

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, April 3, 2024

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April 3, 2024, 8pm 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 1:30pm ET on April 3. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 4 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian forces appear to have increased the number and size of mechanized ground assaults on select sectors of the frontline within the past two weeks, marking a notable overall increase in Russian mechanized assaults across the theater. Ukrainian officials stated on March 20 that Ukrainian forces repelled a large Russian assault in the Lyman direction and published geolocated footage showing Ukrainian forces damaging or destroying several Russian armored vehicles east of Terny (west of Kreminna).[1] Ukrainian forces later defeated a battalion-sized Russian mechanized assault near Tonenke (west of Avdiivka) on March 30 to which Russian forces reportedly committed at least 36 tanks and 12 BMP infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs).[2] A Ukrainian serviceman stated that Ukrainian forces destroyed 12 Russian tanks and eight IFVs during the assault near Tonenke, and Russian forces have likely only conducted one other mechanized assault of that scale along the entire frontline since the beginning of the Russian campaign to seize Avdiivka in October 2023, which was also near Terny on January 20.[3] Geolocated footage published on April 3 shows Ukrainian forces repelling a roughly reinforced platoon-sized mechanized Russian assault near Terny.[4] The April 3 footage is likely recent and is distinct from the March 20 footage of Russian assaults near Terny. Russian forces may be intensifying mechanized assaults before muddy terrain becomes more pronounced in the spring and makes mechanized maneuver warfare more difficult. Russian forces may also be intensifying mechanized assaults to take advantage of Ukrainian materiel shortages before the arrival of expected Western security assistance.[5]

Russian forces may be intensifying the overall tempo of their offensive operations in Ukraine. The intensification of Russian mechanized assaults has occurred generally at the same time as intensified missile and drone strikes against Ukrainian energy facilities.[6] Russian forces escalated its strike campaign in Ukraine by beginning a new pattern of striking hydroelectric power plants around March 22, for example.[7] Russian forces may be intensifying strikes to further pressure the Ukrainian command to deploy air defense systems away from the front in order to more safely intensify aviation operations in support of ground operations.[8] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that Russian forces have been gradually moving materiel and

personnel to frontline positions in small increments making it difficult for Ukrainian forces to monitor Russian force accumulations, suggesting that Russian forces have been preparing for larger-scale assault operations.[9] US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell stated on April 3 that the US assesses that Russia has “almost completely reconstituted militarily” over the past several months, suggesting that Russia is preparing and may already have sufficient manpower and materiel to significantly intensify ongoing offensive operations or initiate offensive efforts in new areas of the theater.[10]

Ukrainian sources continue to stress that the piecemeal and delayed arrival of new Western systems to Ukraine will allow Russian forces to adapt to and offset the likely operational benefits these systems would otherwise provide to Ukrainian forces. *Politico Europe* reported on April 3 that unspecified high-ranking Ukrainian military officers stated that provisions of new Western systems are arriving too late and in insufficient quantities to have maximally effective operational impacts on the battlefield.[11] The Ukrainian officers reportedly stated that Russian forces rapidly adapted to the marginal advantages that new Western-provided weapons systems provide, eliminating those advantages.[12] The Ukrainian officers reportedly pointed to the arrival of Western anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) and HIMARS as systems that arrived at the right time to help Ukrainian forces protect Kyiv in the early months of the full-scale invasion and liberate Kherson City in November 2022, respectively.[13] The Ukrainian officers stated that other Western-provided weapon deliveries have not been so timely, however. The officers reportedly stated that Russian forces are likely already optimizing Russia’s air defense network to counter the arrival of F-16 fighter aircraft, which are scheduled to arrive in Ukraine in the summer of 2024. Russian forces have shown the capacity to adapt to fighting in Ukraine both through mass as well as through steady, though uneven, operational, tactical, and technological.[14] The Russian military’s demonstrated ability to adapt, even if uneven or relatively slow, means that Ukrainian forces have a limited window of opportunity to maximally effectively use new Western systems to achieve operationally significant impacts. Individual systems pose specific challenges to Russian forces, and Russian forces would likely struggle to adapt as easily or quickly as they have previously if Ukrainian forces could employ several new systems at scale simultaneously. The arrival of new Western systems in a timely manner would likely allow Ukrainian forces to significantly degrade Russian forces and prevent even marginal Russian tactical gains while also providing Ukraine with capabilities necessary for operationally significant counteroffensive operations

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that the March 22 Crocus City Hall attack has caused a significant increase in Russian contract service applicants amid reported Russian efforts to increase force generation this spring. The Russian MoD claimed on April 3 that Russian military recruitment centers have documented a significant increase in the number of people applying for military service contracts throughout Russia.[15] The Russian MoD claimed that 16,000 Russian citizens have signed military service contracts over the past 10 days and emphasized that most applicants indicated that their main motive for signing a military contract was to “avenge” the victims of the Crocus attack. The Russian MoD claimed that more than 100,000 Russians have signed military service contracts since the beginning of 2024. Kremlin officials and mouthpieces have consistently attempted to falsely implicate Ukraine in the Crocus attack. If accurate, suggests that the Kremlin’s information operation may have been successful.[16] The fear and instability that the Islamic State’s (IS) attack created in Russian society may have spurred some Russian citizens to sign up for military service. The Russian MoD may alternatively be running a simultaneous information operation designed to portray Russians as increasingly signing military

contracts for revenge to further convince others to sign contracts and justify its long-term war effort in Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on April 3 that Russia is preparing to “mobilize” an additional 300,000 personnel on June 1.[17] Zelensky may be referring to Russia’s ongoing crypto-mobilization efforts or efforts to increase contract service applications following the March 22 Crocus City Hall attack, but Zelensky is likely not referring to another wave of Russian partial mobilization akin to Russia’s September 2022. Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* reported on March 22 that high-ranking Russian officials stated that the Russian MoD plans to increased force generation starting in the spring and that Russia may intend to generate an additional 300,000 personnel within an unspecified time frame.[18] Russian authorities continue to deny Russian and Ukrainian claims about an imminent Russian partial or general mobilization order, and ISW continues to assess that Russian authorities would likely intensify crypto-mobilization efforts before deciding to conduct another unpopular wave of mobilization.[19]

