



## Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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**April 26, 2024, 6:15pm 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 12:30pm ET on April 26. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 27 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

Western media continues to report that select US officials have resumed discussing the idea of “freezing the lines” where they are because the latest package of US military assistance to Ukraine may not be enough for Ukraine to regain all its territory.[1] Supporters of the current package have not claimed that it would by itself allow Ukraine to liberate all occupied territory, and the discussion of possible end states of the war is very premature as President Joe Biden signed the bill authorizing the new package only two days ago. US military assistance is currently *en route* to Ukraine and will take several weeks to arrive to frontline units and have tangible battlefield impacts.[2] Ukrainian forces will first have to leverage the incoming US aid to stabilize the frontlines and stop ongoing Russian advances, particularly in the Avdiivka and Chasiv Yar directions, in the coming weeks. The scale and intensity of the forecasted Summer 2024 Russian offensive operation that will likely begin in June also remains unclear, and the Russian military command may be actively assessing and revising plans for its summer offensive effort to account for facing better-equipped Ukrainian forces.[3] Ukrainian forces will have to defend against the Russian summer offensive effort and prevent Russian forces from making operationally significant advances over the summer months before Ukrainian forces will be in a position to contest the theater-wide initiative and conduct a counteroffensive operation later in 2024 or 2025. Ukrainian forces must also address their ongoing manpower challenges through training new personnel, equipping new units, and reconstituting old units. The exact timeline for these efforts, which will likely play a significant role in determining the timeline for Ukraine's future counteroffensive operations, is unclear.[4] ISW continues to assess that sufficient and consistent Western aid will be critical for future Ukrainian counteroffensive efforts, although the US and the West will likely need to be responsive as the Ukrainian military command determines the scope and focus of such operations and relays Ukraine's needs to Western partners in the weeks and months preceding future

counteroffensive operations.[5] Ukraine’s ability to regain all of its territory in the long term rests on numerous future decisions in the West, in the Kremlin, and in Kyiv, and any discussions that treat the prospects of Ukrainian victory or defeat as predetermined outcomes ignore how all involved parties could dynamically alter the course of the war in Ukraine.

**Public meetings between officials from Russia, Belarus, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Iran, and North Korea have surged in recent days, with at least 10 high-level bilateral meetings between April 22 and 26, underscoring the deepening multilateral partnership these states are constructing to confront the West.** Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting of defense ministers in Astana, Kazakhstan on April 26.[6] Shoigu met with PRC Minister of National Defense Dong Jun on the sidelines of the meeting and highlighted the “unprecedented” level of Russo-Sino relations.[7] Shoigu also met with Iranian Defense Minister Mohammed Reza Ashtiani and stated that Russia is prepared to expand Russo-Iranian military and military-technical cooperation.[8] Dong and Ashtiani held a bilateral meeting and called for increased Sino-Iranian cooperation, including in the defense and military spheres.[9] Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin also met with Dong and Ashtiani at the SCO meeting on April 26.[10] The April 26 SCO meeting marked Iran’s first SCO meeting as a member state since joining the organization in July 2023.[11]

The SCO meetings are only the latest in a series of bilateral meetings between Russia, Belarus, the PRC, Iran, and North Korea. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and Special Representative to the Russian President for Middle East and African Countries Mikhail Bogdanov met with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani in Moscow on April 26.[12] Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev met with PRC Communist Party Politburo member Chen Wenqing on April 23 in St. Petersburg and discussed strengthening cooperation between Russian and PRC intelligence services.[13] Patrushev also met with Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Akbar Ahmadian in St. Petersburg on April 24, and they signed a memorandum of understanding between the two countries’ security councils.[14] A North Korean delegation led by Minister for External Economic Relations Yun Jong Ho traveled to Iran on April 23.[15] Head of the Belarusian Ministry of Defense’s (MoD) Department of International Military Cooperation Major General Valery Revenko met with Iranian Deputy Minister of Defense and rector of the Malek Ashtar University of Technology Mehdi Jafari on April 22 in Minsk.[16] Although the details and results of these various bilateral meetings are unclear, the overt increase in their number and frequency is notable and demonstrates the group’s increased eagerness to publicly display its military and political cooperation in its competition and confrontation against the West.

**PRC officials claimed that NATO bears responsibility for Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine amid meetings between PRC officials and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on April 26.** Blinken met with PRC President Xi Jinping and stated that the PRC’s support for the Russian defense industry is enabling Russia’s war effort and undermining European and transatlantic security.[17] Blinken noted that the PRC is supplying Russia’s defense industry with machine tools, microelectronics, nitrocellulose (an intermediary good used in producing gunpowder and explosives), and other dual-use items and warned that the US is prepared to act if the PRC continues to support the Russian defense industry.[18] ISW has recently observed reports that Russia’s defense industrial base (DIB) continues to rely heavily on Chinese-produced machine tool components and electronics.[19] PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Wang Wenbin stated, likely in response to Blinken, that Russia imports more than 60 percent of weapons components and dual-use items from

the US and other Western countries.[20] Wang added that NATO bears “unshirkable” responsibility for the “Ukraine crisis” and that the PRC continues to promote peace talks between Russia and Ukraine.[21] Wang’s statement is noticeably stronger than previous PRC statements about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine that have portrayed the PRC as an objective and impartial mediator for future peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, and Kremlin newswire TASS framed Wang’s statements as placing “direct responsibility” for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on NATO.[22] The Kremlin will likely seize on stronger PRC rhetoric about the war in Ukraine to frame the PRC as supporting Russia’s objectives in Ukraine, as it has previously attempted to do.[23]

**Ukraine’s Western partners continue to provide Ukraine with immediate and longer-term military assistance, particularly for Ukraine’s air defenses.** The US Department of Defense (DoD) announced on April 26 a new package of military assistance to Ukraine worth \$6 billion as part of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI).[24] The package includes Patriot air defense munitions, National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) munitions, High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) munitions, artillery ammunition, and equipment to integrate Ukrainian and Western air defense systems. The US DoD stated that the announcement marks the beginning of the “contracting process,” and the timeline of the production and delivery of these weapons is unclear at this time. Spanish outlet *El Pais* reported on April 26 that Spain will send a “limited” number of Patriot missiles to Ukraine.[25] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on April 26 at the Ramstein format meeting that Ukraine needs long-range weapons and air defense systems and reported that Russian forces have used more than 9,000 guided glide bombs against Ukraine since the start of 2024.[26] US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin observed that the Patriot is not a silver bullet and that many factors will determine the course of the fighting.[27] No single weapons system is a silver bullet, to be sure, but the Patriot is one of the very few air defense systems able to engage Russian ballistic missiles and also to hit Russian fighter-bombers outside the range of Russian glide bombs. ISW continues to assess that Ukraine’s degraded air defense capabilities have allowed Russian aviation to heavily degrade Ukrainian defenses along the front with glide bomb strikes.[28] Zelensky stated that although Russian forces have seized the battlefield initiative in the past six months, Ukrainian forces will still be able to “not only stabilize the front but also advance.”[29]

