikes have significantly damaged both Ukrainian power generation and transmission capabilities and that Ukrainian officials have not yet assessed the full extent of the damage at energy infrastructure facilities.[70] Russian missile and drone strikes have reportedly damaged or disrupted roughly 80 percent of electricity generation at Ukrainian thermal power plants (TPPs) in recent weeks, as Russian forces continue to exploit the degraded Ukrainian air defense umbrella in an effort to Ukraine's collapse energy grid.[71]

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

Russian President Vladimir Putin passed two laws on April 6 offering Russian society some concession for its sacrifices to support Russia's war in Ukraine. Putin signed a law exempting Russian servicemen fighting in Ukraine from paying interest on consumer loans and credit holidays.[72] Putin previously signed a law on October 7, 2022, exempting mobilized personnel and other participants of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine from accruing penalties for late payments for housing, communal services, loans, and credit card debts.[73] ISW previously assessed that such payment holidays may cost the Russian federal government little in the short term but may have long term implications as Russia continues to financially incentivize more recruits to fight in Ukraine in exchange for state benefits. Putin also signed a law amending the Russian Labor Code and prohibits employers from dismissing widows of Russian servicemen for one year from the date of the husband's death.[74] The Kremlin has likely instituted this law in hopes of appeasing and limiting criticism from wives of deceased servicemen.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky discussed reports that Russia is planning to "mobilize" 300,000 servicemembers by June 1 during a televised interview on April 6, noting that Russia may not be able to meet this goal.[75] Zelensky stated that Russia may attempt to mobilize more than 300,000 personnel but might not meet its June 1 deadline because of discipline problems and the need to train these forces. It is unclear if Zelensky was referring to Russia's ongoing "crypto-mobilization" campaign, 18

which aims to generate combat forces via volunteer and irregular recruitment campaigns, or a possible future Russian decision to conduct a formal call up of the Russian mobilization reserve.

Russia is forming a new "Stalinskiye Sokoly" (Stalin's Hawks) Volunteer Battalion to defend a "strategically important facility" in Republic of Tatarstan, likely in response to the recent successful Ukrainian unmanned aerial systems (UAS) strikes on military production infrastructure in the region. [76] A prominent Russian milblogger amplified a recruitment advertisement offering 261,000 rubles (around \$2,820) monthly salaries to recruits with past air defense military service experience. [77] Russian officials also continue to recruit foreigners to fight in Ukraine. A Russian opposition outlet published pictures of an English-language brochure from an Oryol City military recruitment office inviting foreigners to join an unnamed special unit for foreigners. The brochure offered recruits a one-time signing bonus of \$2,000, a monthly salary of \$2,200, and Russian citizenship for recruits and their families. [78]

Rosgvardia's Press Service reported on April 6 that Rosgvardia plans to conscript over 11,000 servicemen during the spring 2024 conscription cycle between April 1 and June 15.[79] Rosgvardia's Press Service claimed that Rosgvardia will not involve conscripts in Russia's war in Ukraine and added that the number of conscripts wishing to serve in Rosgvardia has increased since 2022.

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

A Ukrainian military observer reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed a T-72 tank jerry-rigged with several EW systems in an unspecified part of the front on April 5.[80] The Ukrainian military observer stated that the Russian tank, which was leading a column of armored vehicles during a mechanized assault, was able to completely disrupt all Ukrainian first-person view (FPV) drones in the area and that Ukrainian forces had to use a specialized fixed-wing drone with an additional terminal guidance system to strike the tank.[81] Russian forces are attempting to equip their armored vehicles with electronic warfare (EW) systems to protect them against Ukrainian drone strikes.

# <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 State Duma Deputy and former Southern Military District (SMD) Commander Lieutenant General Andrei Gurulev reportedly claimed in a leaked voice memo that Russia plans to invade Kazakhstan. A Russian insider source leaked a voice memo on April 6, which Gurulev purportedly privately sent to members of the Russian State Duma Defense Committee, in which Gurulev claimed that Russia could attack Kazakhstan after completing its invasion of Ukraine and that Russian authorities have already made an unspecified, corresponding decision to this effort.[82] The insider source claimed that Gurulev is advocating for a future Russian invasion of Kazakhstan because Gurulev believes that unspecified, presumably pro-Ukrainian actors launched the April 2 Ukrainian drone strike against Tatarstan from Kazakhstan or another Central Asian country.[83] Gurulev responded to the leaked audio, calling it fake and rude and criticizing the Telegram channels that amplified the leaked audio.[84] Gurulev previously faced backlash from Russian milbloggers and other Kremlin officials for leaking an audio recording of former Russian 58th Combined Arms Army (SMD) Commander Major General Ivan Popov complaining about heavy Russian losses and a lack of effective counterbattery capabilities in western Zaporizhia Oblast, which resulted in Popov's dismissal in July 2023.[85] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger recently criticized Kazakhstan for not appreciating its "shared history" with Russia.[86] ISW is unable to verify the authenticity of Gurulev's alleged leaked audio message.

Prominent Russian milbloggers are circulating claims that US military personnel participated the recent border raids into Russia. A prominent Russian milblogger published footage on April 6 that he alleged showed US citizens participating in combat operations in Belgorod Oblast. [87] The milblogger insinuated that the video is proof that US citizens are imbedded within the Ukrainian military and are participating in combat operations against Russia. At least six other prominent Russian milbloggers amplified the posts and footage and expressed agreement with the first milblogger's assertion that US citizens were involved in the border raids. [88] Russian President Vladimir Putin stated on March 18 that military personnel from NATO member countries are already in Ukraine. [89] The Kremlin is already publicly communicating that it believes that NATO military contingents are in Ukraine and that the West has already violated Russia's stated "red line" regarding NATO personnel in Ukraine.

The Kremlin appears to be investing in its next generation of propagandists, having recognized the success of its previous and ongoing information operations. Russia's Far Eastern Federal University announced on April 5 that its students recently met with a Donetsk Oblast occupation official as part of the university's "Heroes Among Us" program. [90] The "Heroes Among Us" program is reportedly aimed at helping students create emotional and persuasive propaganda documentaries to further the Kremlin's narratives that justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine and occupation of Crimea and Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts.

<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)

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on April 6 that Ukrainian officials do not assess that there is an active threat to Ukraine from Belarusian territory.[91]

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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