Republic of Tatarstan Head Rustam Minnikhanov warned that Russian companies and local authorities must defend themselves against Ukrainian drone strikes and not rely on Russian air defenses following the April 2 Ukrainian strikes on Russian military production and oil refinery infrastructure in Tatarstan. Minnikhanov stated on April 3 that “there is no need to wait for [Russian] missile defense to work...we must decide on our own, every enterprise, every municipality, every city.”[20] Minnikhanov stated that Russians should “wake up” and realize that “no one will protect you except yourself.” Russian military sources recently told Russian state outlet *Izvestia* that the Russian military is forming mobile fire groups to combat Ukrainian drones, indicating that Russia may be unable to deploy conventional air defense systems to defend all of Russia’s critical facilities.[21] ISW assessed that Ukraine’s April 2 strikes on targets in Tatarstan likely represent a significant inflection in Ukraine’s ability to conduct long-range strikes far into rear Russia’s areas.[22] Minnikhanov’s statement is likely a reflection of increased Russian concern following the April 2 strikes and is a clear acknowledgment and admonition of the Russian Ministry of Defense’s (MoD) failure to defend Russian cities and critical infrastructure from Ukrainian drone strikes.

Russian-backed former Ukrainian separatist politician Oleg Tsaryov complained on April 3 that no current Russian political party adequately represents the political interests of Russian ultranationalists, highlighting a possible source of discontent between the pro-Russian ultranationalist community and the Kremlin. Tsaryov responded to a recent claim by Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Kremlin-controlled Russian Orthodox Church, that there is an absence of Russian nationalism in Russian politics, stating that Russian nationalism and demands for the Kremlin to implement nationalist ideals are increasing.[23] Tsaryov claimed that an official nationalist political party could provide the nationalists with a legal avenue through which to pursue policy changes without discrediting themselves and allow more radical nationalists to work with the mainstream nationalists, presumably as part of a Russian nationalist political coalition.[24] Now-imprisoned ardent nationalist Igor Girkin previously founded the Angry Patriot’s Club, his failed initiative to provide fringe Russian ultranationalists with a platform that directly opposed Russian President Vladimir Putin’s regime and conduct of the war in Ukraine.[25] Tsaryov’s call for an official nationalist political party highlights a grievance that mainstream Russian ultranationalist milbloggers may develop over the long term as Putin aims to further increase control over the ultranationalist information space and fails to implement some of their desired political

changes.[26] Putin likely aims to suppress any possible ultranationalist political movement that could oppose his regime as he did with the Angry Patriots by having Girkin arrested.[27] Notably, Russian President Vladimir Putin's war of conquest against Ukraine is insufficiently nationalist for Tsaryov.

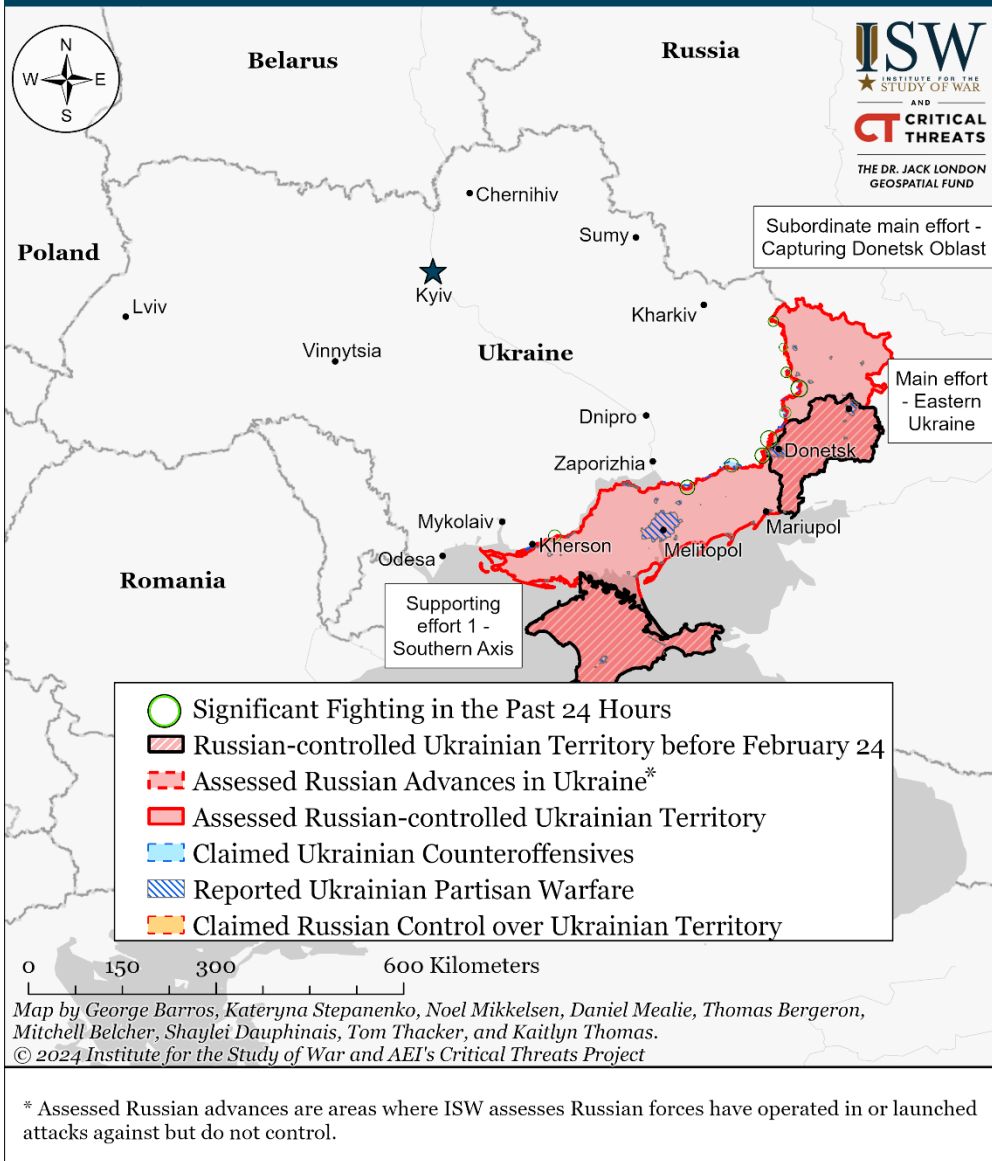
Ukraine and Finland signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement on April