**The Ukrainian military has reportedly pulled US-provided M1A1 Abrams tanks from the frontline in part because of the widespread threat of Russian drones and other strikes.** The *Associated Press* (AP) reported on April 26, citing two unspecified US military officials, that Ukraine has removed Abrams tanks from the frontline partly because Russia’s widespread drone usage has made it too difficult for Ukrainian forces to operate Abrams without Russian forces detecting and striking Abrams with drones.[30] Ukrainian drone operators recently told the *Washington Post* that the number of drones that both Russian and Ukrainian forces use has made the battlefield “almost transparent” given that up to 100 Russian and Ukrainian reconnaissance and attack drones can operate simultaneously within a 10-kilometer radius.[31] Any armored vehicles that Russian or Ukrainian forces may field on the frontline are visible to each other’s reconnaissance drones, so Ukrainian forces are likely prioritizing efforts to protect the limited number of Abrams tanks they currently possess. Any armored vehicles on the battlefield without active protection and counter-drone systems are highly vulnerable to enemy drone, artillery, and anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) strikes. The Russian government has hyper-fixated on Russia’s ability to destroy Western-made weapon systems to posture Russian military equipment as superior to Western designs. Russia will soon open an exhibition of captured Western equipment in Moscow and has given military and monetary awards to Russian soldiers who destroyed Western armored vehicles.[32]

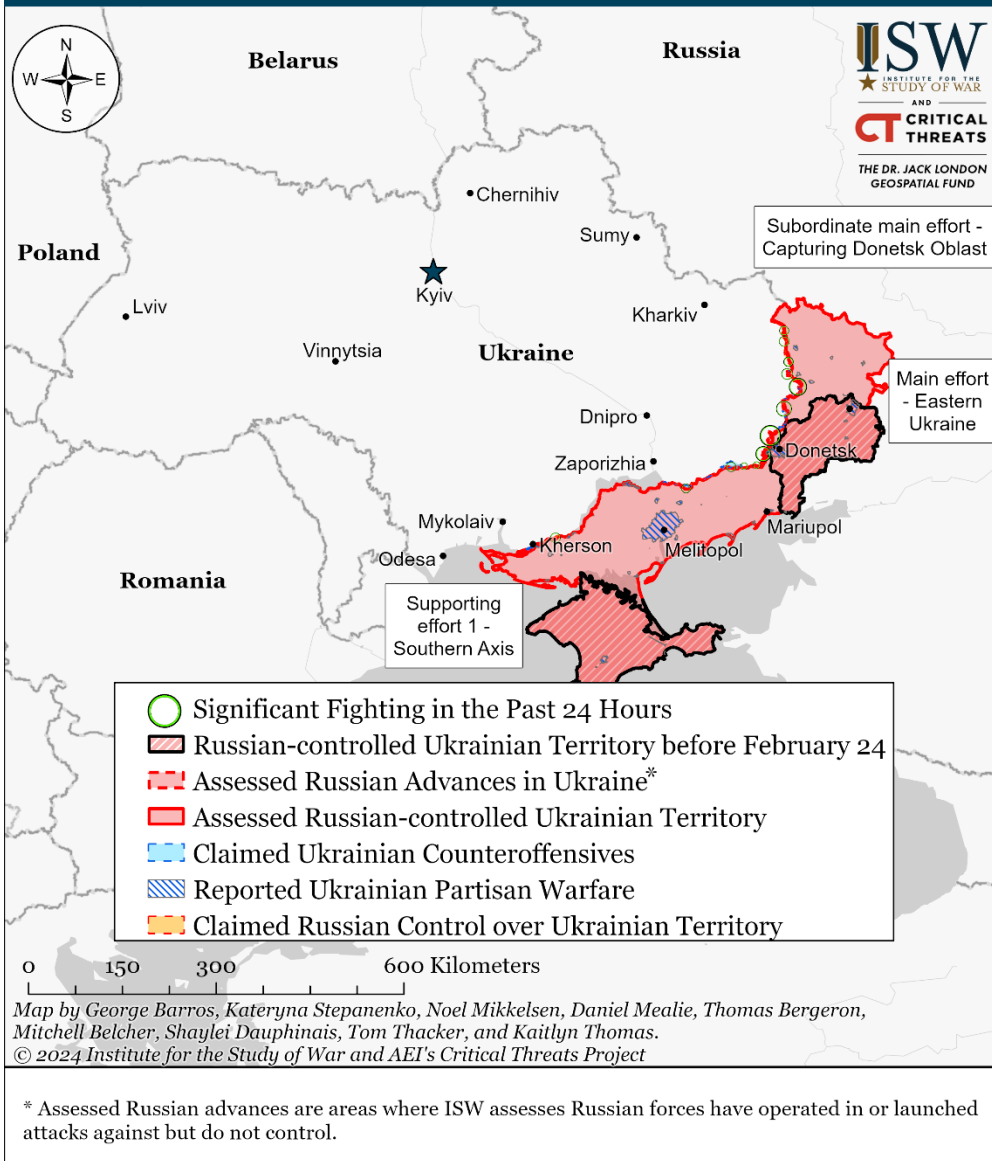
**Russian authorities continue efforts to expand the definition of prosecutable anti-war sentiment to portray Russians who oppose the war in Ukraine as opposing Russia itself.** The Russian Ministry of Justice appealed to the Russian Supreme Court on April 26 to recognize the alleged “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” and its “structural divisions” as an extremist organization, which would allow Russian authorities to prosecute Russians for belonging, supporting, financing, or spreading the ideology of this movement.[33] Russian opposition media outlets largely responded to the appeal by noting that no such organization exists, and Russian authorities have previously designated other non-existent organizations meant to encompass broader “social movements” as “extremist.”[34] The Russian Ministry of Justice described the “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” as an “international social movement [aiming] to destroy the multinational unity and territorial integrity of Russia,” indicating that Russian authorities likely intend to use this new extremist designation to further prosecute anti-war sentiment among Russians and within occupied Ukraine, particularly movements opposing Russia’s occupation of Ukraine and movements within ethnic minority communities advocating for better treatment of Russian military personnel and mobilized personnel from these communities.[35] The “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” extremist designation also sets informational conditions to further paint Russians who oppose the war or Russian imperialism as actually opposing the Kremlin and Russia itself.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Western media continues to report that select US officials have resumed discussing the idea of “freezing the lines” where they are because the latest package of US military assistance to Ukraine may not be enough for Ukraine to regain all its territory. Supporters of the current package have not claimed that it would by itself allow Ukraine to liberate all occupied territory, and the discussion of possible end states of the war is very premature as President Joe Biden signed the bill authorizing the new package only two days ago.**
- **Public meetings between officials from Russia, Belarus, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Iran, and North Korea have surged in recent days, with at least 10 high-level bilateral meetings between April 22 and 26, underscoring the deepening multilateral partnership these states are constructing to confront the West.**
- **PRC officials claimed that NATO bears responsibility for Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine amid meetings between PRC officials and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on April 26.**
- **Ukraine’s Western partners continue to provide Ukraine with immediate and longer-term military assistance, particularly for Ukraine’s air defenses.**
- **The Ukrainian military has reportedly pulled US-provided M1A1 Abrams tanks from the frontline in part because of the widespread threat of Russian drones and other strikes.**
- **Russian authorities continue efforts to expand the definition of prosecutable anti-war sentiment to portray Russians who oppose the war in Ukraine as opposing Russia itself.**
- **Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance northwest of Avdiivka, and Ukrainian forces made a confirmed advance in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast, although this advance was likely not recent.**

