

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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April 25, 5:00 pm ET

**Russian forces conducted precision missile strikes against five Ukrainian railway stations in central and western Ukraine on April 25 in a likely effort to disrupt Ukrainian reinforcements to eastern Ukraine and Western aid shipments.** A series of likely coordinated Russian missile strikes conducted within an hour of one another early on April 25 hit critical transportation infrastructure in Vinnytsia, Poltava, Khmelnytskyi, Rivne, and Zhytomyr oblasts.<sup>i</sup> Russian forces seek to disrupt Ukrainian reinforcements and logistics. The Kremlin may have additionally conducted this series of strikes—an abnormal number of precision missile strikes for one day—to demonstrate Russia’s ability to hit targets in Western Ukraine and to disrupt western aid shipments after US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s surprise visit to Kyiv over the weekend. However, Russian precision strike capabilities will remain limited and unlikely to decisively affect the course of the war; open-source research organization Bellingcat reported on April 24 that Russia has likely used 70% of its total stockpile of precision missiles to date.<sup>ii</sup>

**Local Ukrainian counterattacks retook territory north of Kherson and west of Izyum in the past 24 hours. Russian forces continue to make little progress in scattered, small-scale attacks in eastern Ukraine.** Ukrainian forces are successfully halting Russian efforts to bypass Ukrainian defensive positions around Izyum, and Russian forces are struggling to complete even tactical encirclements. Local Ukrainian counterattacks in Kherson Oblast are unlikely to develop into a larger counteroffensive in the near term but are disrupting Russian efforts to completely capture Kherson Oblast and are likely acting as a drain on Russian combat power that could otherwise support Russia’s main effort in eastern Ukraine.

## Key Takeaways

- **Russian forces resumed ground attacks against Mariupol’s Azovstal Steel Plant in the last 24 hours. Russian officers may assess they will be unable to starve out the remaining defenders by May 9 (a possible self-imposed deadline to complete the capture of Mariupol). Russian forces will likely take high casualties if they resume major ground assaults to clear the facility.**
- **Russian forces are accelerating efforts to secure occupied Mariupol but will likely face widespread Ukrainian resistance.**
- **Continued Russian attacks in eastern Ukraine took little to no additional territory in the past 24 hours.**
- **Prudent tactical Ukrainian counterattacks around Izyum are likely impeding Russian efforts to complete even tactical encirclements of Ukrainian forces.**
- **Russian forces are preparing for renewed attacks to capture the entirety of Kherson Oblast in southern Ukraine after minor losses in the past 48 hours.**
- **Russian forces likely conducted a false flag attack in Transnistria (Russia’s illegally occupied territory in Moldova) to amplify Russian claims of anti-Russian sentiment in Moldova, but Transnistrian forces remain unlikely to enter the war in Ukraine.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 25, 2022, 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 those 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 population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.***

**ISW has updated its assessment of the four primary efforts Russian forces are engaged in at this time:**

- Main effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate supporting efforts);
- Supporting effort 1—Kharkiv and Izyum;
- Supporting effort 2—Southern axis;
- Supporting effort 3—Sumy and northeastern Ukraine.