3.[28] Finland also announced a new military aid package to Ukraine worth 188 million euros (about \$204 million) that includes air defense materiel and large-caliber artillery ammunition.[29]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian forces appear to have increased the number and size of mechanized ground assaults on select sectors of the frontline within the past two weeks, marking a notable overall increase in Russian mechanized assaults across the theater.**
- **Russian forces may be intensifying the overall tempo of their offensive operations in Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian sources continue to stress that the piecemeal and delayed arrival of new Western systems to Ukraine will allow Russian forces to adapt to and offset the likely operational benefits these systems would otherwise provide to Ukrainian forces.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that the March 22 Crocus City Hall attack has caused a significant increase in Russian contract service applicants amid reported Russian efforts to increase force generation this spring.**
- **Republic of Tatarstan Head Rustam Minnikhanov warned that Russian companies and local authorities must defend themselves against Ukrainian drone strikes and not rely on Russian air defenses following the April 2 Ukrainian strikes on Russian military production and oil refinery infrastructure in Tatarstan.**
- **Russian-backed former Ukrainian separatist politician Oleg Tsaryov complained on April 3 that no current Russian political party adequately represents the political interests of Russian ultranationalists, highlighting a possible source of discontent between the pro-Russian ultranationalist community and the Kremlin.**
- **Ukraine and Finland signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement on April 3.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Bakhmut and Donetsk City and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.**
- **Russian authorities continue to expand social benefits for Russian military personnel.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 3, 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

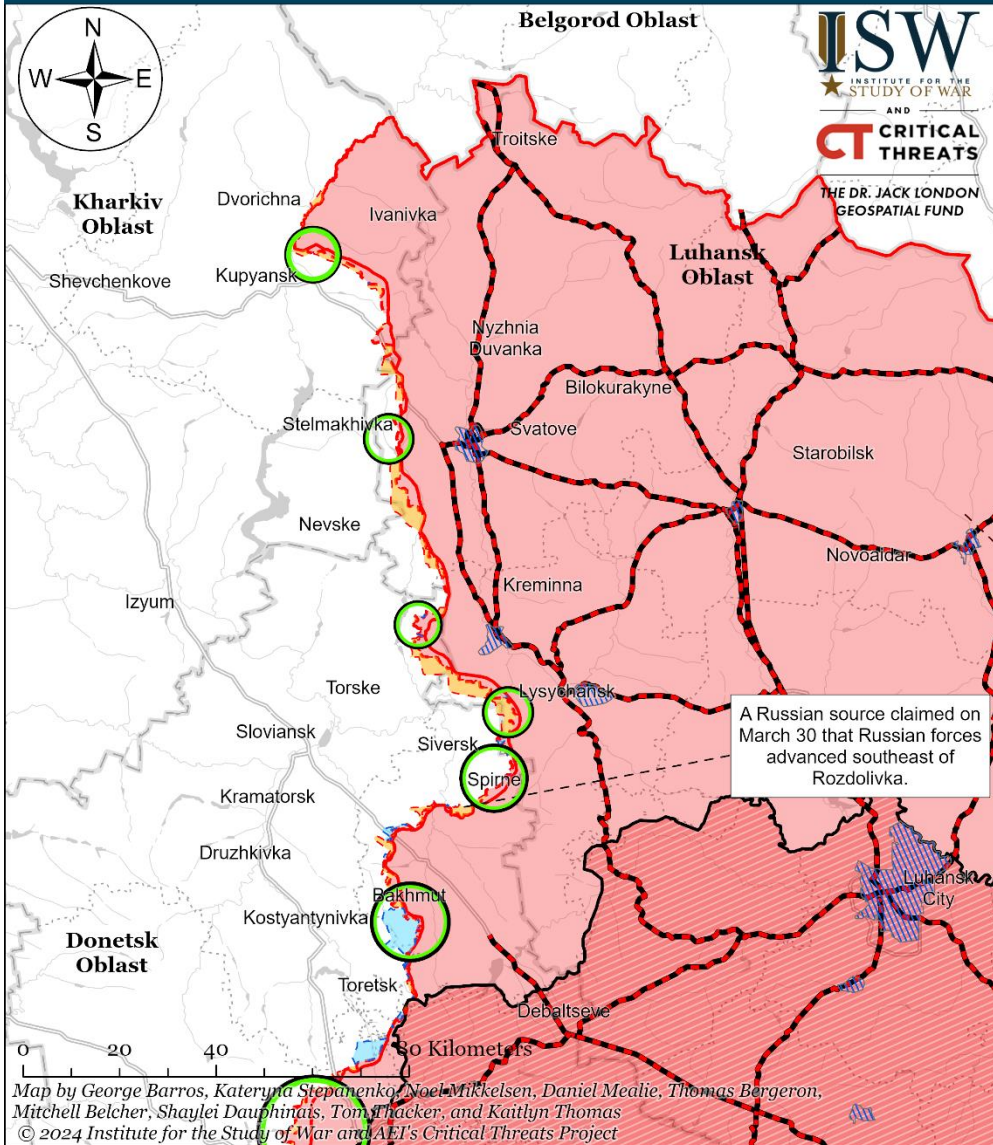
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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)