- **Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s Tatar-Bashkort service Idel Realii reported on April 26 that Samara Oblast is forming a new “Batyr” volunteer motorized rifle battalion.**
- **The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) issued a joint statement on behalf of 45 member states stating that Russia has arbitrarily detained thousands of Ukrainian civilians in occupied Ukraine and subjected them to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



**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)**

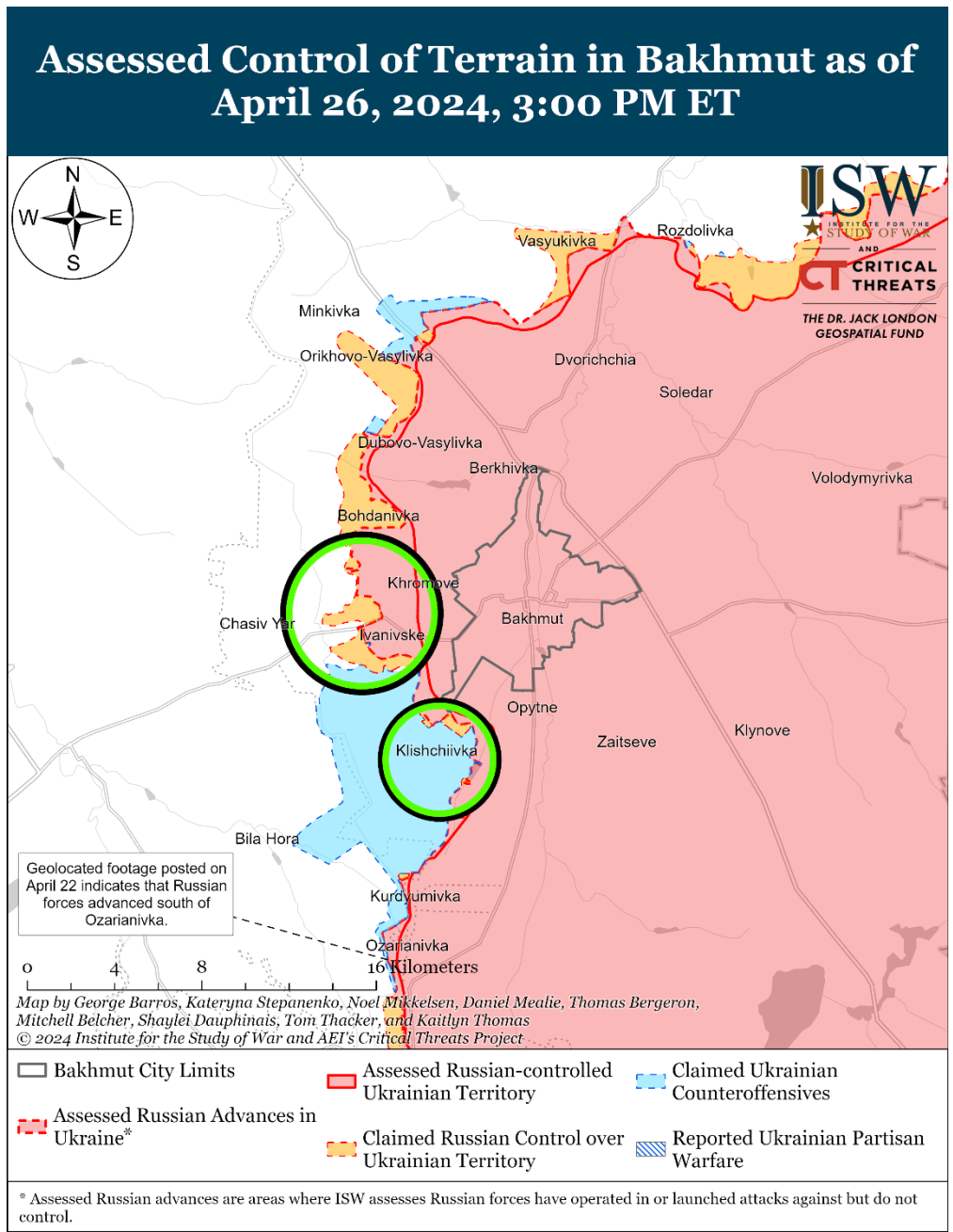
Positional engagements continued along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on April 26 but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Positional engagements continued southeast of Kupyansk near Kyslivka and Berestove; northwest of Svatove near Stelmakhivka; southwest of Svatove near Druzhelyubivka and Makiivka; west of Kreminna near Terny, Zarichne, and Torske; southwest of Kreminna near the Serebryanske forest area; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[36] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Terny and Yampolivka, but ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[37]





**Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

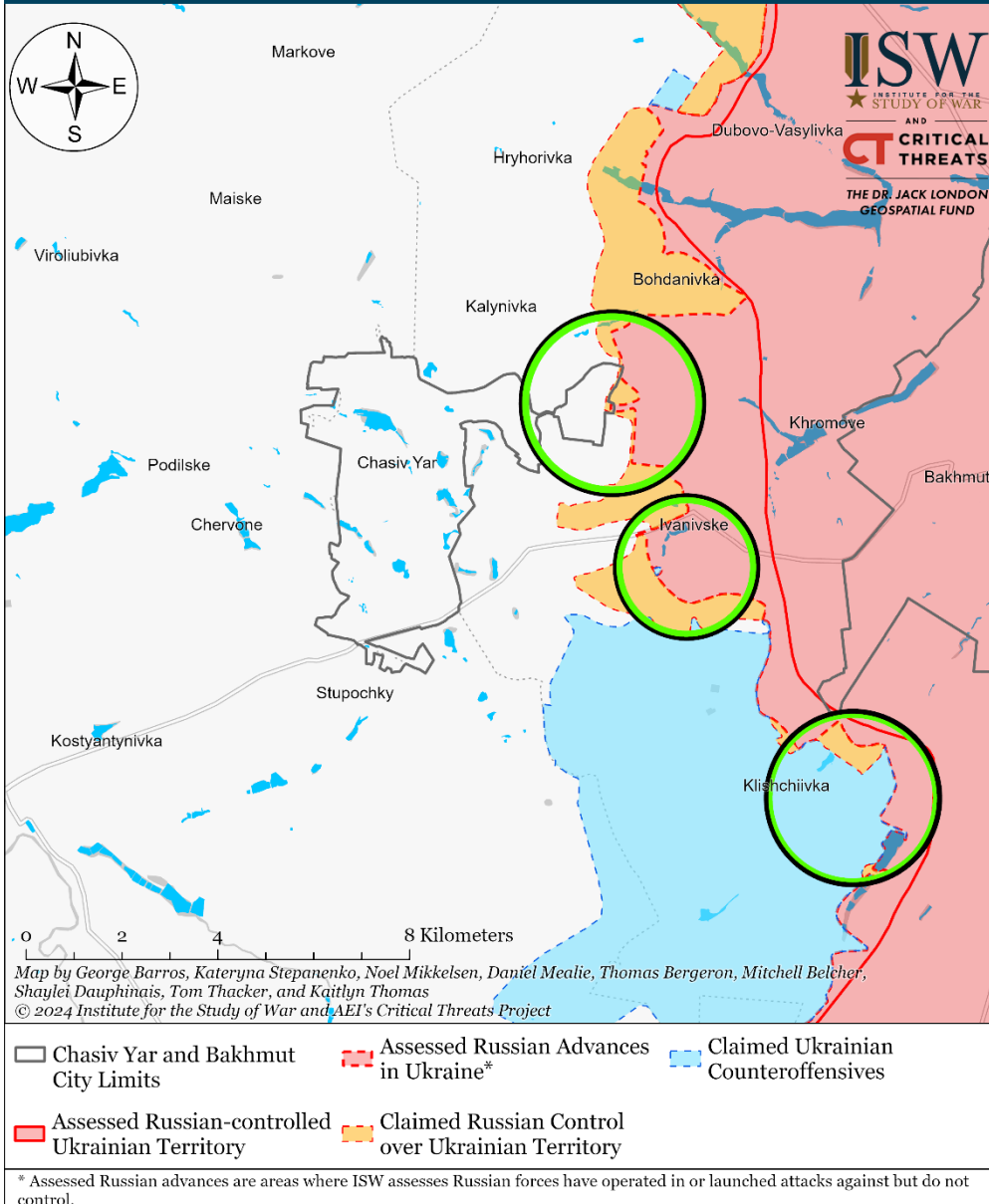
Positional fighting continued in the Siversk direction (northeast of Bakhmut) on April 26 but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. Positional fighting continued east of Siversk near Verkhnokamyanske, south of Siversk near Mykolaivka, and southeast of Siversk near Vyimka and Spirne.[38] Elements of the Russian 6th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) are reportedly operating in the Siversk direction.[39]



