

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, April 16, 2024

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April 16, 2024, 8:15pm 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 1:15pm ET on April 16. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 17 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky emphasized that continued shortages in air defense systems and artillery are preventing Ukraine from effectively defending itself against Russian strikes and ground assaults. Zelensky stated in an interview with *PBS News Hour*, which aired on April 15, that Ukrainian forces continue to lack enough air defense systems to protect Ukraine's critical infrastructure. Zelensky noted that Ukrainian forces were only able to destroy the first seven of the 11 Russian missiles launched against the Trypilska Thermal Power Plant (TPP) on April 11 before running out of air defense missiles, allowing the remaining four missiles to destroy the plant.[1] Zelensky also expressed frustration with the differential US response to strikes against Ukraine and Israel and stated that the United States and the West are continuing to limit military aid out of the false belief that such self-restraint will prevent further Russian aggression.[2] Zelensky reported that Ukrainian forces currently suffer from a 1-to-10 artillery shell disadvantage and that this artillery ammunition disadvantage allows Russian forces to push Ukrainian forces back each day. ISW continues to assess that continued US delays in security assistance to Ukraine limit Ukrainian forces' ability to conduct effective defensive operations while giving Russian forces flexibility in conducting offensive operations — a dynamic that can lead to compounding and non-linear opportunities for Russian forces to make operationally significant gains in the future.[3] Russia and Ukraine are engaged in a constant air domain offense-defense innovation-adaptation race, in which Russia continues to adjust the timing, scale, composition, and targets of its strike packages to attempt to penetrate Ukraine's air defense umbrella. Significant delays in US military assistance have already created shortages in Ukraine's air defense missile stockpiles and hinder Ukraine's ability to adapt to evolving Russian strike packages. Limited air defense systems and interceptors have forced Ukraine to make difficult decisions to allocate air defense systems between rear and frontline areas leaving frontline troops largely exposed to Russian air attack, and only the United States can rapidly provide air defense systems to Ukraine at the scale necessary to significantly improve Ukraine's air defense capabilities.[4]

Zelensky signed a new mobilization law on April 16, codifying a difficult but critical decision in Ukraine’s efforts to stabilize its force generation apparatus and adequately prepare the Ukrainian fighting force both defensively and offensively.[5] The new mobilization law, which the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada adopted on April 11, lowers the Ukrainian draft age from 27 to 25 years of age, cancels the status of “limited suitability” for military service, and requires citizens living abroad to register for military service in Ukraine. Ukrainian military officials have emphasized the exigency of a new Ukrainian mobilization law to address Ukraine’s manpower shortages that, together with the shortages of Western aid, are making Ukrainian defense on critical areas of the front extremely difficult.[6] Ukraine’s ability to defend throughout the theater and eventually contest Russia’s battlefield initiative is contingent on Ukraine’s ability to restore existing units and create new units, as well as on the provision of US military assistance to existing and new units.

Russian forces in eastern Ukraine are using smaller groups to conduct assaults and are reportedly suffering from morale issues, but Russian attacks are unlikely to culminate in the near term despite these challenges because of Ukrainian materiel shortages. Spokesperson of the Ukrainian National Guard Colonel Ruslan Muzychuk stated that Russian forces in eastern Ukraine have not recently used large units to conduct assaults but are instead using groups split into two detachments reinforced with armored vehicles to conduct ground attacks.[7] Muzychuk stated that Russian forces are also using small vehicles without protection to approach Ukrainian positions quickly and set conditions for a subsequent Russian infantry group to secure these positions. Muzychuk reported that Ukrainian drones destroyed about 70 percent of Russian armored vehicles last week, although it is unclear if Muzychuk is claiming that Ukrainian drones actually destroyed armored vehicles or temporarily rendered them *hors de combat*. [8] The press officer for the Ukrainian 26th Artillery Brigade, Oleh Kalashnikov stated that Russian forces in the Bakhmut direction are not conducting battalion-sized ground attacks because Ukrainian drones immediately detect them and that Russian forces are instead using company-sized groups at most.[9] Kalashnikov stated that Russian forces in the Bakhmut direction are suffering from low morale and are also using barrier troops to prevent Russian soldiers from retreating. Russian forces previously used mass infantry-led frontal assaults in their seizure of Bakhmut and in the beginning of the Russian effort to seize Avdiivka, but Russian forces appear to have shifted to using smaller infantry groups recently to conduct ground attacks.[10] Russian sources have also recently indicated that Russian forces suffered from exhaustion and lacked rotations but had to continue to fight on new lines west of Avdiivka following Russia’s seizure of Avdiivka.[11] ISW has previously (and not always accurately) assessed how low Russian morale and exhaustion affected the prospects of Russian offensive operations, but Ukraine’s current material shortages may make it difficult for Ukrainian forces to defend against Russian forces – even those that are exhausted and unmotivated.[12] ISW continues to assess that Russia’s opportunities to exploit Ukrainian vulnerabilities will widen as Ukrainian materiel shortages persist.[13]

A Russian Storm-Z instructor argued that Russian forces should capitalize on Ukrainian disadvantages brought on by materiel shortages to increase Russian guided glide bomb strikes to support Russian ground operations. The instructor claimed on April 15 that Ukrainian forces are unable to defend against Russian guided glide bomb strikes, which had caused significant damage to Ukrainian manpower, equipment, and other materiel.[14] The instructor claimed that Russian forces “linked” guided glide bomb strikes to Russian ground assaults on Avdiivka and more recently on Umanske (west of Avdiivka) to ensure Russian tactical advances. The instructor stated that

Russian forces are conducting guided glide bomb strikes “situationally” and “episodically,” not systemically, and highlighted how Russian forces conducted guided glide bomb strikes near Terny in the Lyman direction but have not made significant advances in this area for months. The instructor claimed that Russian forces are currently “testing” Russian aviation near Chasiv Yar and may be able to turn local tactical successes into operational-level effects. The instructor claimed that Ukraine’s decreased air defense systems and man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) are allowing Russian reconnaissance drones to operate significantly further forward and called on Russian forces to optimize their use of multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) to conduct counterbattery strikes and isolate the battlefield. ISW observed that sparse and inconsistent Ukrainian air defense coverage along the front resulting from shortages in Ukrainian air defense systems and missiles has facilitated Russia’s intensification of guided and unguided glide bomb strikes, which Russian forces used to tactical effect in their seizure of Avdiivka in February 2024 and which Russian forces are using again during their current offensive operations near Chasiv Yar.[15]

Russian President Vladimir Putin continued to show support for Iranian aggression against Israel during a March 16 call with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. Putin expressed hope that Israel and Iran would “show reasonable restraint” and not allow a “new round of confrontation,” effectively preemptively blaming Israel for any response to the massive but unsuccessful Iranian missile and drone strike.[16] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) reported that Raisi told Putin that Iran was “forced” to take “retaliatory measures” against Israel in response to the April 1 Israeli strike targeting Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officials in Damascus.[17] The Russian MFA claimed that Raisi stated that Iran’s response was “limited in nature,” despite the fact that Iran launched about 170 Shahed drones, 30 cruise missiles, and 120 ballistic missiles — a large-scale strike package very likely intending to cause significant damage.[18] The Russian MFA also claimed that Raisi expressed Iran’s disinterest in further escalation in the region. The Russian MFA’s portrayal of Raisi’s claims notably diverges from IRGC-affiliated *Tasnim News Agency’s* claim that Raisi stated that Iran will respond to any Israeli action that harms Iranian interests “more fiercely, widely, and painfully” than before.[19] Putin and the Russian government will likely continue to amplify information operations designed to justify Iran’s April 13 strikes against Israel and continue to rhetorically support Iran against Israel to the international community.