Russian forces recently conducted an unsuccessful roughly reinforced platoon-sized mechanized assault west of Kreminna and resumed limited assaults immediately west of Svatove as of April 3. Geolocated footage published on April 3 shows Ukrainian forces repelling a roughly reinforced platoon-sized Russian mechanized assault east of Terny (west of Kreminna) with first person view (FPV) drones, artillery, and anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs).[30] It is unclear when Russian forces conducted this assault, but it was likely recent. The recent roughly reinforced platoon-sized mechanized assault near Terny suggests that the Russian command is prioritizing the Lyman direction and may further intensify the tempo of their offensive operations in the area. Russian milbloggers claimed on April 2 that Russian forces seized Ukrainian strongpoints west of Svatove, and the Ukrainian General Staff reported on April 3 that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Andriivka (west of Svatove).[31] Russian forces conducted offensive operations west of Svatove near Raihorodka in the summer of 2023 but have since rarely conducted assaults in the area.[32] It remains unclear if Russian forces will continue offensive operations immediately west of Svatove. Positional fighting continued elsewhere along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line near Synkivka (northeast of Kupyansk) and Bilohorivka (south of Kreminna).[33]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces are targeting Ukrainian logistics and command infrastructure in the Kupyansk direction. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces conducted a glide bomb strike on a Ukrainian command post in Borova (west of Svatove) on April 2.[34] Russian milbloggers amplified footage on April 3 purporting to show Russian forces striking a bridge across the Oskil River near Kupyansk-Vuzlovy (immediately east of Kupyansk).[35] Russian forces damaged bridges across the Oskil River during a coordinated strike campaign in September and October 2023 and may be targeting crossings once again in an effort to isolate the battlespace on the east bank of the Oskil River.[36]

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



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A Russian source claimed on March 30 that Russian forces advanced southeast of Rozdolivka.

- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- - - Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- ▢ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- ▢ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▨ Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- ▢ Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- ▢ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

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

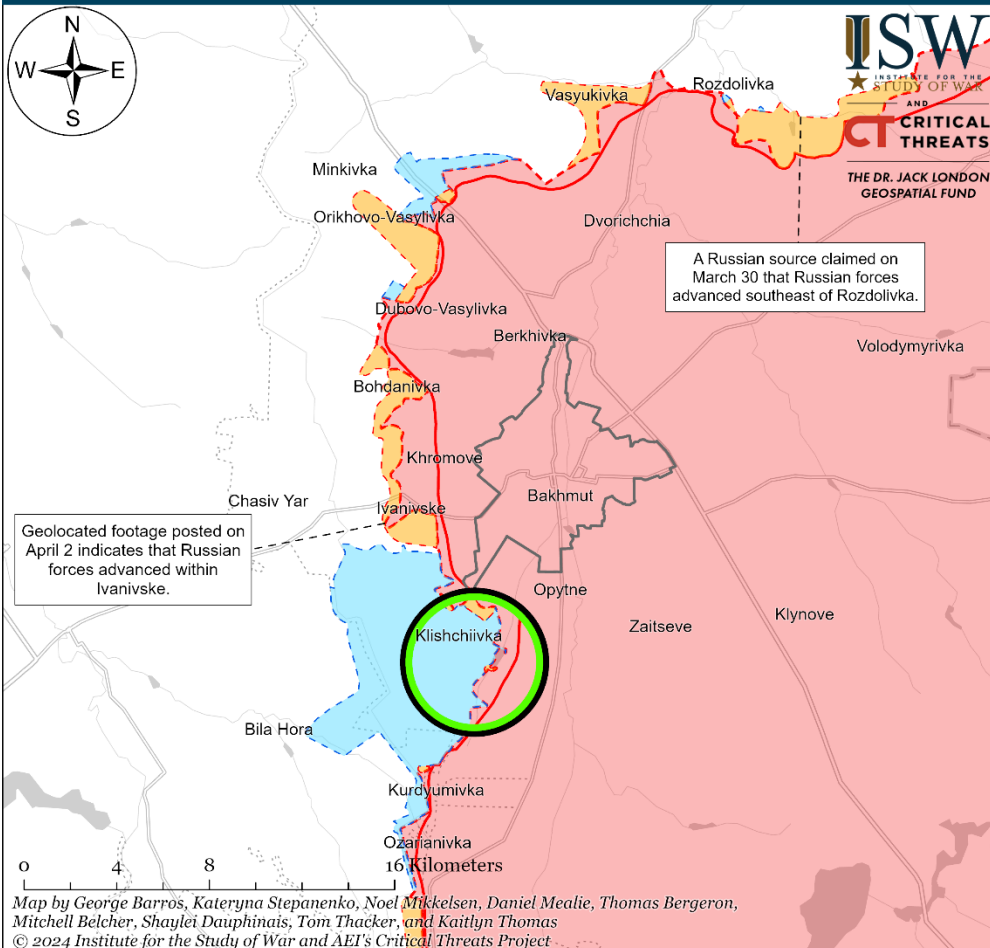
Note: A Russian source claimed on March 30 that Russian forces seized seven square kilometers near Rozdolivka.

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

Russian forces recently advanced west of Bakhmut amid continued positional fighting in the area on April 3. Geolocated footage published on April 2 shows that Russian forces recently advanced into southwestern Ivanivske (west of Bakhmut).[37] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced further west of Ivanivske towards Chasiv Yar, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[38] Positional fighting also continued northeast of Bakhmut near Spirne and Vyimka; northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanvika; southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka; and south of Bakhmut near Pivdenne.[39] Elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division reportedly continue to operate east of Chasiv Yar.[40]