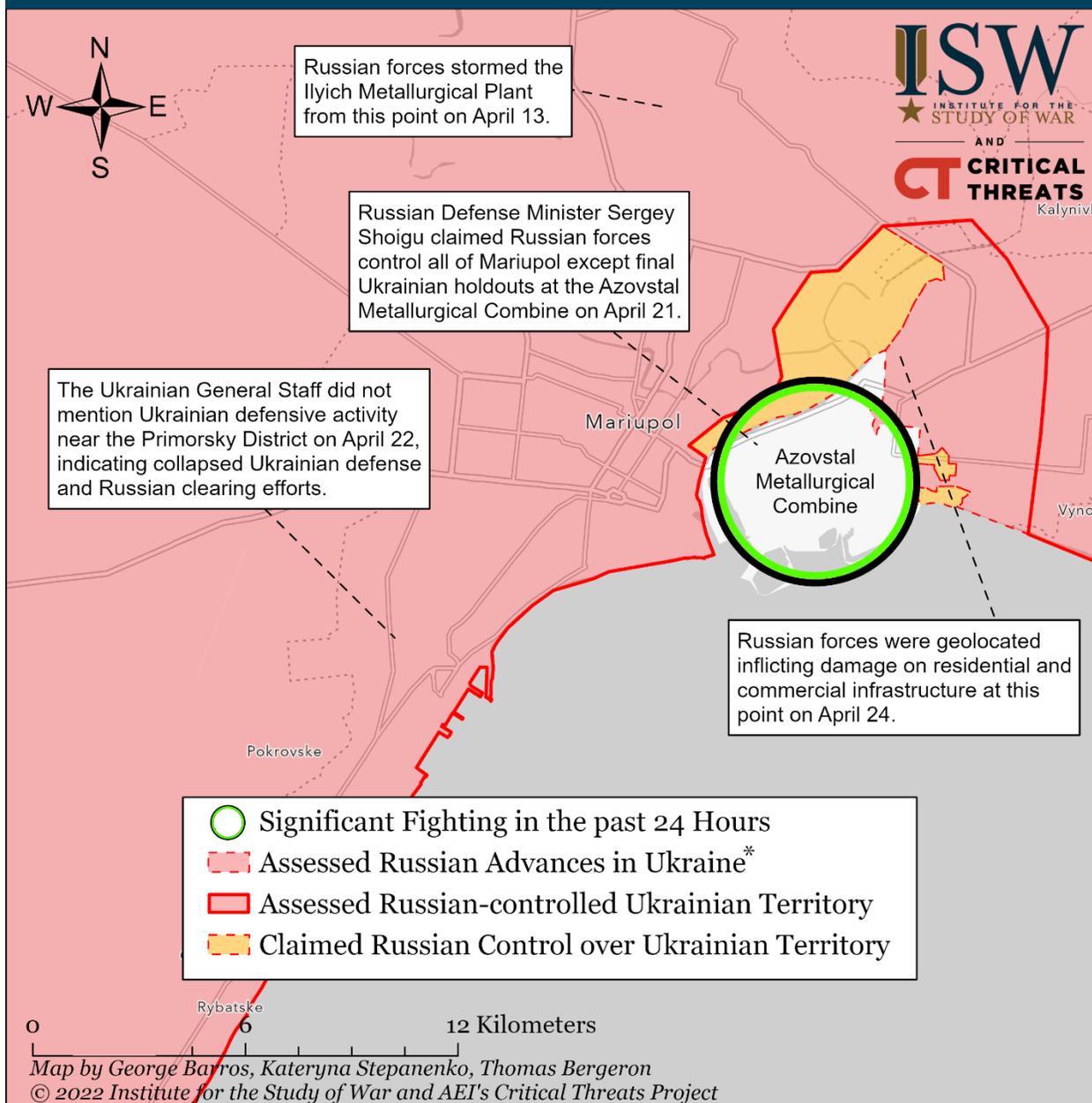
**Main effort—Eastern Ukraine**

**Subordinate Main Effort—Mariupol (Russian objective: Capture Mariupol and reduce the Ukrainian defenders)**

Russian forces resumed ground assaults against Ukrainian defenders in the Azovstal Steel Plant and continued heavy bombardment on April 25 but did not secure any discernable advances.<sup>iii</sup> Ukrainian Presidential Advisor Oleksiy Arestovych and advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko separately reported that Russian forces are carrying out ground attacks against Azovstal despite Russian President Vladimir Putin’s April 21 statement that Russia would cease its assaults on the plant to prevent further Russian casualties.<sup>iv</sup> The Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) claimed that Russia may employ chemical weapons against Ukrainian positions to “smoke out” defenders and civilians, though ISW cannot independently confirm the possibility of these threats.<sup>v</sup> ISW cannot independently confirm the scale of these reported Russian assaults, but Russian commanders may assess that they will be unable to starve out remaining Ukrainian defenders in the coming weeks, necessitating hasty and likely costly Russian attacks to clear the facility by the Kremlin’s possible self-imposed deadline of May 9. It is otherwise unclear why Russian forces would resume ground attacks on the facility after previously stating their intent to starve out the remaining defenders, who are highly unlikely to be able to break out and are almost certainly low on supplies.