People’s Republic of China (PRC) President and General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Xi Jinping met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on April 16 and proposed prerequisites for the end to the war in Ukraine in a manner that suggests that Xi is continuing to posture himself as a neutral mediator in the war despite increasing reports of China’s support for the Russian war effort. During a meeting with Scholz in Beijing, Xi proposed four tenets to “restore peace” in Ukraine — prioritizing peace and stability and “refrain from seeking selfish gain,” “avoid adding fuel to the fire,” creating the conditions for peace, and reducing the negative impact on the global economy and stability of global industry supply chains.[20] Xi’s language is fairly neutral and does not explicitly come down on one side or the other, which is generally consistent with Xi’s reticence to make the Sino-Russian partnership as deep as Putin desires, partially in order to maintain access to Western markets.[21] Xi and other Chinese officials have additionally refrained from calling the war in Ukraine a war. Various NATO and US officials have recently warned that China is helping to “prop up” the Russian defense industrial base and support Russia via microelectronics, optics, machine tools, and missile propellant deliveries.[22] Xi’s generally vague signaling to Scholz vis a vis Ukraine over the backdrop of reportedly intensifying Chinese support for Russia is therefore more likely an attempt to maintain China’s access

to European markets by garnering goodwill with Germany than to show actual interest in facilitating an end to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) recently destroyed a Russian Nebo-U long-range radar station in Bryansk Oblast.[23] SBU sources told Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* on April 16 that the Nebo-U station allowed Russian forces to surveil up to 700 kilometers into Ukrainian airspace, detect Ukrainian weapons, and support Russian bombers in targeting Ukrainian force concentrations.[24] The SBU also previously destroyed a Nebo-U station in Belgorod Oblast and recently targeted a Kasta-2E modern radar system near occupied Berdyansk, Zaporizhia Oblast.[25]

The Kremlin continues to centralize authority over Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov's "Akhmat" Spetsnaz forces via the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD). Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on April 16 appointing Commander of the Akhmat Spetsnaz Apty Alaudinov as the Deputy Head of the Main Directorate for Military-Political Work at the Russian MoD.[26] The Russian MoD's Main Directorate for Military-Political Work is a department responsible for supporting "military-patriotic work" at the Russian Armed Forces such as ensuring that Russian forces subscribe to Russia's political ideology.[27] Kadyrov stated that Alaudinov was relieved of his responsibilities as the Deputy Commander of the 2nd Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Army Corps but will continue to command Akhmat Spetsnaz forces.[28] Alaudinov's appointment notably took place on the 15th year anniversary of the Kremlin declaring victory in Chechnya on April 16, 2009, under Kadyrov's pro-Kremlin rule.[29] The appointment also follows Kadyrov's recent announcement that 3,000 former Wagner Group personnel would join Akhmat Spetsnaz after Alaudinov reached an agreement with Wagner leadership on April 5.[30]

Putin is likely pursuing two objectives with Alaudinov's appointment: establishing safeguards to ensure that Chechen leadership remains loyal to the Kremlin as Kadyrov continues to grow his forces and advancing the Kremlin's ongoing force formalization efforts under the Russian MoD. Kadyrov has been steadily growing his forces since the start of the full-scale invasion and had used Russia's reliance on Chechen forces to blackmail the Kremlin into ordering high-profile military command changes within the Russian MoD alongside deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin.[31] Alaudinov's appointment into the Russian MoD, therefore, ensures that Kadyrov and Alaudinov can no longer exercise the same level of freedom to make similar demands as they did in late 2022 and early 2023. The Kremlin enforced similar measures to coopt the Russian milblogger community by appointing several milbloggers into Kremlin-led initiatives, effectively buying their loyalty.[32] One Russian political blogger observed that Alaudinov's appointment formally ensures that Akhmat Spetsnaz is now officially part of the Russian MoD.[33] The observation is consistent with the Kremlin's recent progress in subordinating irregular forces fighting in Ukraine, such as Kadyrov's units, to the Russian MoD.

Russian federal censor Roskomnadzor is considering banning TikTok in Russia. The Russian Association of Professional Users of Social Networks and Messengers (APPSIM) recently appealed to Roskomnadzor to block TikTok, and Roskomnadzor announced on April 16 that it will consider the appeal until May 8.[34] TikTok banned Russian users from posting new content on the platform in March 2022 due to the "security implications" of Russia's new law against spreading false information about the Russian military.[35] Russian TikTok users have since only been able to view videos from before 2022 but can bypass these restrictions in various ways including by using foreign SIM cards or VPNs.[36] The APPSIM called for Roskomnadzor to investigate if TikTok has adhered to Russian personal data laws, which require all companies that collect personal data on Russian citizens

to use databases located on Russian territory.[37] APPSIM's appeal to Roskomnadzor reportedly stated that TikTok announced its readiness to localize the data of Russian citizens in 2019 but that TikTok had not publicly reported if it had done this or not.[38] APPSIM claimed that blocking TikTok will increase audiences on Russian social media networks, such as VKontakte, which will boost the "professional community's" number of subscribers on domestic platforms.[39] A Russian court fined Google 15 million rubles (about \$159,000) in November 2023 for repeatedly refusing to localize the personal data of Russian users in Russia, and it is unclear if Roskomnadzor would ban TikTok for the same offense for which it simply fined Google.[40]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky emphasized that continued shortages in air defense systems and artillery are preventing Ukraine from effectively defending itself against Russian strikes and ground assaults.**
- **Zelensky signed a new mobilization law on April 16, codifying a difficult but critical decision in Ukraine's efforts to stabilize its force generation apparatus and adequately prepare the Ukrainian fighting force both defensively and offensively.**
- **Russian forces in eastern Ukraine are using smaller groups to conduct assaults and are reportedly suffering from morale issues, but Russian attacks are unlikely to culminate in the near term despite these challenges because of Ukrainian materiel shortages.**
- **A Russian Storm-Z instructor argued that Russian forces should capitalize on Ukrainian disadvantages brought on by materiel shortages to increase Russian guided glide bomb strikes to support Russian ground operations.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin continued to show support for Iranian aggression against Israel during a March 16 call with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.**
- **People's Republic of China (PRC) President and General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Xi Jinping met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on April 16 and proposed prerequisites for the end to the war in Ukraine in a manner that suggests that Xi is continuing to posture himself as a neutral mediator in the war despite increasing reports of China's support for the Russian war effort.**
- **Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) recently destroyed a Russian Nebo-U long-range radar station in Bryansk Oblast.**
- **The Kremlin continues to centralize authority over Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov's "Akhmat" Spetsnaz forces via the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD).**
- **Russian federal censor Roskomnadzor is considering banning TikTok in Russia.**
- **Russian forces made confirmed advances near Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City and in western Zaporizhia Oblast amid continued positional engagements along the entire line of contact on April 16.**
- **The Republic of Tatarstan is reportedly preparing a new youth employment program that would allow minors aged 14 and older to work at Russian defense industrial base (DIB) enterprises, likely as part of an ongoing effort to expand the Russian DIB.**

- Russian occupation officials are using the education system, particularly history courses, to Russify Ukrainian children living in occupied areas.