Russian sources discussed the struggles that Russian forces are facing in their effort to seize Chasiv Yar. A Russian milblogger complained that Russian infantry largely have to conduct dismounted infantry assaults west of Bakhmut despite heavy Ukrainian drone operations and that some Russian infantry only train for a week and a half before deploying to Bakhmut, contributing to significant Russian losses.[41] The milblogger claimed that some infantry must operate on foot for several days and that these prolonged dismounted operations also generate large losses. Other milbloggers forecasted that dense Ukrainian minefields, defense-in-depth, and prepared indirect firing positions in and near Chasiv Yar will likely present significant challenges for the Russian effort to seize the town.[42]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of April 3, 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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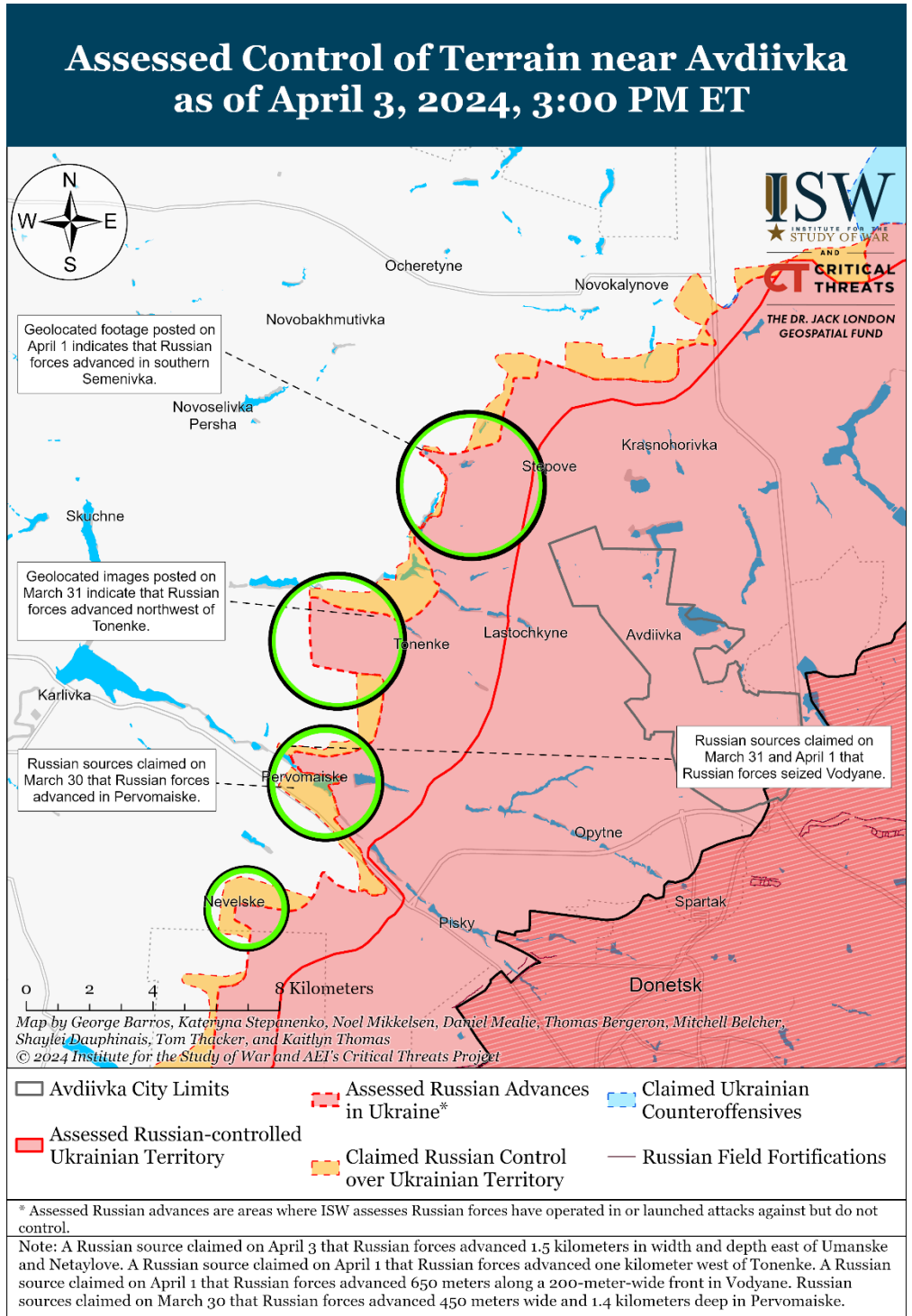
Bakhmut City Limits	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

* 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 1 that Russian forces advanced 620 meters along a two-kilometer-wide front toward the Stupky-Holubivske-2 Nature Reserve. A Russian source claimed on March 30 that Russian forces seized seven square kilometers near Rozdolivka.

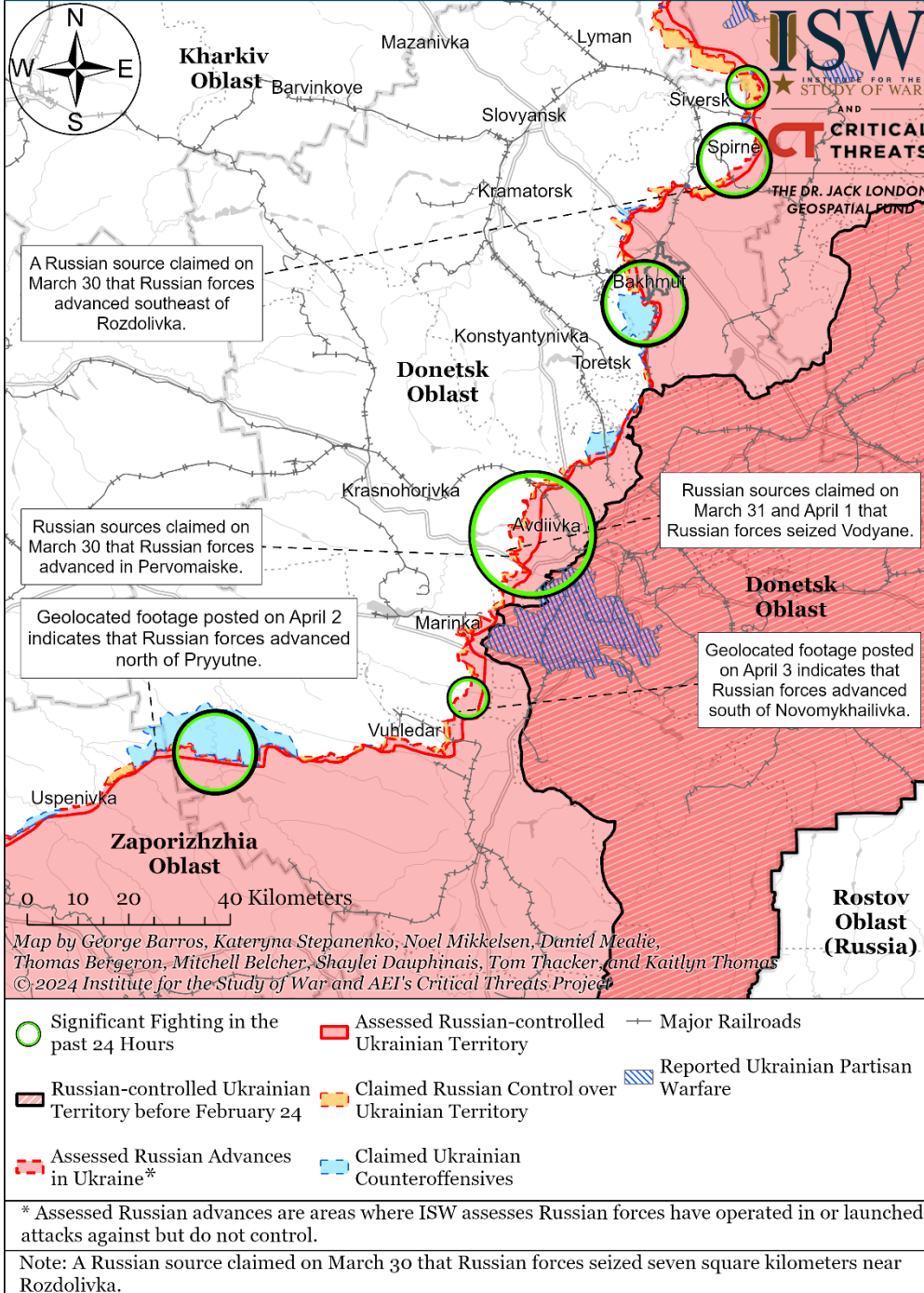
Russian forces reportedly advanced west of Avdiivka amid continued fighting in the area on April 3. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 1.5 kilometers in width and depth towards the Umanske-Netaylove line (both west of Avdiivka) in recent days.[43] Another milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are withdrawing from Berdychi and Semenivka (both west of Avdiivka).[44] While ISW has not yet observed confirmation of this claim, ISW currently assesses that Russian forces occupy most of Berdychi. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced further into the southern outskirts of Semenivka, although ISW has only observed evidence of a Russian presence in the southernmost part of the settlement.[45] Fighting also continued west of