Russian forces continue to consolidate control over occupied Mariupol. Deputy Ukrainian Prime Minister Iryna Verushchuk said that Russia continues to refuse to engage with evacuation efforts, denying Russian claims that Russian forces opened humanitarian corridors to facilitate evacuations from Azovstal.<sup>vi</sup> Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko stated that Russian troops are using former police officers who were mobilized into the militia of the Russian-backed Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) to patrol the streets.<sup>vii</sup> Russian artillery continues to inflict massive damage on civilian infrastructure in areas of Mariupol that are already under Russian control.<sup>viii</sup> Russian naval infantry units are reportedly redeploying away from Mariupol in the direction of Volnovakha, but ISW cannot independently confirm the status of such redeployments at this time.<sup>ix</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Mariupol as of April 25, 2022, 3:00 ET



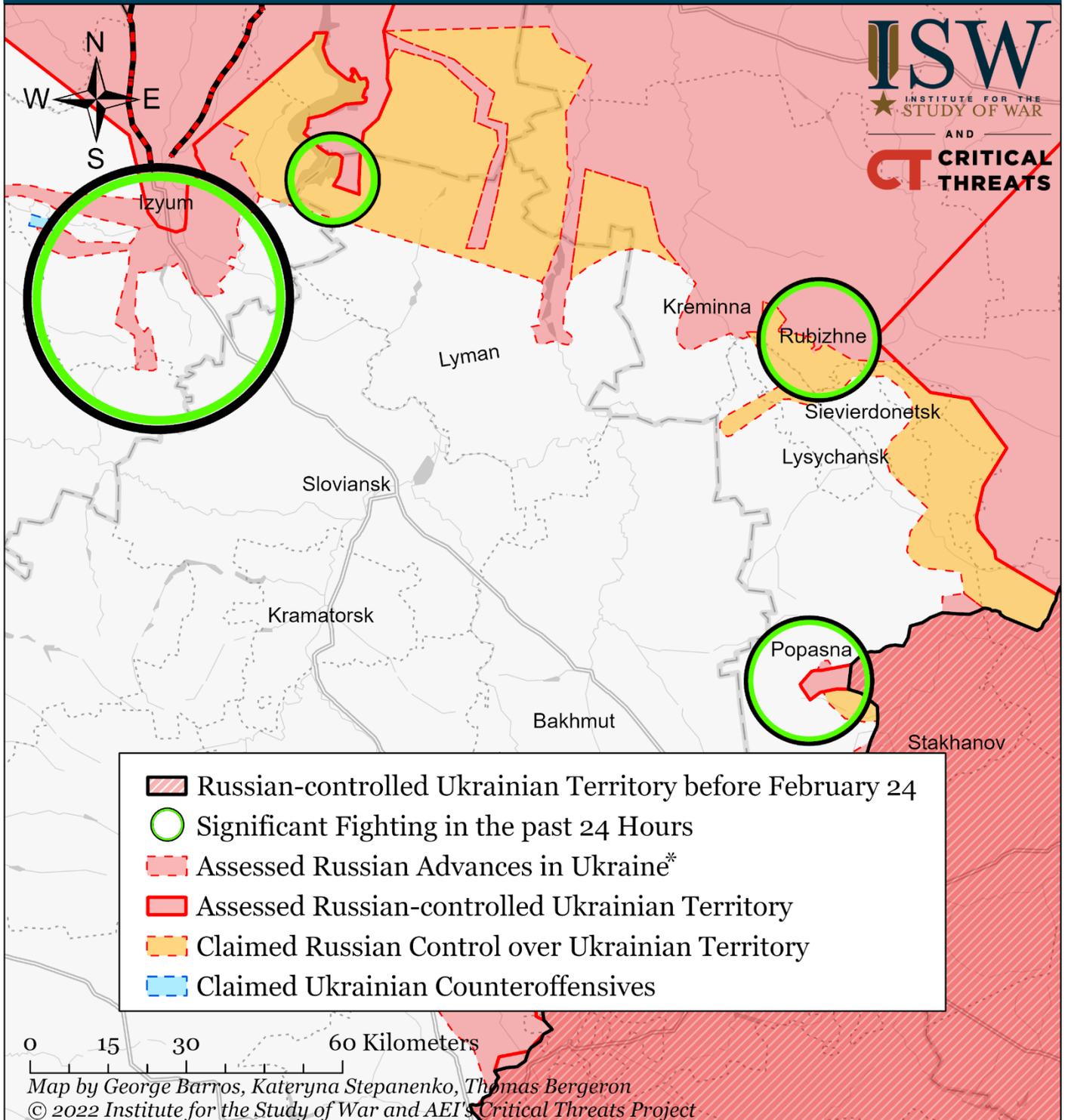
The Kremlin declared victory in Mariupol on April 21 after capturing the city besides Ukrainian holdouts in the encircled Azovstal Metallurgical Combine. Russian forces resumed ground assaults on remaining Ukrainian defenders at Azovstal on April 25. Russian war reporters filmed some Russian elements redeploying from Mariupol northward on April 24 and April 25. The Ukrainian General Staff notably did not mention Ukrainian defensive activity near the port of Mariupol or Primorsky District on April 22, indicating Russian clearing efforts. The Kremlin will spin the (still incomplete) capture of Mariupol into a major victory in Ukraine to compensate for stalled or failed Russian offensives elsewhere.