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

violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

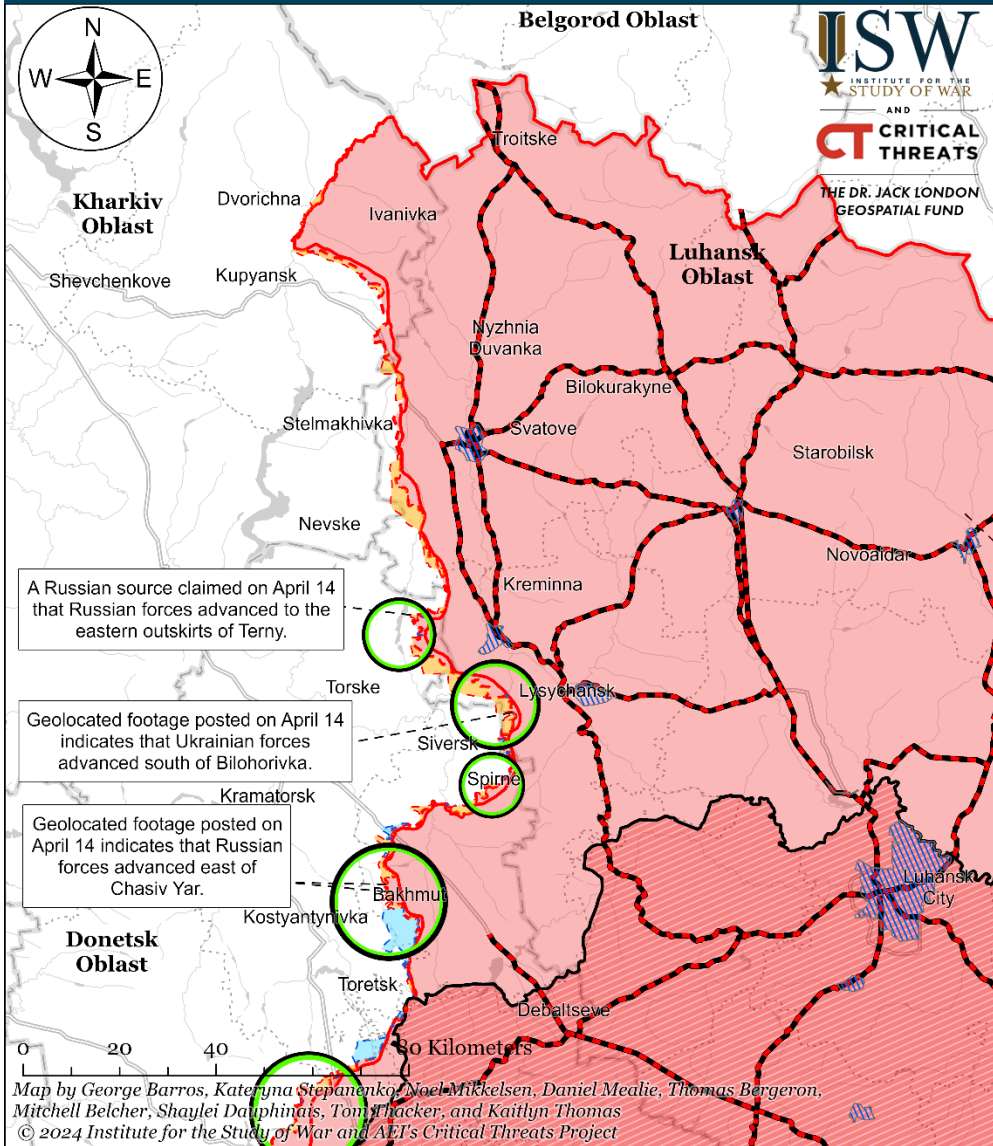
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces continued ground attacks west of Kreminna on April 16, but there were no confirmed changes to the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported continued positional engagements west of Kreminna near Terny and Torske; southwest of Kreminna near Hryhorivka and in the Serebryanske forest area; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[41] The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Russian forces did not conduct offensive or assault actions in the Kupyansk direction on April 16.[42] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces captured a Ukrainian fortified position north of Terny and pushed Ukrainian forces back about 800 meters, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of a Russian advance near Terny.[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of April 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas
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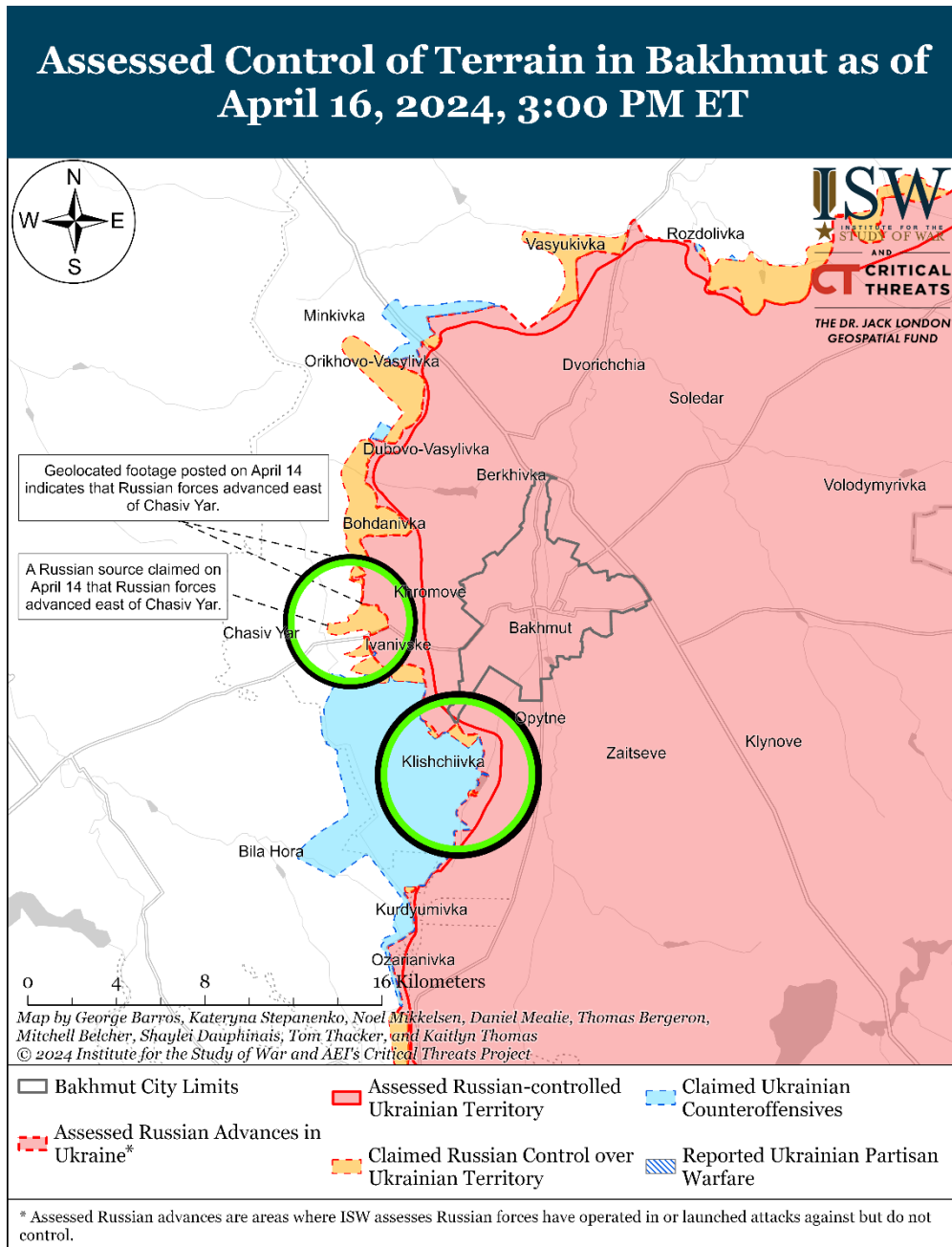
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on April 16 that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces 800 meters from a fortification north of Terny.