Russian forces continued offensive operations near Chasiv Yar on April 26 but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Fighting occurred northeast of Chasiv Yar near Bohdanivka, near the Novyi

and Kanal microraidions in eastern Chasiv Yar, east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske, southeast of Chasiv Yar near the Stupky-Holubovskiy nature reserve and Klishchiivka, and south of Chasiv Yar near Shumy.[40] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Voloshyn stated on April 26 that Russian forces are attacking Bohdanivka, Ivanivske, Klishchiivka, and Andriivka (southeast of Chasiv Yar) in an effort to bypass Chasiv Yar and set conditions to operationally encircle and seize the settlement.[41] Voloshyn stated that Russian forces are concentrating efforts on breaking through Ukrainian defenses east of Chasiv Yar, crossing the Siverskyi-Donets Donbas Canal, seizing Chasiv Yar, and creating conditions for subsequent drives on the Kramatorsk agglomeration (the Slovyansk-Kramatorsk-Druzhkivka-Kostyantynivka fortress belt).[42] Voloshyn reported that Russian forces have concentrated slightly more personnel near Klishchiivka and attacked heavily near Bila Hora (southeast of Chasiv Yar) on April 25.[43] Voloshyn added that Russian forces in the Bila Hora area are regrouping, accumulating ammunition, and actively demining the frontline.[44] Elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating on Chasiv Yar's eastern outskirts.[45]

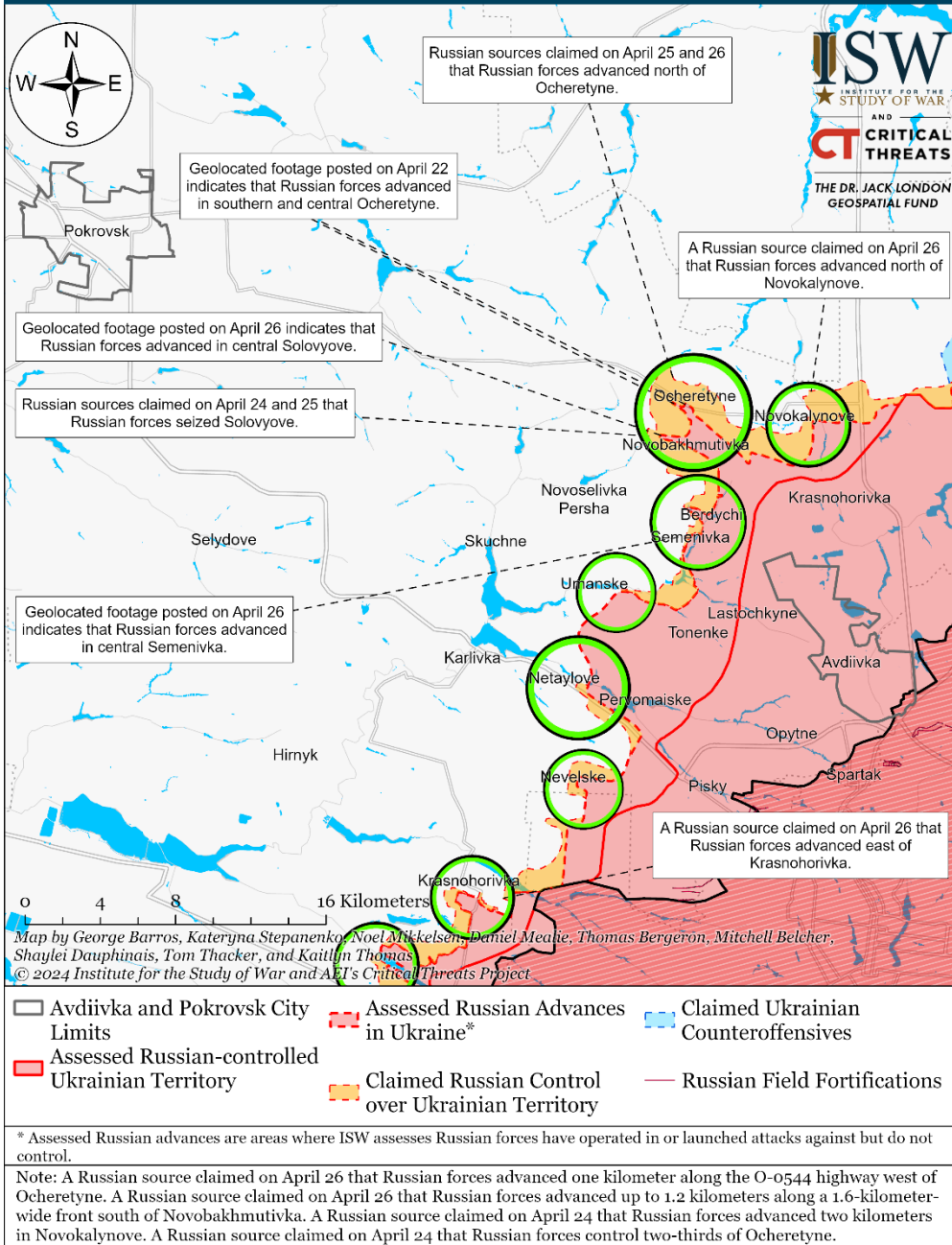
# Assessed Control of Terrain near Chasiv Yar as of April 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces recently made additional tactical gains northwest of Avdiivka and reportedly advanced further in the area as of April 26. Geolocated footage published on April 26 indicates that Russian forces recently made marginal advances within central Solovyove (northwest of Avdiivka) and in central Semenivka (west of Avdiivka).[46] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Ocheretyne (northwest of Avdiivka) and up to a kilometer west of the settlement along the O-0544 (Ocheretyne-Hrodivka) highway; north, west, and south of Novobakhmutivka (northwest of Avdiivka), and north of Novokalynove (northwest of Avdiivka).[47] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces seized the remainder of Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka) and advanced in fields northwest of the settlement after Ukrainian forces withdrew from Berdychi.[48] Russian milbloggers claimed that