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

**Subordinate Main Effort—Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Russian forces continued shelling along the entire frontline in Donetsk and Luhansk and did not secure any confirmed advances in continuing ground attacks on April 25.<sup>x</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults against Koroviy Yar and Rubizhne and that fighting is ongoing in Popasna.<sup>xi</sup> Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov claimed on April 25 that Russian forces have completely captured Rubizhne (after making a similar claim on April 20), though this claim is likely false.<sup>xii</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that elements of the 30th Separate Motorized Infantry Brigade of the 2nd Guards Combined Arms Army suffered heavy losses around Severodonetsk, confirming that Central Military District units previously active on the Chernihiv axis are fighting in eastern Ukraine.<sup>xiii</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of April 25, 2022, 3:00 ET

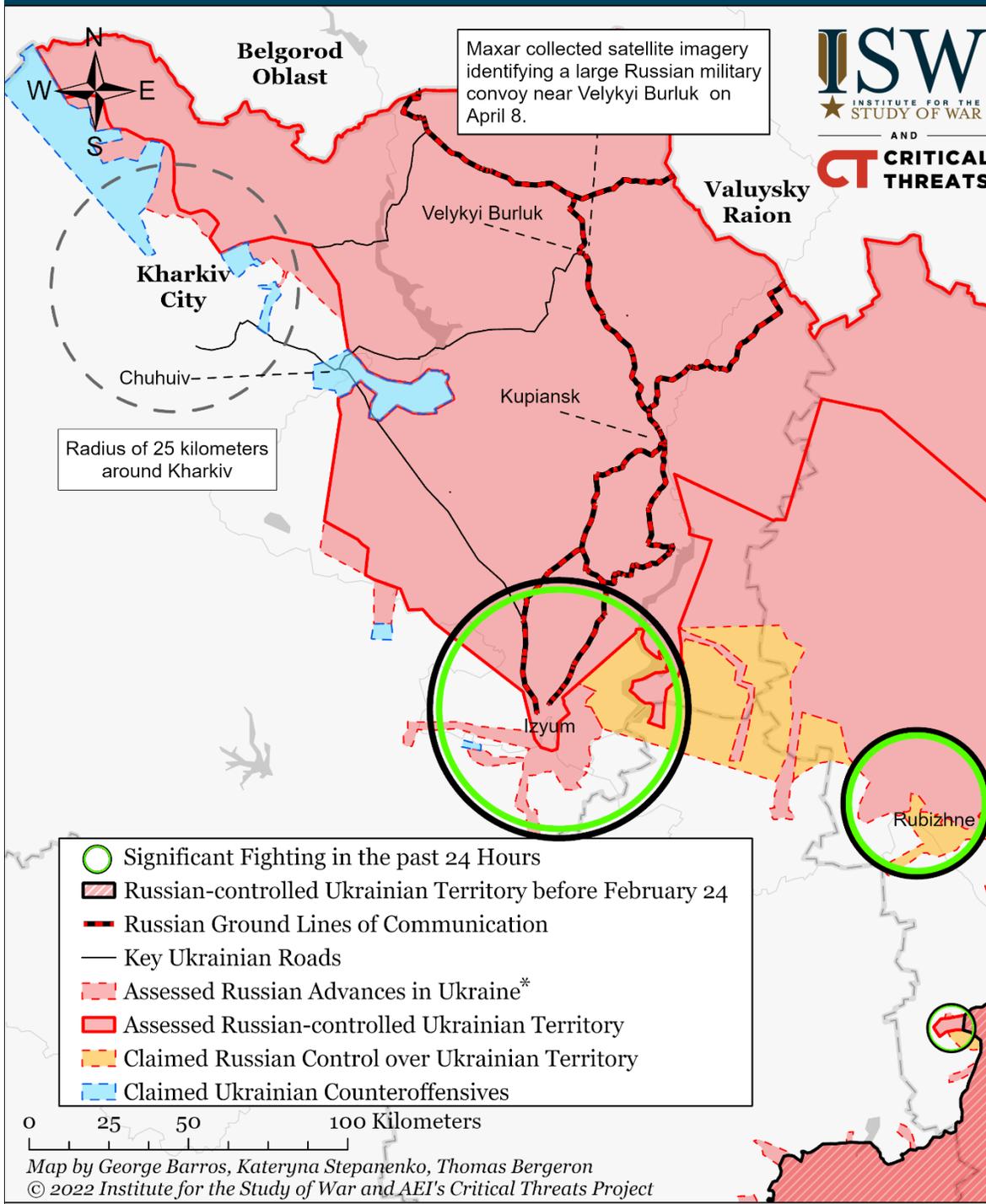


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**Supporting Effort #1—Kharkiv and Izyum: (Russian objective: Advance southeast to support Russian operations in Luhansk Oblast; defend ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to the Izyum axis)**