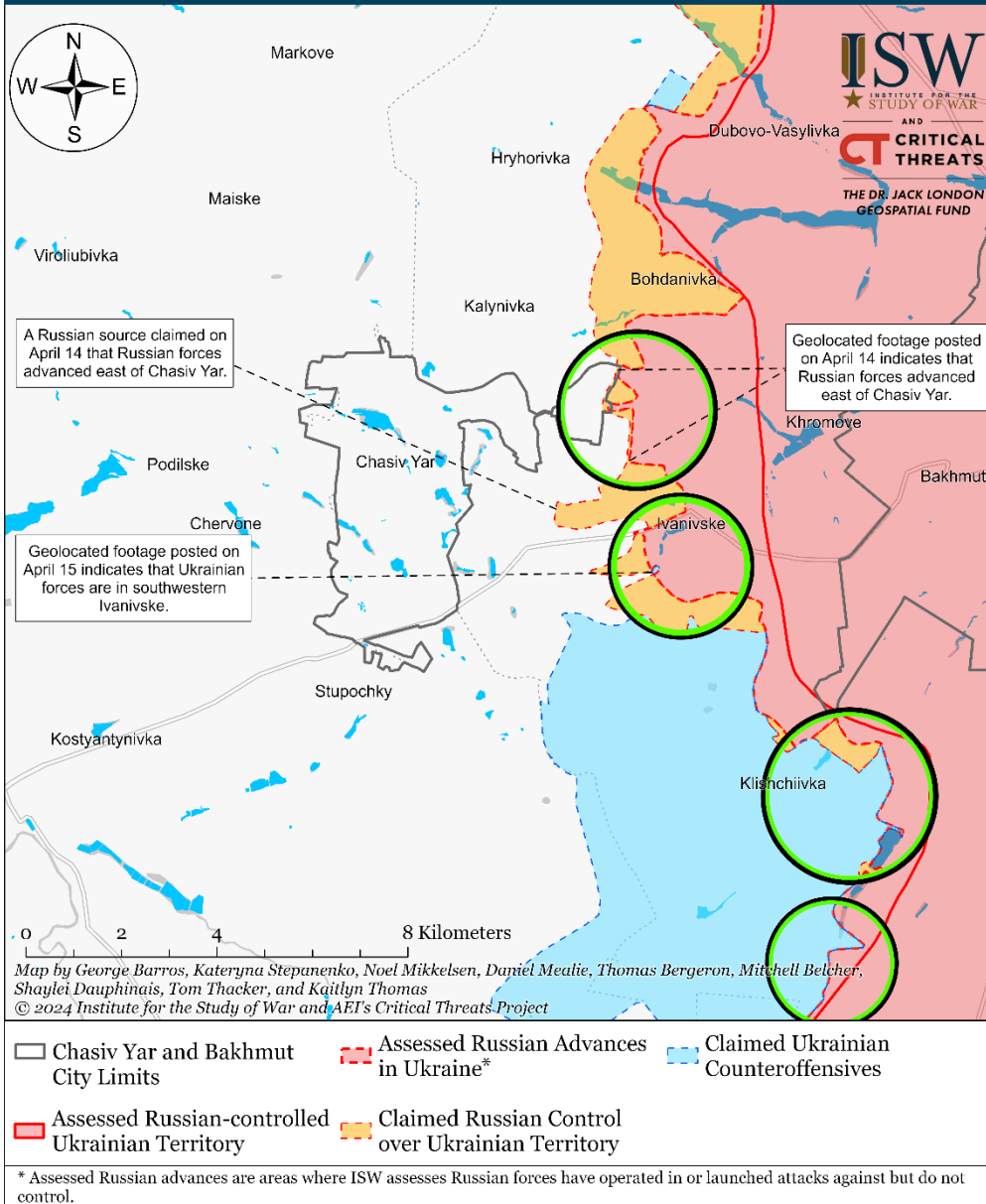
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Positional engagements continued in the Siversk direction (northeast of Bakhmut) on April 16, but did not result in any changes to the frontline. Russian forces reportedly unsuccessfully attacked east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske and southeast of Siversk near Vyimka and Spirne.[44] Elements of the Russian 2nd Artillery Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) reportedly operate near Spirne; elements of the 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd AC) operate near Vyimka; and elements of the “Storm” penal detachment of the 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade operate in the Siversk direction.[45]



Ukrainian forces continued to hold some positions in westernmost Ivanivske (southeast of Chasiv Yar). Geolocated footage published on April 15 shows Russian drone operators striking Ukrainian positions in western Ivanivske.[46] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces made unspecified and unconfirmed advances in the suburbs of Chasiv Yar, while Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Bohdanivka (northeast of Chasiv Yar).[47] A milblogger affiliated with Russian airborne (VDV) forces claimed that elements of the Russian 98th Guards VDV Division are continuing to attack Chasiv Yar but have not entered the Kanal microraiion in easternmost Chasiv Yar nor Chasiv Yar itself.[48] Positional fighting also continued southeast of Chasiv Yar near Novyi microraiion, Ivanivske, Klishchiivka, and Andriivka.[49] Elements of the Russian 331st Guards VDV Regiment (98th VDV Division) and 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar, and elements of the 1486 “Leningrad” Regiment (a unit composed of mobilized personnel) are continuing to operate near Klishchiivka.[50]