Russian forces seized the remainder of Semenivka, although Russian sources have previously claimed that Russian forces have seized the settlement.[49] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of any of these Russian claims. Voloshyn stated that Ukrainian forces currently control two-thirds of Ocheretyne and are preventing Russian forces from making further advances in the area.[50] Select Russian milbloggers claimed on April 25 and 26 that Ukrainian forces withdrew from Ocheretyne to Arkhanhelske (northeast of Ocheretyne and northwest of Avdiivka), although others claimed that Ukrainian forces retain positions in northwestern Ocheretyne.[51] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian assault groups temporarily reached the outskirts of Arkhanhelske and argued that this indicates that Ukrainian forces likely do not have strong fortifications between Ocheretyne and Arkhanhelske.[52] Fighting also continued northwest of Avdiivka near Keramik, west of Avdiivka near Umanske, and southwest of Avdiivka near Netaylove and Nevelske.[53] Elements of the Russian 55th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly operating near Ocheretyne, and elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC) are reportedly operating near Semenivka.[54]

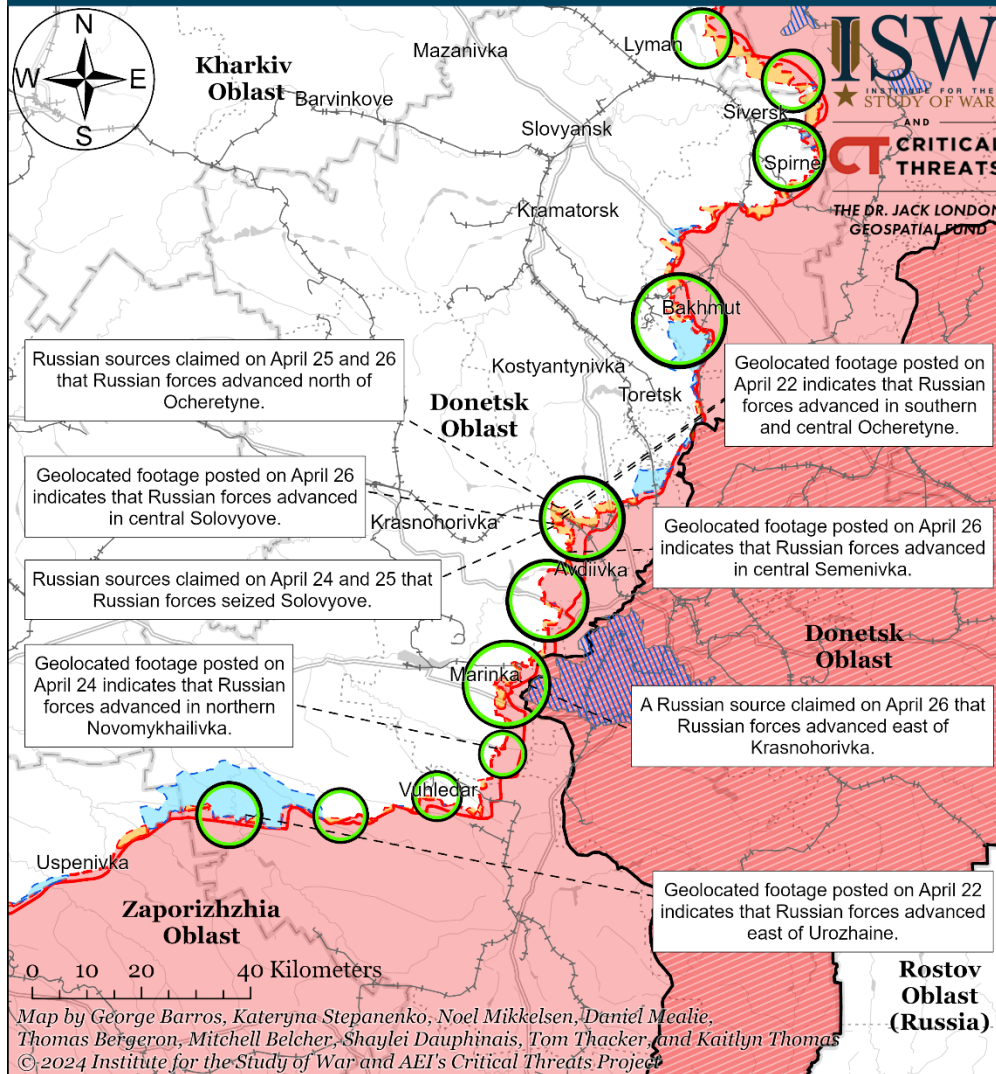
# Assessed Control of Terrain Northwest of Avdiivka as of April 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued offensive operations west and southwest of Donetsk City on April 26 but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in fields east of Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City) and broke through Ukrainian defenses within Paraskoviivka (southwest of Donetsk City), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of these claims.[55] Fighting continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda, Novomykhailivka, and Vodyane.[56] A Russian milblogger

amplified footage showing Russian forces conducting a roughly platoon-sized mechanized assault within Krasnohorivka reportedly on April 24.[57]

## Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of April 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources claimed on April 25 and 26 that Russian forces advanced north of Ocheretyne.

Geolocated footage posted on April 22 indicates that Russian forces advanced in southern and central Ocheretyne.

Geolocated footage posted on April 26 indicates that Russian forces advanced in central Solovoyve.

Geolocated footage posted on April 26 indicates that Russian forces advanced in central Semenivka.

Russian sources claimed on April 24 and 25 that Russian forces seized Solovoyve.

Geolocated footage posted on April 24 indicates that Russian forces advanced in northern Novomykhailivka.