Avdiivka near Tonenke, Umanske, and Yasnobrodivka and southwest of Avdiivka near Vodyane, Pervomaiske, and Nevelske.[46] Elements of the Russian 6th Tank Regiment (90th Tank Division, 41st Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) reportedly continue to operate near Tonenke despite taking heavy losses on March 30.[47]



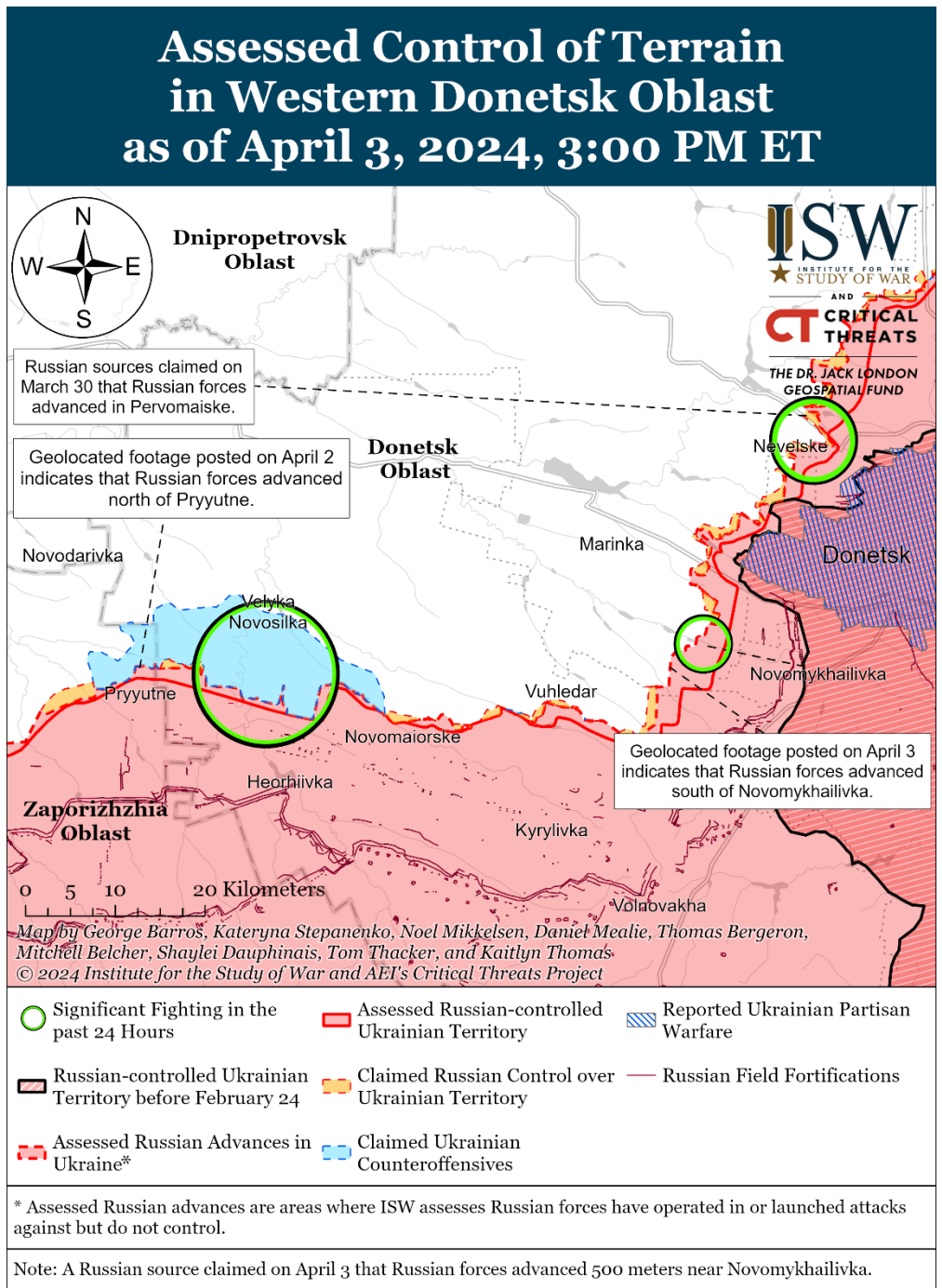
Positional fighting continued southwest of Donetsk City on April 3. Geolocated footage published on April 3 shows that Russian forces marginally advanced near a windbreak southwest of Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[48] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near the Mashinostroitel community garden north of Novomykhailivka and advanced 500 meters southwest of Timiryazeva Street in southern Novomykhailivka.[49] ISW has not observed confirmation of these Russian claims, however. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are attempting to encircle Novomykhailivka from the north and south.[50] Positional fighting also continued near Mykilske (southwest of Donetsk City and southeast of Vuhledar).[51] Elements of the Russian 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) continue to fight west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka.[52] Elements of the Russian 30th Spetsnaz Company (reportedly of the 36th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]), 26th Radiation, Chemical, and Biological Protection Regiment (36th CAA), and 11th Air Force and Air Defense Army (Russian Aerospace Forces [VKS] and EMD) reportedly continue to operate in the south Donetsk direction.[53]