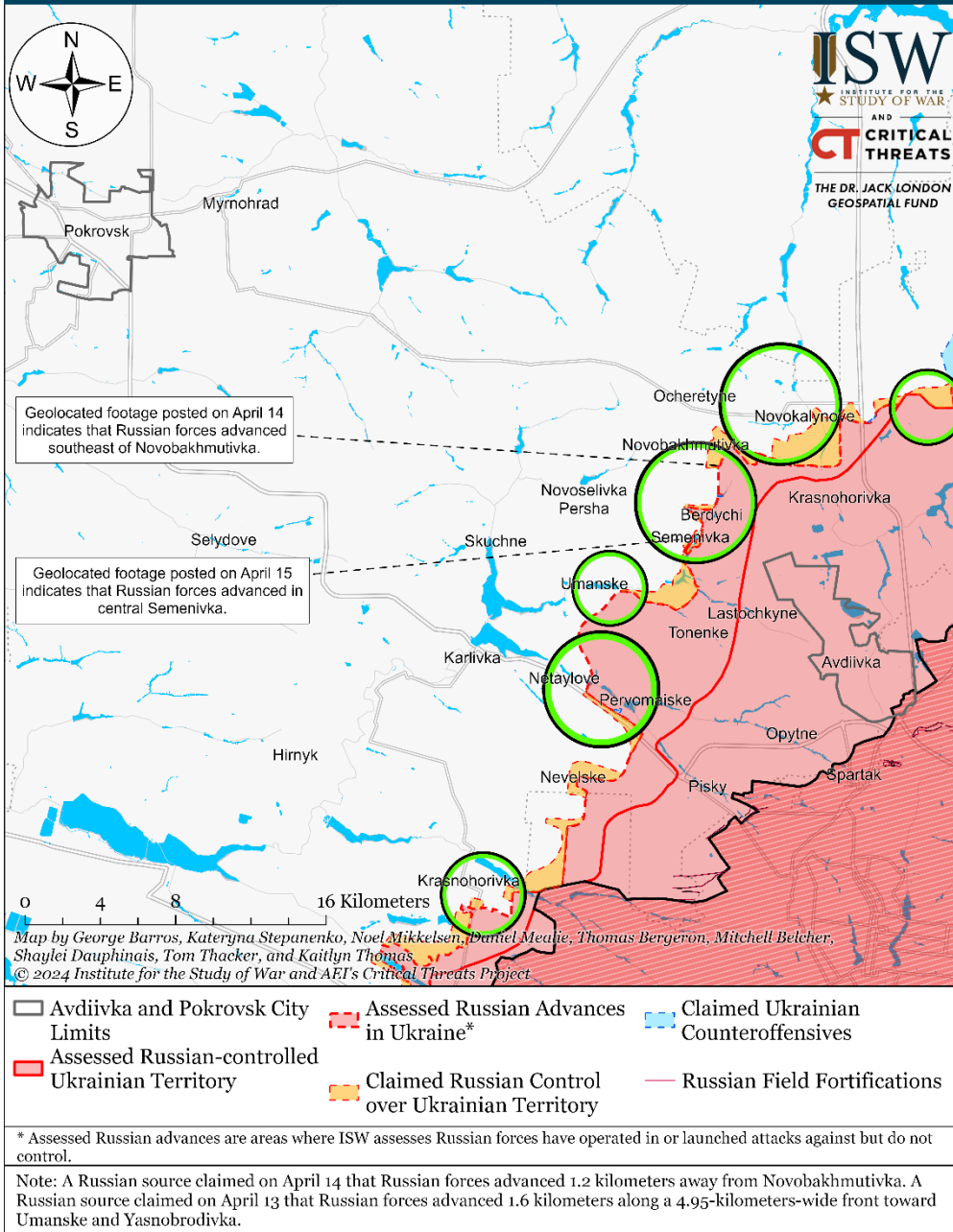
Assessed Control of Terrain near Chasiv Yar as of April 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces recently regained some positions northwest and west of Avdiivka, although it is not clear if Ukrainian advances are a result of recent successful Ukrainian counterattacks. Geolocated footage published on April 10 and later geolocated on April 15 shows Ukrainian forces operating in central Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka), and geolocated footage published on April 15 also indicates that Ukrainian forces retook some ground north of Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka).[51] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced to the T-0511 highway in Novokalynove (north of Avdiivka), in central Semenivka (northwest of Avdiivka), east of Novobakhmutivka (northwest of Avdiivka), and in Netaylove (southwest of Avdiivka).[52] A Russian

milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced two kilometers wide and 1.4 kilometers deep north of Berdychi.[53] ISW has not observed visual evidence confirming these claims at the time of this publication. Positional engagements continued north of Avdiivka near Novokalynove and Stepove; northwest of Avdiivka near Ocheretyne, Berdychi, Semenivka, Umanske; and southwest of Avdiivka near Netaylove and Pervomaiske.[54] Elements of the Russian 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC) are reportedly operating near Pervomaiske and Vodyane (southwest of Avdiivka).[55]