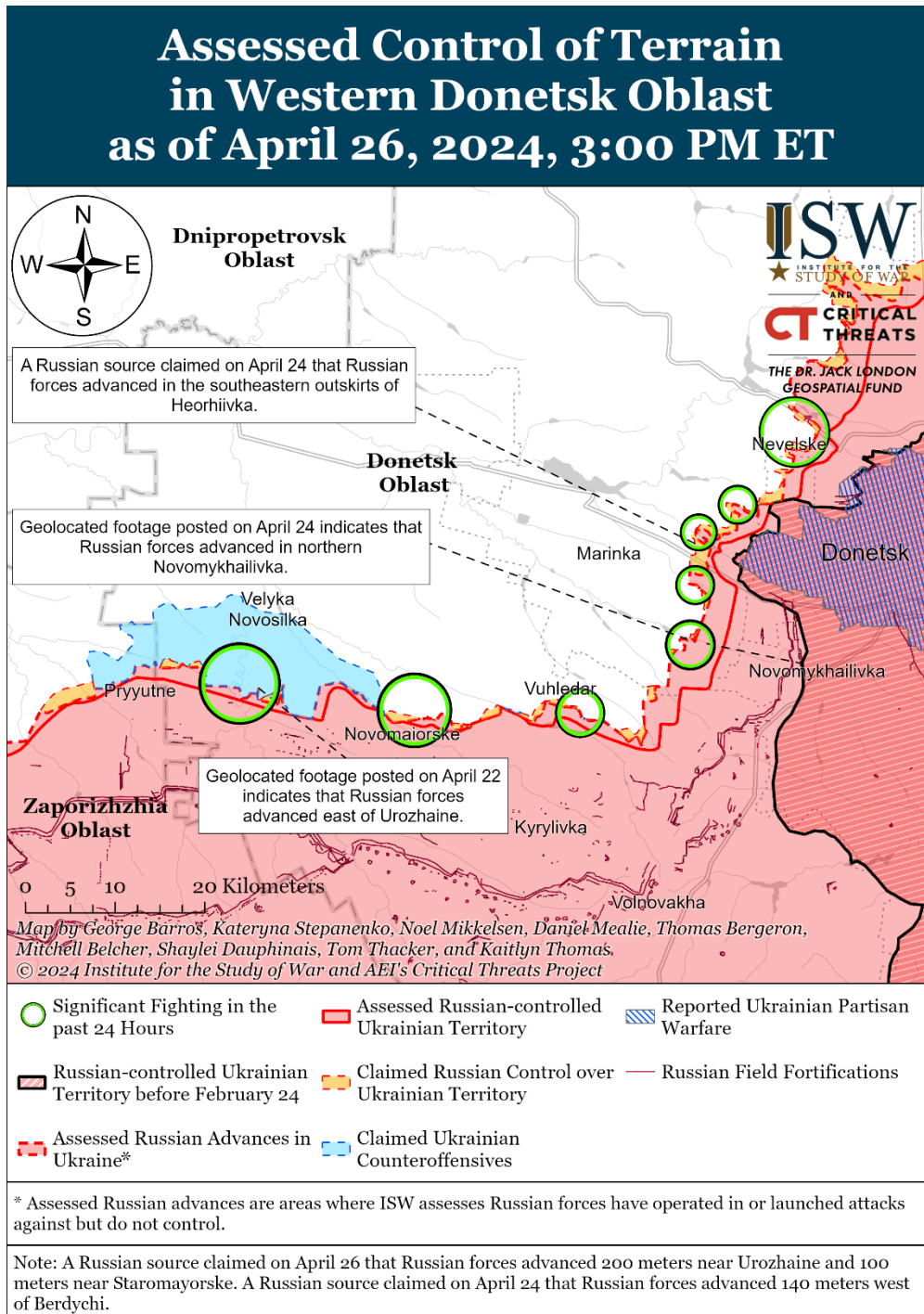
A Russian source claimed on April 26 that Russian forces advanced east of Krasnohorivka.

Geolocated footage posted on April 22 indicates that Russian forces advanced east of Urozhaine.

- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Major Railroads

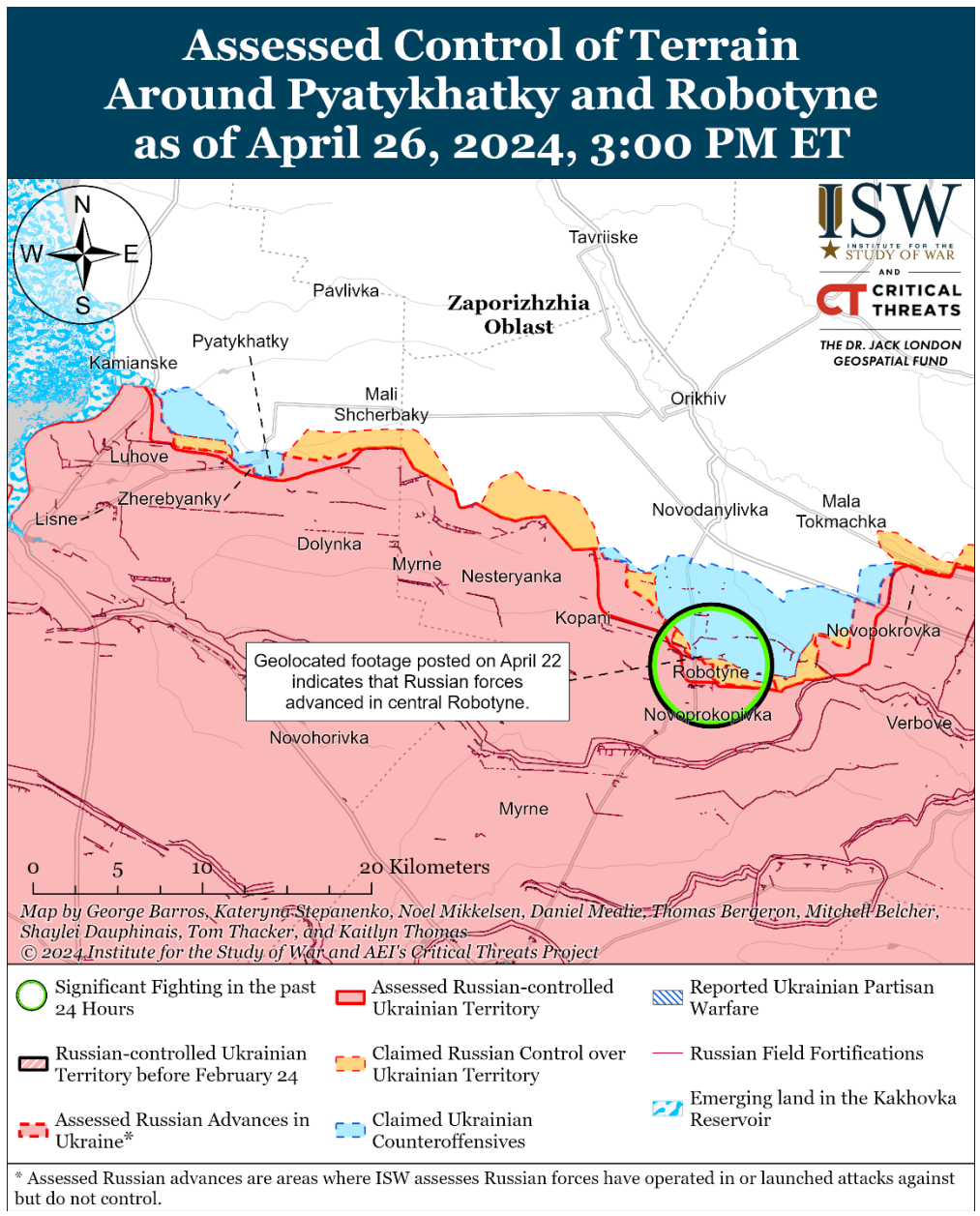
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Positional fighting continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on April 26. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 200 meters in depth near Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[58] Positional fighting occurred southeast of Velyka Novosilka near Prechystivka and south of Velyka Novosilka near Urozhaine and Staromayorske.[59] Elements of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Vuhledar (southwest of Donetsk City).[60]