Russian forces continued to mount unsuccessful ground offensives southward from Izyum toward Barvinkove and Slovyansk on April 25.<sup>xiv</sup> Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted a limited counterattack and expelled Russian troops from Zavody, about 20 km directly west of Izyum.<sup>xv</sup> Russian forces are likely trying to advance through Zavody to bypass deeper-entrenched Ukrainian defenses along the direct highway route to Barvinkove. Effective Ukrainian counterattacks are likely impeding the ability of Russian forces to conduct even tactical encirclements, let alone the operational encirclement of Ukrainian forces in eastern Ukraine that Russian forces likely intend to achieve. Russian forces maintained their positions around Kharkiv city and continued artillery and aviation strikes on Kharkiv city and the surrounding settlements.<sup>xvi</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of April 25, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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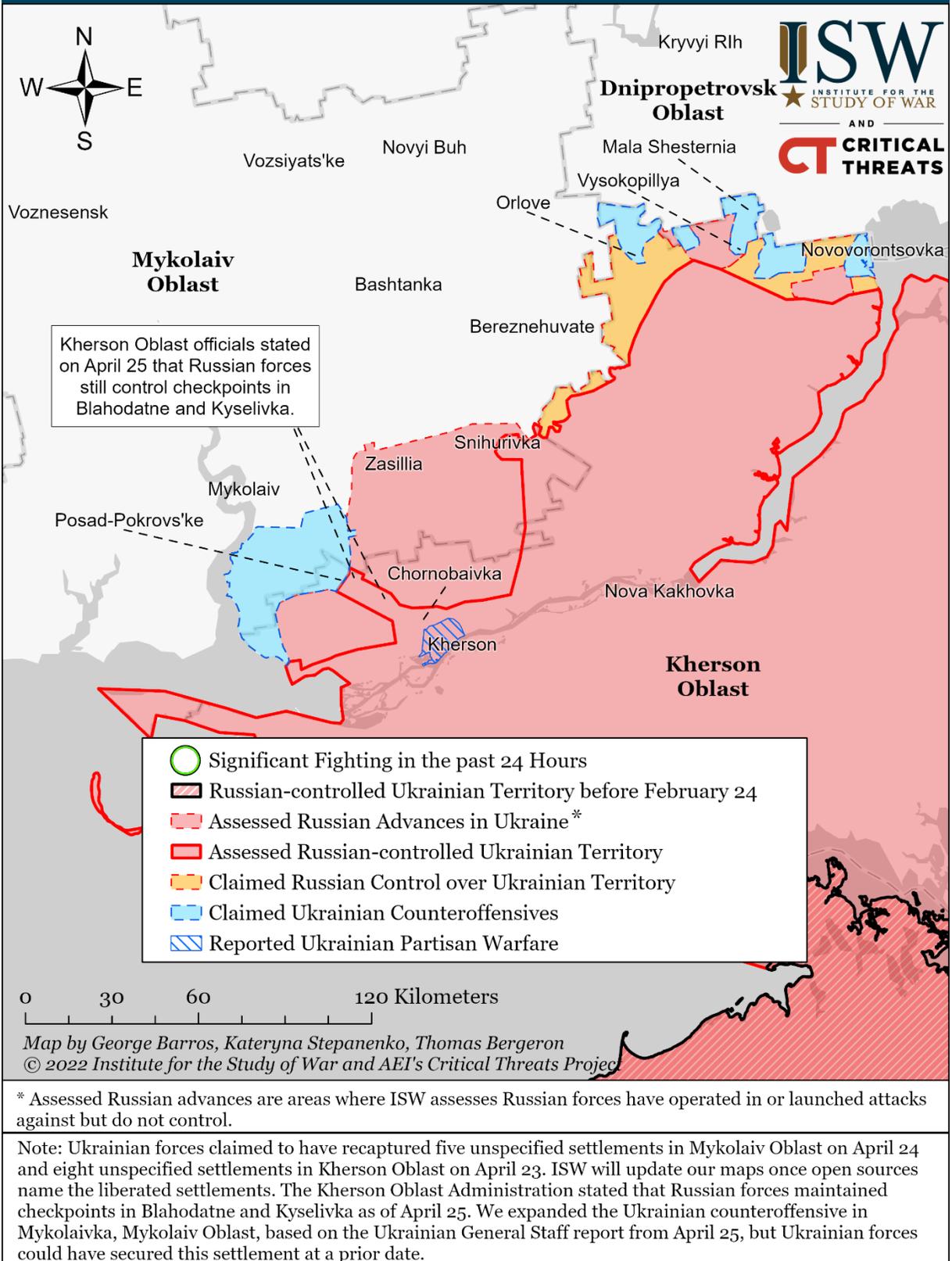
Note: We expanded Ukrainian counteroffensives in Malynivka, Karasivka, and Korobochkino, Kharkiv Oblast, based on observing Russian artillery attacks on April 25. Ukrainian forces likely recaptured these settlements on a prior date, even though ISW only acquired enough evidence to change the map on April 25.