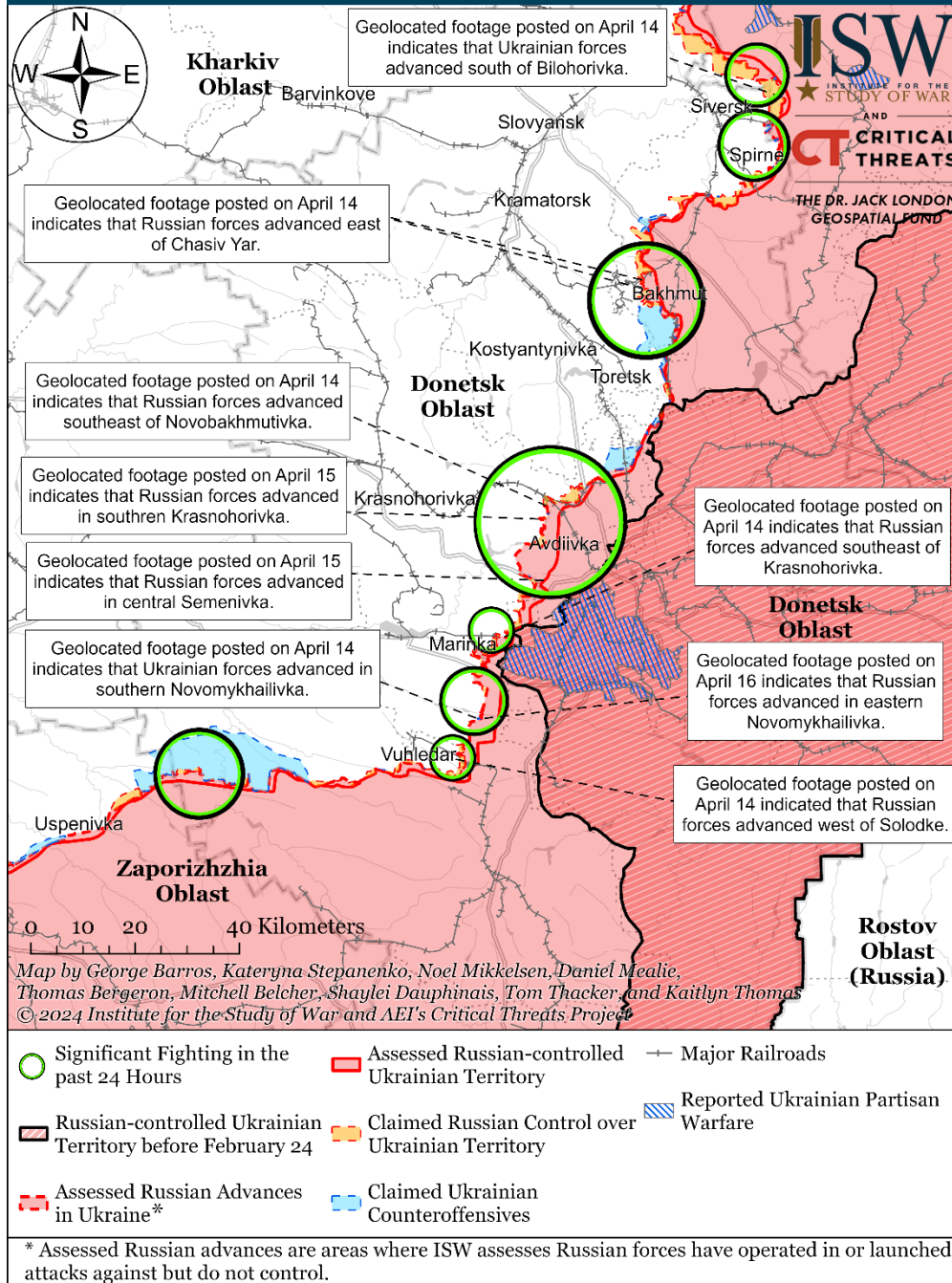
Assessed Control of Terrain Northwest of Avdiivka as of April 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces have recently advanced west and southwest of Donetsk City. Geolocated footage published on April 14 shows that Russian forces advanced west of Solodke (southwest of Donetsk City) and in southern Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City), respectively.[56] Geolocated footage published on April 16 also shows that Russian forces marginally advanced in southwestern Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[57] Russian milbloggers similarly claimed that Russian forces, namely elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st AC), advanced to southern Krasnohorivka and captured several buildings including the railway station.[58] The DNR People’s Militia claimed that

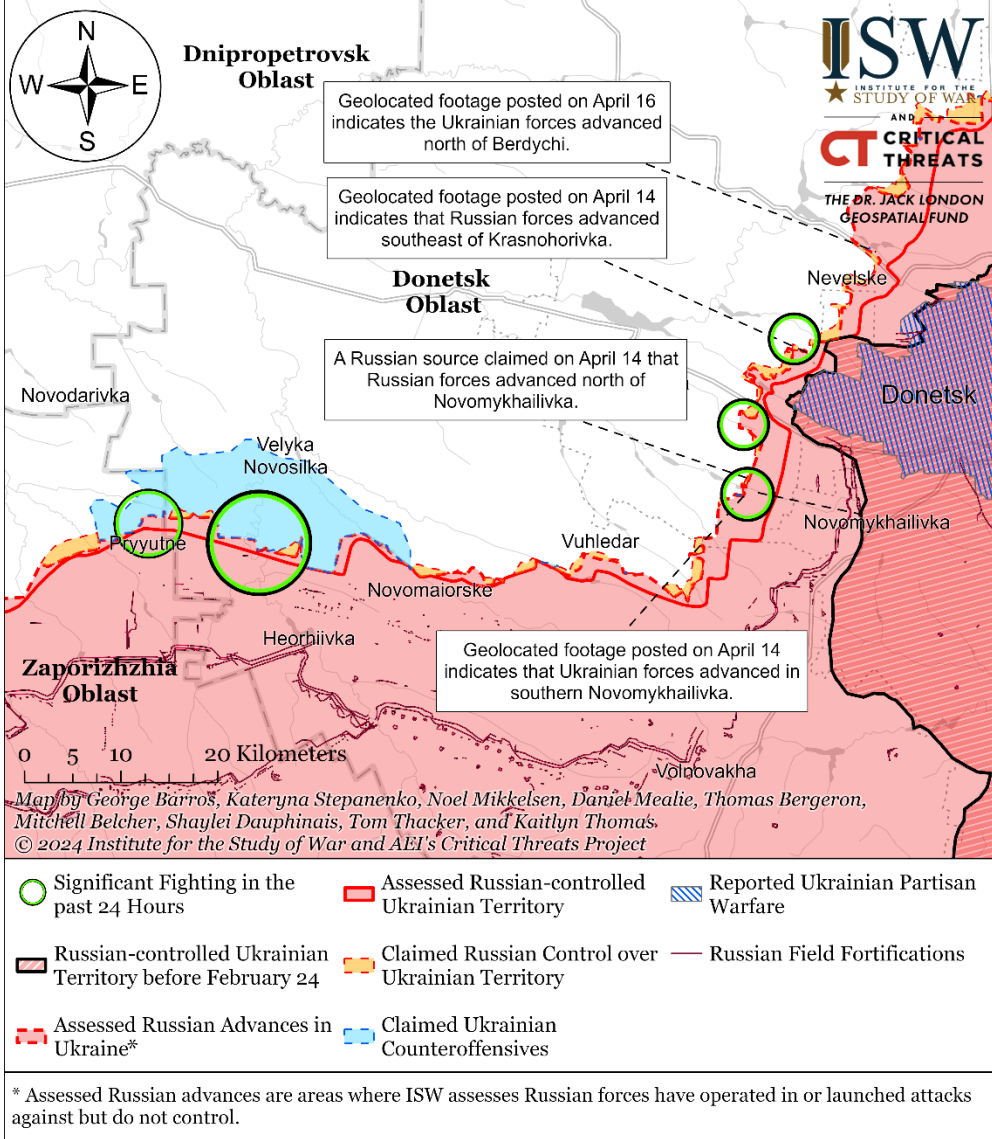
Russian forces used six attack helicopters to support the Russian infantry ground assault on Krasnohorivka by firing 240 missiles at Ukrainian forces.[59] Positional engagements continued near Krasnohorivka; west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka; and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka, Pobieda, and Vodyane.[60] Elements of the Russian reconnaissance company of the 1472nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (68th AC, Eastern Military District [EMD]) and 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th AC) are reportedly operating near Novomykhailivka.[61] Elements of the Russian “Perepel” detachment of the 255th Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Guards Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Guards Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) operate near Marinka (west of Donetsk City), and elements of the Russian 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA, SMD) operate