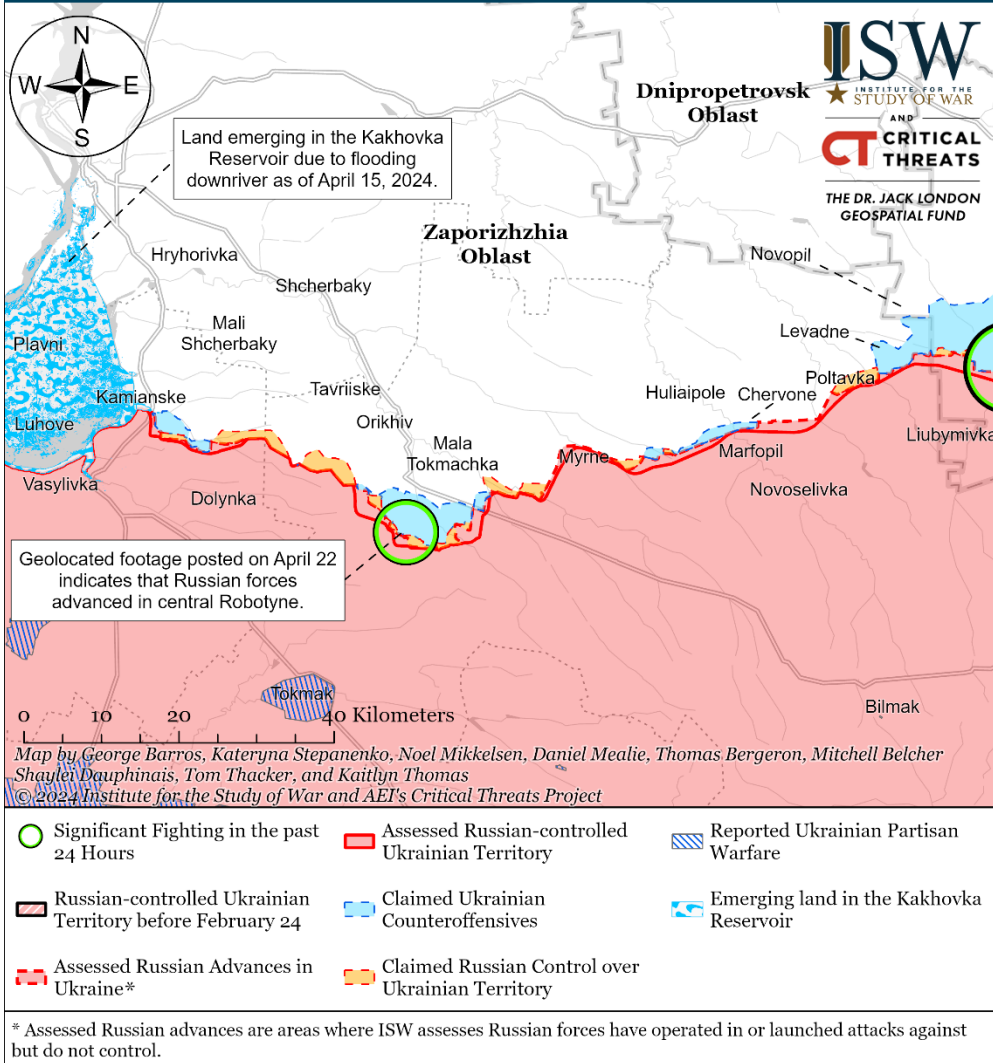
**Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

Russian forces reportedly advanced in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on April 26, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne), but ISW has not observed any visual confirmation of this claim.[61] Positional engagements continued near Robotyne and northwest of Verbove.[62] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces recently intensified shelling and drone strikes against Russian positions in the area.[63] Elements of the Russian 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Robotyne.[64]



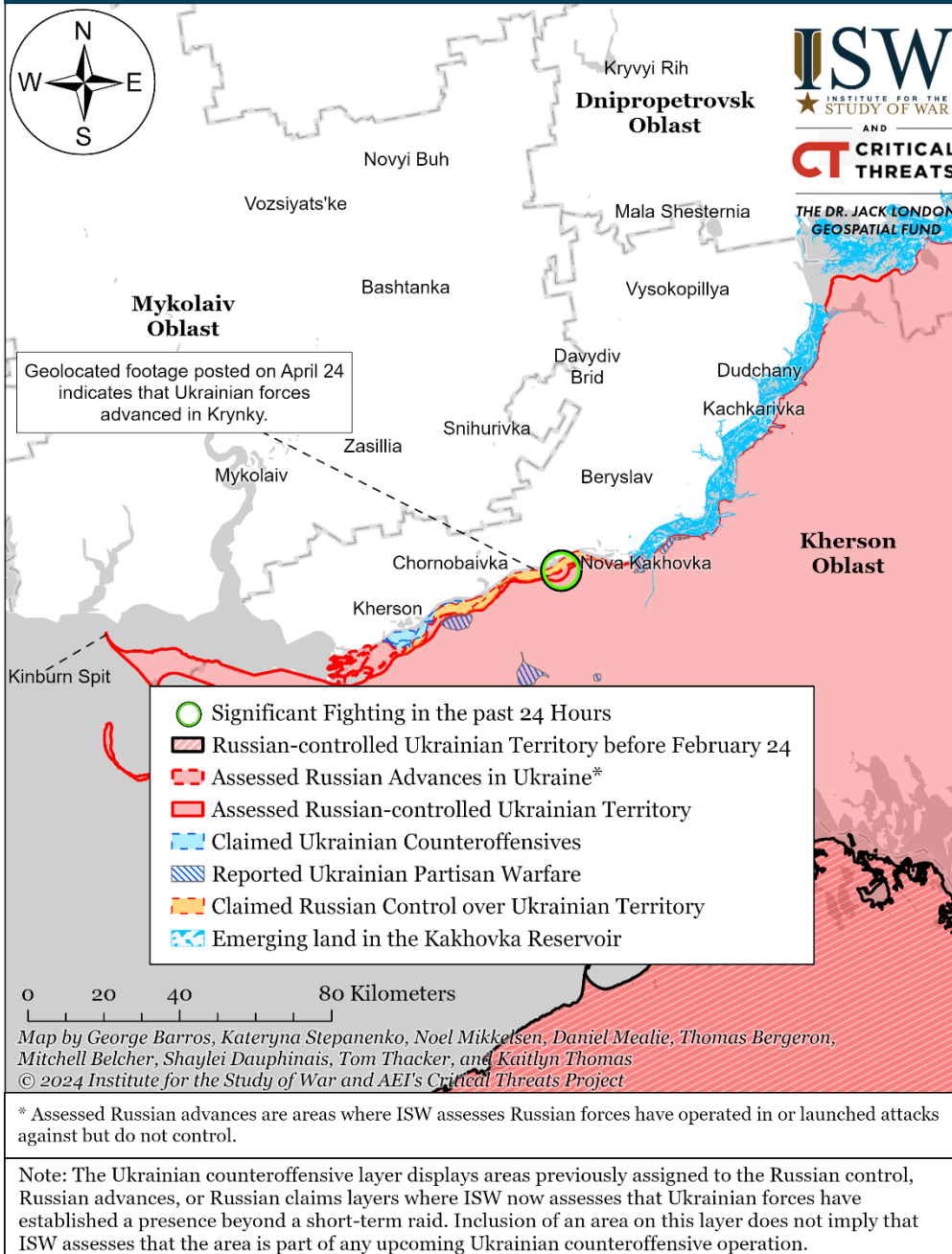


# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of April 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces marginally advanced in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast amid continued positional engagements in the area on April 26. Geolocated footage published on April 26 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced within Krynky, although the advance is likely not recent.[65] Positional engagements continued near Krynky and the Antonivsky roadway bridge (north of Oleshky).[66]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 26, 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 reportedly conducted limited strikes against Ukrainian railway and industrial infrastructure on April 26. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces struck a train transporting Western weapons and military equipment near Udachne, Donetsk

Oblast.[67] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also struck an industrial enterprise in Sumy City.[68]

Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Major Ilya Yevlash stated on April 26 that Russian forces are using Su-57 fighter aircraft to launch missiles at Ukraine and are operating the aircraft far from frontline areas to avoid limited Ukrainian air defense systems downing the aircraft.[69] Yevlash noted that Russian forces can use Su-57 aircraft to launch Kh-69 cruise missiles.