## **Supporting Effort #2—Southern Axis (Objective: Defend Kherson against Ukrainian counterattacks)**

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces are consolidating in the southern direction to conduct limited attacks west toward Mykolaiv and north toward Kryvyi Rih after conducting limited withdrawals from several forward positions in the past two days.<sup>xvii</sup> ISW could not verify Ukrainian claims to have recaptured five settlements in Mykolaiv Oblast on April 24 and eight in Kherson Oblast on April 23, though Ukrainian forces are likely conducting successful local attacks.<sup>xviii</sup> Limited Ukrainian counterattacks in the past 48 hours northwest of Kherson city likely disrupted Russian offensive preparations and forced some Russian forces to retreat to Chornobaivka on April 23.<sup>xix</sup> Ukraine’s Operational Command “South” reported that two Russian sabotage and reconnaissance units attempted to advance toward Mykolaiv but lost half their personnel and retreated on April 24.<sup>xx</sup> Ukrainian counterattacks continue to disrupt Russian efforts to capture the entirety of Kherson Oblast.

Russian forces likely conducted a false flag attack in Transnistria (Russia’s illegally occupied territory in Moldova), but Transnistrian forces remain unlikely to enter unsupported actions in Ukraine. The Transnistrian Internal Affairs Ministry reported that unknown forces targeted the Ministry of State Security with two grenade launchers on April 25; Transnistrian officials stated the attack was “an attempt to sow panic and fear in Transnistria.”<sup>xxi</sup> The Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) claimed the attack was organized by Russia’s FSB “to instill panic and anti-Ukrainian sentiment” and that the FSB will carry out further provocations in Transnistria, though ISW cannot independently confirm this claim. The Kremlin (or local Transnistrian actors) may seek to depict threats to Russian speakers in Moldova to echo a common Russian talking point. The Moldovan government has not commented on the claimed attack as of publication.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 25, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



## **Supporting Effort #3—Sumy and Northeastern Ukraine: (Russian objective: Withdraw combat power in good order for redeployment to eastern Ukraine)**

There was no significant change in this area in the past 24 hours.