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of April 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces reportedly attacked several settlements near the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border on April 16 but did not make confirmed advances. Russian forces attacked south of Velyka Novosilka and Staromayorske and southwest of Velyka Novosilka north of Pryutne.[63]

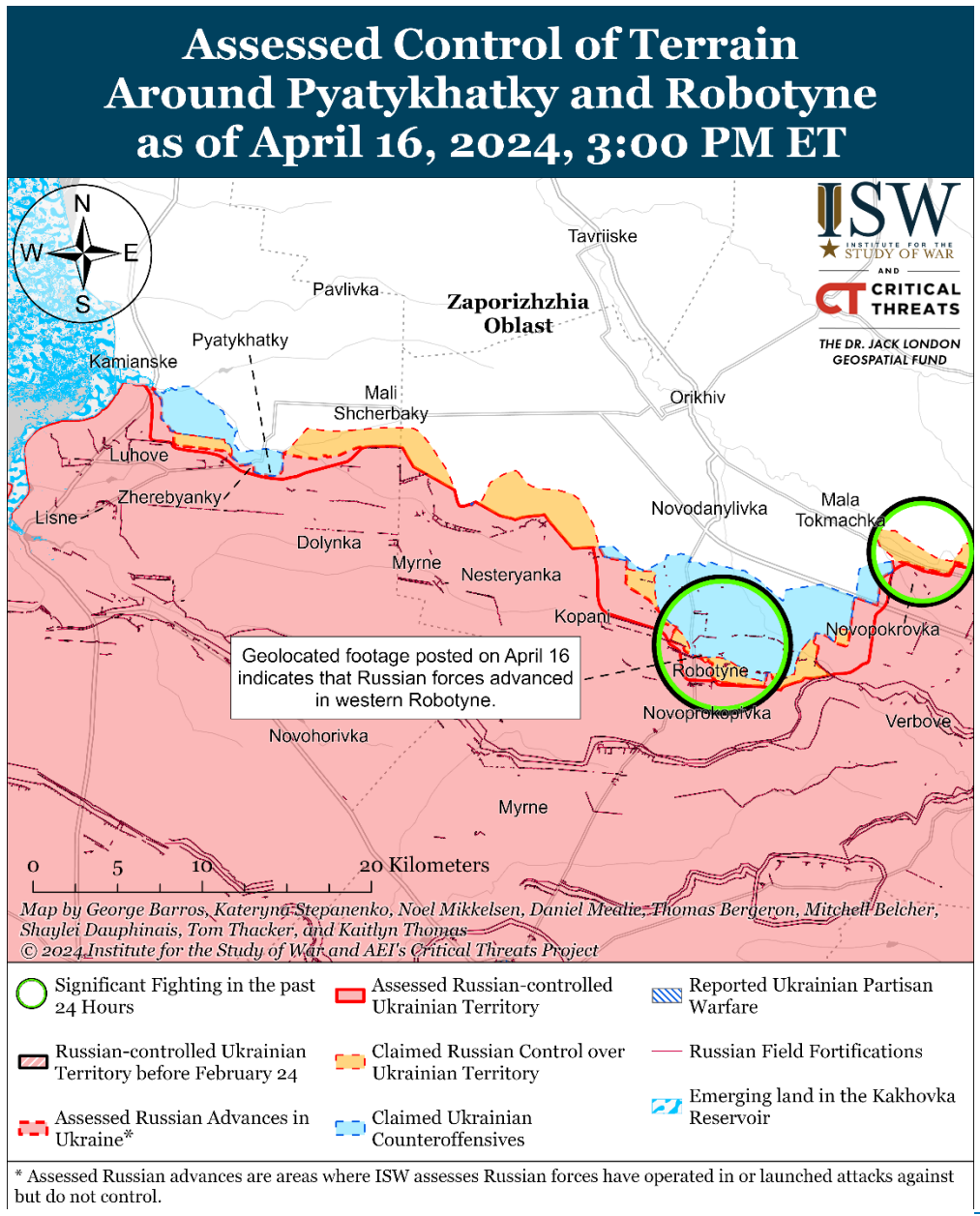
Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Donetsk Oblast as of April 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

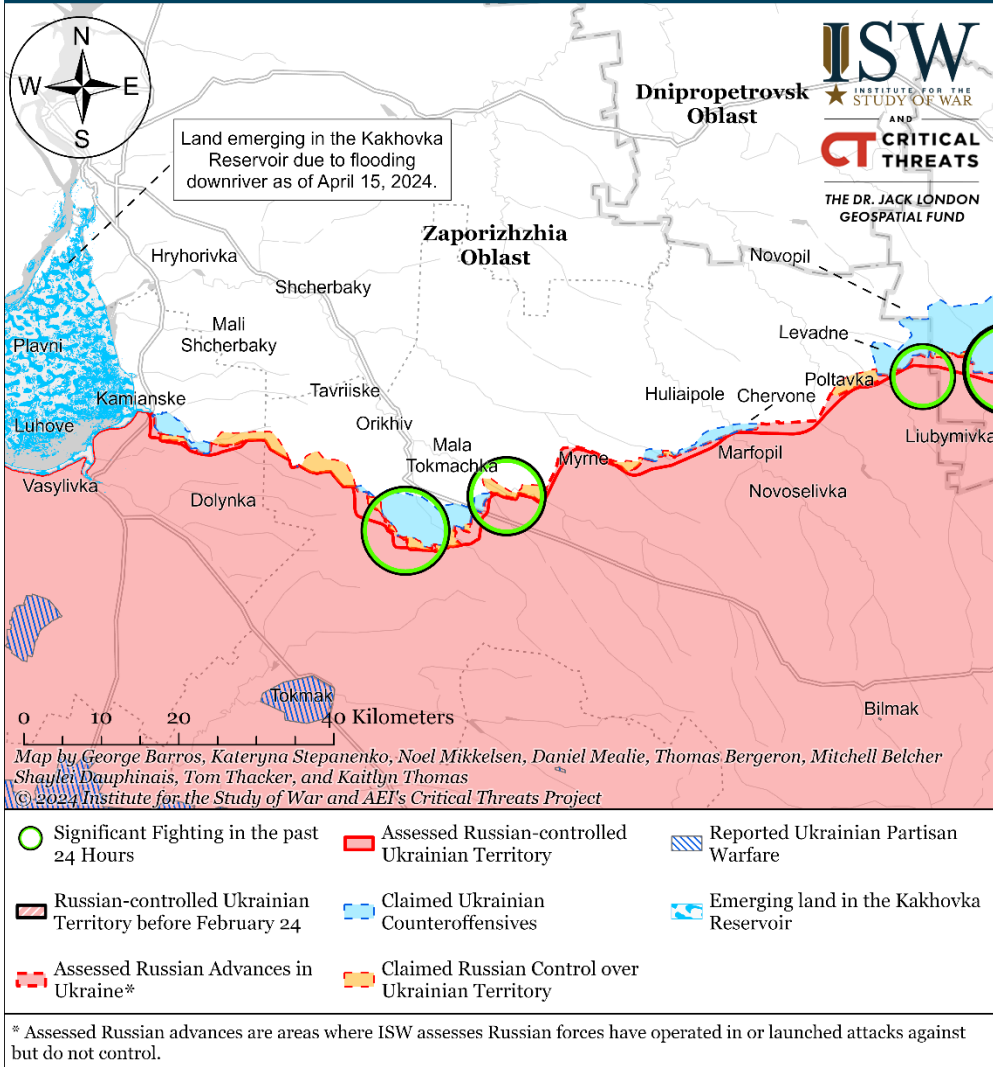
Russian forces recently advanced in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast amid continued positional engagements in the area on April 16. Geolocated footage published on April 16 indicates that elements of the Russian 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) advanced in western Robotyne.[64] Positional engagements continued near Bilohirya (northeast of Robotyne), Robotyne, and Verbove (east of