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



Russian forces recently marginally advanced in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia oblast border area amid continued positional fighting in the area on April 3. Geolocated footage published on April 2 shows

that Russian forces marginally advanced north of Pryytune (southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[54] Positional fighting also continued south of Velyka Novosilka near Urozhaine and Staromayorske.[55]



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

Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on April 3, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 1st Battalion of the 429th Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) repelled a Ukrainian attack along the Robotyne-Verbove line.[56] Positional engagements continued near Robotyne and northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne).[57] Elements of the Russian 1152nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (70th Motorized Rifle Regiment, 42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD) reportedly continue operating near Robotyne.[58]

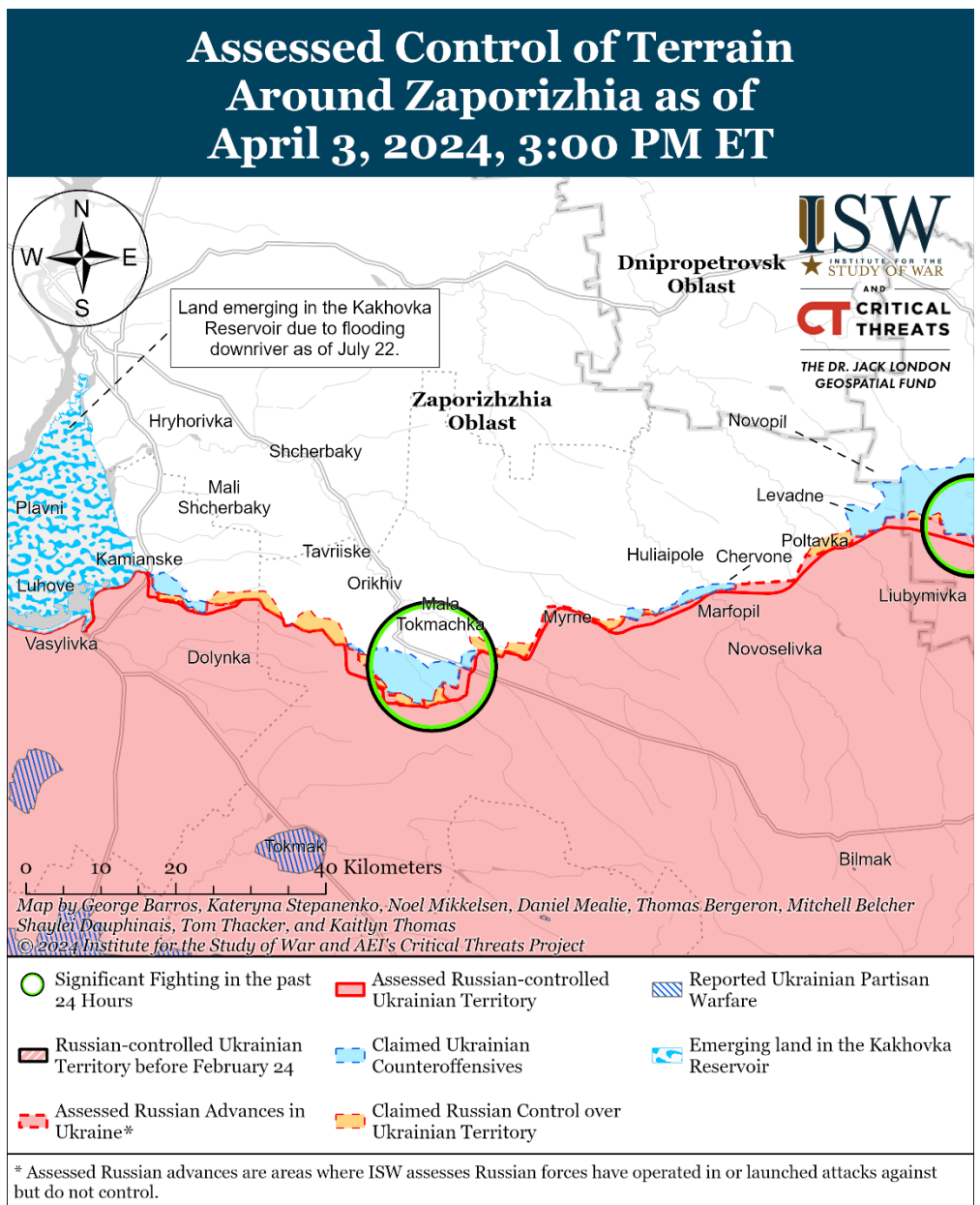


Positional engagements continued in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on April 3, including near Krynky, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline.[59] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces "somewhat" changed their assault tactics in the east bank of

Kherson Oblast and are conducting a larger number of assaults with smaller groups.[60] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain limited positions near the Antonivsky roadway bridge (north of Oleshky).[61]



Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that there are two Russian force groupings operating in southern Ukraine – the “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces operating in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia directions and the Eastern Grouping of Forces operating in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia oblast border area.[62] Mashovets reported that the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces consists of elements of the 58th, 18th, and 49th CAAs (all SMD); the 14th Army Corps (Northern Fleet); and the 7th, 76th, and 104th airborne (VDV) divisions. Mashovets stated that the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces consist of elements of the 5th, 29th, 35th, and 36th CAAs (all Eastern Military District [EMD]); the 336th Naval Infantry Brigade (Baltic Fleet); and 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet). Mashovets reported that the “Dnepr” and Eastern groupings of forces in total consist of 180,000 to 182,000 personnel. Mashovets stated that there are an additional 13,500 Russian military personnel in the “Crimean Defense Grouping” and at least 14,000 Rosgvardia personnel in southern Ukraine and occupied Crimea.