### **Immediate items to watch**

- Russian forces will likely continue attacking southeast from Izyum, west from Kreminna and Popasna, and north from Donetsk City via Avdiivka or another axis.
- Russian officers may assess they will be unable to starve out remaining defenders by May 9 (a possible self-imposed deadline to complete the capture of Mariupol) but will likely take high casualties if they resume major ground assaults to clear the facility.
- Russian forces will likely increase the scale of ground offensive operations in the coming days, but it is too soon to tell how fast they will do so or how large those offensives will be. It is also too soon to assess how the Russians will weight their efforts in the arc from Izyum to Donetsk City.



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<sup>i</sup> <https://t.me/stranaua/38447>; <https://t.me/vitalykoval8/5393>; <https://t.me/khmelnyskaODA/364>;  
<https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1518430753612251136>; <https://t.me/truexanewsua/43435>;  
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<https://t.me/DMYTROLUNIN/1470>; <https://t.me/DMYTROLUNIN/1475>; <https://t.me/vinnyskaODA/2036>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-ato/3466423-russia-has-used-up-about-70-of-its-highprecision-missiles-since-warstart-bellingcat.html>; <https://inforesist.org/bellingcat-v-pervoj-faze-vojny-rf-poteryala-90-svoih-luchshih-desantnikov/>.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302697315376687>; [https://t.me/OP\\_UA/6372](https://t.me/OP_UA/6372);  
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<https://twitter.com/zcjbrooker/status/1518296972666580993>

<sup>iv</sup> [https://t.me/OP\\_UA/6372](https://t.me/OP_UA/6372); <https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/826778.html>;  
<https://t.me/andriyshTime/469>.

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/DefenceIntelligenceofUkraine/posts/298690512442376>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://armyinform.com.ua/2022/04/25/po-azovstali-okupanty-ne-hochut-jty-na-bud-yaki-peremovyny-cze-vijskovyj-zlochyn-iry-na-vereshhuk/>; <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-mariupol-humanitarian-corridor-azovstal/31819961.html>; <https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/827024.html>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://t.me/andriyshTime/470>; <https://t.me/andriyshTime/471>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1518319428567502850>;  
<https://twitter.com/zcjbrooker/status/1518296972666580993>

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<sup>ix</sup> [https://twitter.com/Danspiun/status/1518309788605632515;](https://twitter.com/Danspiun/status/1518309788605632515)  
<https://twitter.com/doppelot/status/1518222851941318656>

<sup>x</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302697315376687;](https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302697315376687)  
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<https://twitter.com/Militarylandnet/status/1518516831350312960>

<sup>xi</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302697315376687;](https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302697315376687)  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302312052081880>

<sup>xii</sup> [https://lenta.ru/news/2022/04/25/kadurovrubezhnoe/;](https://lenta.ru/news/2022/04/25/kadurovrubezhnoe/) [https://russian.rt.com/ussr/news/995103-lnr-kadyrov-osvobozhdenie?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=RSS.](https://russian.rt.com/ussr/news/995103-lnr-kadyrov-osvobozhdenie?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=RSS)

<sup>xiii</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302413012071784;](https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302413012071784)  
[https://twitter.com/666\\_mancer/status/1505835700998004736.](https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1505835700998004736)

<sup>xiv</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302697315376687;](https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302697315376687)  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302312052081880>

<sup>xv</sup> [https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1518574717975904257;](https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1518574717975904257)  
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<sup>xvi</sup> [https://t.me/synegubov/2980;](https://t.me/synegubov/2980) [https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302697315376687;](https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302697315376687)  
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<sup>xvii</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/302697315376687>

<sup>xviii</sup> [https://24tv.ua/zrosla-aktivnist-rozvidki-drg-voroga-bik-mikolayivskoyi-oblasti\\_n1962363;](https://24tv.ua/zrosla-aktivnist-rozvidki-drg-voroga-bik-mikolayivskoyi-oblasti_n1962363)  
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<sup>xix</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/okPivden/posts/2039927556178487>

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<sup>xxi</sup> [https://tass.ru/proisshestviya/14469567;](https://tass.ru/proisshestviya/14469567) <https://novostipmr.com/ru/news/22-04-25/v-tiraspole-u-zdaniya-mgb-programeli-vzryvy>