Robotyne).[65] Elements of the 1429th Motorized Rifle Regiment (58th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[66]



International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi stated on April 15 that drone strikes against the dome of the unit six reactor building and near the main reactor buildings of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) on April 7 did not cause major damage but set a “very dangerous precedent.”[67] Grossi warned that drone strikes on the ZNPP and nearby Enerhodar significantly increase the nuclear safety of the ZNPP.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of April 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional engagements continued near Krynky on April 16.[68] A Russian milblogger claimed on April 15 that Ukrainian forces expanded their bridgehead in Krynky westward by a width of 500 meters after an unspecified Russian unit surrendered its positions.[69] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces also advanced in central Krynky up to 400 meters wide and 100 meters deep. ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claimed advances, however. Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian aircraft increasingly launch missile strikes at Kherson Oblast from the Black Sea and Sea of Azov but fly closer to the frontline to conduct guided glide bomb strikes once a week.[70] Humenyuk and Ukrainian Kherson Oblast Administration Head Oleksandr Prokudin reported that Russian forces conducted a glide bomb strike on Beryslav in the west (right) bank of Kherson Oblast.[71]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian forces conducted a limited drone strike against Ukraine on the night of April 15-16. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched nine Shahed-136/131 drones from occupied

Cape Chauda, Crimea, and that Ukrainian forces destroyed all the drones over Kherson, Mykolaiv, Khmelnytskyi, Poltava, Cherkasy, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.[72] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk noted that the Russian strike series on the night of April 15-16 consisted of a smaller number of drones than recent strikes.[73]

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

The Republic of Tatarstan is reportedly preparing a new youth employment program that would allow minors aged 14 and older to work at Russian defense industrial base (DIB) enterprises, likely as part of an ongoing effort to expand the Russian DIB. Kremlin-affiliated business outlet *Kommersant* reported on April 15 that Tatarstan’s new program would simplify the employment of minors aged 14 to 18 to promote the employment of teenagers from families in “socially dangerous situations” and allow them to work at DIB enterprises.[74] Tatarstan previously proposed amendments to its labor code that would allow Russian minors aged 16 to 18 to work in hazardous conditions under a fixed-term contract due to personnel shortages, although postponed passing the amendments due to criticism.[75] Tatarstan’s Alabuga Special Economic Zone (SEZ) notably houses a Shahed drone production plant, and there have been reports that college students are working at the plant.[76]

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

Nothing significant to report.

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)

Russian occupation officials are using the education system, particularly history courses, to Russify Ukrainian children living in occupied areas. The Russian Ministry of Education published a decree on April 12 that orders schools in Russia and in occupied Ukraine to raise the weekly number of hours allocated to history instruction starting September 1, 2025.[77] The Kherson Oblast occupation administration noted that these changes will allow students in occupied Kherson Oblast to study Russian history and reverse “perverted values and a false understanding of history,” emphasizing that Russian history courses are explicitly meant to present Ukrainian children and youth with the Russian version of history and to undermine Ukrainian history and culture.[78] A Kherson Oblast occupation official emphasized that teaching Ukrainian children Russian history is “the most powerful form of propaganda and rewiring the brains of the population” and will “instill in the population the desired ideology.”[79] The Ukrainian Resistance Center responded to the Russian decree on April 16, noting that the decree is trying to rewrite Ukrainian history in a way favorable to the Russian propaganda line.[80]

The Kremlin-affiliated Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) continues to align itself with Russian occupation officials in order to consolidate religious control over occupied areas of Ukraine. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation governor Yevgeny Balitsky met with Bishop Theodore of Berdyansk and Prymorsk and congratulated him on the ROC's decision to take control of parishes and monasteries in occupied Melitopol and Enerhodar and throughout occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.[81] The Synod of the ROC previously appointed Bishop Theodore to the position of Eminence of Berdyansk and Prymorsk on March 12, 2024, after illegally transferring Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) dioceses in Berdyansk and Prymorsk to ROC control in May 2023.[82] ISW has long assessed that the ROC is trying to consolidate control over orthodox parishes in occupied Ukraine and persecuting religious minorities in doing so.[83]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) Vasily Nebenzya continued to accuse Ukraine of endangering the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).[84] Nebenzya claimed that Russia is grateful to the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) leadership for condemning the recent drone strikes, although the IAEA notably did not specify the actor that conducted the drone strikes.[85] Ukrainian officials recently warned that Russian forces may be preparing to conduct a false flag provocation at the ZNPP.[86] Russia has routinely raised the possibility of a radiological incident at the ZNPP to prompt negotiations with international organizations, including the IAEA, in an effort to force international organizations to legitimize Russia's control over the ZNPP and by extension Russia's occupation of sovereign Ukrainian territory.[87]

Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev continued to baselessly tie Ukraine to alleged "sabotage and terrorist" activities in Russia in an effort to deter continued Western provisions of military aid to Ukraine.[88] Patrushev claimed that Russian authorities are taking additional security measures against the backdrop of intensified alleged Ukrainian "terrorist" activities in Russia's Northwestern Federal District.[89] Senior Russian officials have attempted to falsely tie Ukraine to the March 22 Crocus City Hall attack and other alleged "terrorists" activities in Russia since the Crocus City Hall attack.[90] ISW is confident that the Islamic State (IS) conducted the Crocus City Hall attack and has yet to observe independent reporting or evidence to suggest that an actor other than IS was responsible for or aided the attack.[91] ISW continues to assess that the increased frequency of counterterrorism operations in Russia, especially in the North Caucasus, and intensified measures targeting Central Asian migrants in Russia are further evidence that Russian authorities actually assess that such threats emanate from Russia's Central Asian and Muslim communities instead of Ukraine.[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)

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko signed a decree on April 15 on the implementation of a new bilateral Russian-Belarusian space project that will be implemented from 2024 to 2028.[93] The project will launch a Belarusian-Russian ultra-high resolution remote sensing spacecraft into orbit for at least seven years.[94] Belarusian state newswire *BELTA* reported that the spacecraft will allow

Belarus to increase the “efficiency and quality of space information” and bolster the image of Belarus as a “space power and a high-tech state.”[95]

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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