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

*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's* Tatar-Bashkort service Idel Realii reported on April 26 that Samara Oblast is forming a new “Batyr” volunteer motorized rifle battalion.[70] Idel Realii reported that the battalion intends to recruit largely from Tatarstan residents in May-June 2024 and plans to recruit 400 personnel. The personnel who sign contracts to serve in the “Batyr” battalion will reportedly receive a 405,000 ruble (\$4,406) payment from Samara Oblast and a 195,000 ruble (\$2,121) payment from the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), and the Republic of Tatarstan government is reportedly helping finance and provision the battalion.

Russian military personnel, particularly penal recruits, continue to commit crimes upon returning to Russia from Ukraine. Russian opposition outlet Verstka reported on April 25 that Russian military personnel who fought in Ukraine and returned to Russia have killed 107 people, including 76 people across 55 cases of murder; and wounded an additional 100 people through attempted murder, assault, and car accidents.[71] Verstka reported that most of the murderers were penal colony recruits, including Wagner Group penal colony recruits.

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

The Telegram channel of the Russian 1430th Motorized Rifle Regiment (Russian Territorial Troops [TRV]) posted footage on April 26 purportedly of Russian forces using ropes and hooks to retrieve downed drones from minefields to avoid personnel losses.[72] Elements of the 1430th Regiment are reportedly operating near Urozhaine in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.[73]

### **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)**

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) issued a joint statement on behalf of 45 member states stating that Russia has arbitrarily detained thousands of Ukrainian civilians in occupied Ukraine and subjected them to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.[74] The OSCE noted that Russian authorities in Ukraine have conducted systematic torture of Ukrainians, conducted

extrajudicial killings, and failed to investigate those killings. The OSCE reported that Russian authorities used cruel forms of punishment such as sexual violence, and kept detained Ukrainians in harsh conditions, including depriving them of contact with the outside world. The OSCE noted that Ukrainian detainees have reported receiving punishments for speaking Ukrainian or for other expressions of Ukrainian identity and culture. The OSCE explicitly concluded that “extrajudicial killings” of Ukrainian civilian detainees” and the failure to investigate these killings “constitute serious violations” of international human rights law and “may amount to a war crime and crime against humanity.”

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to Russify Ukrainian youth through forced deportations and other measures in occupied Ukraine. Russian opposition outlet Vazhnye Istorii reported on April 25 that Kremlin Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova opened a center in Penza Oblast for disabled individuals and that Russian authorities transferred four disabled Ukrainians from occupied Ukraine to the Penza center in November 2023.[75] Vazhnye Istorii noted that Russian authorities are not discussing the return of these Ukrainians to Ukraine.[76] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on April 24 that Russian occupation officials have ordered libraries in occupied Crimea to remove materials featuring pro-Ukraine sentiments and symbology, information about the Holodomor genocide, and information about Crimean Tatar activities.[77] The Resistance Center reported on April 25 that occupation officials continue militarizing Ukrainian children in occupied Ukraine and will begin teaching schoolchildren how to operate drones in the new school year on September 1, 2024.[78]

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to restore some logistics infrastructure and mineral extraction facilities while struggling with labor shortages in occupied Ukraine. Kherson Oblast occupation government chairperson Andrei Alekseyenko stated on April 24 that Russian authorities intend to completely reconstruct the Askania Nova-Chaplynka highway, which connects the western and eastern halves of occupied Kherson Oblast and serves as an alternate route to occupied Crimea, before the start of summer 2024.[79] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on April 25 that Russian authorities are auditing a final 33 mines in occupied Luhansk Oblast to determine if the mines are profitable enough to continue maintaining.[80] The Resistance Center noted that Russia has previously deemed almost 100 mines of 114 assessed as unprofitable and that Russian authorities coerced 60 percent of mine workers to serve in the Russian military.

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

Russian officials are trying to deflect blame from the Russian military’s use of chemical weapons in Ukraine by claiming that the US is supporting the Ukrainian military’s alleged use of chemical weapons. Russian Permanent Representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Vladimir Tarabrin, claimed on April 26 that the US and its allies are shielding Ukraine’s use of chemical weapons.[81] A *Telegraph* investigation published in April found that Russian forces continue to systematically use prohibited chemical weapons in Ukraine and are attacking Ukrainian positions with chemical substances almost daily throughout the frontline.[82] The Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) 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.[83] CS gas is a riot control agent (RCA) prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), to which Russia is a signatory.[84]

Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova blamed the US and NATO for allegedly threatening nuclear escalation with Russia and claimed that Russia has warned the West about the “catastrophic” consequences of such escalation, likely in an attempt to posture against Polish President Andrzej Duda’s April 22 statement that Poland is ready to host NATO’s nuclear weapons.[85] NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated on April 23 that NATO is not planning to deploy any more nuclear weapons to any additional NATO countries.[86]

Zakharova insinuated that Ukraine is endangering the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), likely in an attempt to shift blame away from Russia’s two-year occupation and militarization of the ZNPP.[87] Russian forces have endangered the ZNPP by storing military equipment including ammunition, armored personnel carriers, anti-aircraft guns, and other armaments on ZNPP grounds.[88]

Armenian Ambassador to the European Union (EU) Tigran Balayan stated that Armenia is considering blocking more Russian state television programs from Armenian broadcasting to combat Russian information operations attempting to undermine Armenia’s sovereignty. Balayan stated in an interview with the *Moscow Times* published on April 24 that Russian media is attempting to promote negative views of Armenian leadership and questioning “the very idea of Armenia being an independent state.”[89] Prominent Russian propagandists, including *RT* Editor-in-Chief Margarita Simonyan, Tigran Keosayan, Vladimir Solovyov, and Kremlin-affiliated milbloggers, have routinely criticized Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and claimed that he and the Armenian government are ceding Armenian sovereignty to Azerbaijan.[90] Balayan stated that Russian state television broadcasts in Armenia do not have a strong effect on Armenian public opinion but can impact those who are native Russian speakers and are accustomed to watching Russian state television.[91] Armenian Minister of High-Technology Industry Mkhitar Hayrapetyan stated on April 10 that Armenia is considering terminating an agreement with Russia that allows Russia to broadcast Russian state television programs in Armenia following the March 29 announcement that Armenia blocked two of Solovyov’s shows.[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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