Ukraine's Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk warned on April 3 that Russian forces can still conduct Kalibr cruise missile strikes despite successful Ukrainian operations repelling the Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) from the western part of the Black Sea.[63] Humenyuk stated that Russian forces have deployed missile carriers twice in the past month before mass drone strikes against Ukraine. Humenyuk reported that the Russian BSF has nine Kalibr missile carriers, including surface ships and submarines.

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

Russian forces launched limited drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of April 2 to 3 and during the day on April 3. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched four Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai, and that Ukrainian mobile fire groups destroyed all of the Shaheds over Khmelnytskyi, Zhytomyr, Kirovohrad and Cherkasy oblasts on the night of April 2 to 3.[64] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces struck Donetsk Oblast with three S-300 missiles on the night of April 2 to 3, and Ukrainian Donetsk Oblast Military Administration Head Vadym Filashkin later stated during the day on April 3 that Russian forces struck Selydove, Donetsk Oblast, with two additional unspecified ballistic missiles.[65]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that Russia has launched almost 1,000 missiles, 2,800 Shaheds, and almost 7,000 glide bombs against Ukraine since the beginning of 2024.[66]

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

Russian authorities continue to expand social benefits for Russian military personnel. Chairperson of the Russian state-run “Defenders of the Fatherland” Foundation, Anna Tsivileva, stated during a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on April 2 that the foundation has processed 910,000 social benefit cases and resolved 780,000 cases from Russian servicemen fighting in Ukraine since the foundation opened in June 2023.[67] The “Defenders of the Fatherland” Foundation provides government support to Russian servicemen and veterans and helps provide rehabilitation and social support to wounded veterans and their families.[68] Tsivileva stated that the “Defenders of the Fatherland” Foundation has opened branches in all of Russia’s federal subjects, including in occupied Ukraine.[69] Putin stated during the meeting that the Russian Ministry of Defense’s (MoD) military medical commission will provide soldiers serving in Russian private military companies (PMCs) with combat disability status.[70] Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin stated on April 3 that the Russian Cabinet of Ministers has placed a special emphasis on quickly providing benefits for Russian servicemen who fight in Ukraine and that Russian authorities will exempt servicemen from paying property taxes.[71]

Russian officials continued to praise the claimed successes of Russia’s defense industrial base (DIB) and appear to be actively working to overcome Russia’s reliance on Western-made machine tools. Mishustin stated on April 3 that Russia’s DIB significantly increased its production of weapons and equipment in 2023.[72] Mishustin stated that Russia increased its production of machine tools by more than 60 percent by the end of 2023 (presumably compared to 2022) after not developing Russia’s machine tool production for the past 30 years.[73] Mishustin stated that Russia will allocate 300 billion rubles (\$3.25 billion) from the federal budget to machine tool production over the next six years.[74] A recent report by Lithuanian intelligence indicated that Russian intelligence services likely

continue to source foreign-made precision machine tools and operate them to produce Russian military equipment despite sanctions, however.[75]

The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) stated on April 3 that the Russian Aerospace (VKS) Forces have around 100 Su-35 multi-purpose fighter aircraft, over 100 Su-34 fighter bombers, and seven A-50 long range radar detection aircraft as of March 2024.[76] The GUR stated that Russia is currently repairing and modernizing two A-50 aircraft at the Taganrog Aviation Scientific and Technical Complex in Taganrog, Rostov Oblast and one A-50 aircraft at the “Aviastar” aircraft construction plant in Ulyanovsk, Ulyanovsk Oblast. Ukrainian forces have reportedly downed more than 15 Su-34 and Su-35 fighters and two A-50 aircraft since the beginning of 2024, although ISW has not observed confirmation of this reporting.[77]

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)

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

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian officials continue efforts to falsely implicate Ukraine and the West as sponsors of terrorism following the Kremlin’s failure to prevent the March 22 Crocus City Hall attack. The Russian Prosecutor General’s Office sent inquiries to the United States, Germany, France, and Cyprus about their possible involvement in organizing and financing a number of alleged “terrorist” attacks on Russian territory.[78] The Russian Federation Council called on the United Nations (UN) to condemn alleged Western encouragement of terrorism.[79] Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev claimed that the Ukrainian embassy in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, is recruiting mercenaries to fight in Ukraine, likely attempting to further rhetorically connect Ukraine to the Tajik attackers that conducted the Crocus City Hall attack.[80] The *Washington Post* reported on April 2 that the US government warned Russian officials that the Crocus City Hall concert venue was a potential target two weeks ahead of the attack, prompting Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova to deny the *Washington Post*’s report as a “hoax.”[81] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitri Peskov avoided responding to the *Washington Post* report altogether.[82] The Kremlin will likely continue alleging that Ukraine and the West are responsible for the attack as it continues efforts to capitalize on domestic fear and anger to generate perceptions about a wider Ukrainian and Western terrorist threat in hopes of increasing Russian domestic support for the war in Ukraine.[83] ISW remains confident that 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.[84] Russian law enforcement and intelligence responses in the North Caucasus — such as a counterterrorism raid in Dagestan on March 31 and intensified measures targeting Central Asian migrants in Russia are further evidence that Russian authorities in practice assess that the terrorist threat is emanating from Russia’s Central Asian and Muslim minority communities instead of Ukraine.[85]

Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov warned on April 3 that Russian actors are conducting information operations about hypothetical Russian offensive operations from Belarus and about Russian efforts to seize Kharkiv City in order to sow panic within Ukraine.[86] Yusov added that Ukrainian officials have not observed anything “strategically new” concerning the deployment of Russian forces that would indicate that there is any validity to these Russian information operations, which is consistent with ISW’s own assessment.[87]

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)

Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Major Ilya Yevlash stated that the Russian military continues to use Belarusian airfields during military exercises and that Ukraine does not rule out the possibility of Russian aircraft conducting airstrikes from Belarus, given that Russian forces in Belarus conducted combat operations against Ukraine leveraging staging areas and airfields in Belarus in February 2022.[88]

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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BABEL STREET

[1] <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-20-2024>

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