

**Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, April 8, 2023**  
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**April 8, 6pm 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 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.

Ukrainian and Russian sources discussed the decreased rate of Russian offensive operations along the entire frontline on April 8, supporting ISW’s assessment that the overall Russian offensive is approaching culmination.<sup>[1]</sup> Council of Reservists of the Ukrainian Ground Forces Head Ivan Tymochko reported on April 8 that Russian forces are fighting along the entire frontline, but that Russian offensive potential continues to decline and that current Russian attacks are focused on distracting and dispersing Ukrainian troops in anticipation of counteroffensive operations.<sup>[2]</sup> Tymochko stated that Russian forces are not making serious advances anywhere on the frontline, noting that the pace of attacks in and around Bakhmut has slightly decreased in some areas and stagnated entirely in others.<sup>[3]</sup> Tymochko also assessed that the Russian offensive on Avdiivka has “choked” and reported that Russian forces still do not control Marinka despite having reduced the city to rubble.<sup>[4]</sup> A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that the pace of Russian offensive operations along the entire Avdiivka-Donetsk City frontline has decreased over the past day and emphasized that Russian forces are struggling to advance anywhere in Ukraine.<sup>[5]</sup> Several Russian commentators are emphasizing Russian preparations for an anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive, suggesting that the overall focus of the Russian information space is shifting away from discussing Russian offensive capabilities and towards assessing Ukraine’s potential to regain significant ground.<sup>[6]</sup>

**The dynamics of battlefield artillery usage in Ukraine reflect the fact that Russian forces are using artillery to offset their degraded offensive capabilities.** Former Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Security Minister and current Vostok Battalion commander Alexander Khodakovsky reported that the Russian command has decided to stop the daily issue of ammunition to areas of the front where there are no active offensive operations almost entirely.<sup>[7]</sup> Khodakovsky noted that the artillery shortage on the frontline results in part from preparations for a Ukrainian counteroffensive.<sup>[8]</sup> Khodakovsky’s statement indicates that the Russian command must prioritize artillery ammunition supplies rigorously due to shortages. High demand for shells indicates that Russian forces are still heavily relying on artillery to offset key shortcomings in combat capability, including poor Russian targeting skills, insufficient ground assault capabilities, and inadequate availability of airpower in Ukraine. Russian forces use heavy artillery barrages to flatten settlements before seizing them with ground attacks, offsetting the need to conduct effective infantry attacks or to conduct an airstrike using scarce precision munitions and putting airframes and pilots at risk of Ukrainian air defenses. Continuing Russian shortages in artillery ammunition will undermine the Russian military’s ability to continue offsetting its other weaknesses and limitations. *The Washington Post* reported on April 8 that by contrast, Ukrainian forces are using one-third as many shells as

Russian forces and that Ukrainian forces are conserving shells by carefully prioritizing targets.<sup>[9]</sup> Ukrainian forces are more accurate in their targeting, but also likely benefit from being on the defensive in most areas--offensive operations normally generate increased artillery requirements.

**Former Russian officer and ardent nationalist Igor Girkin launched a new effort likely aimed at protecting the influence of the Russian pro-war faction within the Kremlin.** Girkin formed the “Club of Angry Patriots” social movement along with seven prominent proxy and ultranationalist figures on April 1 seeking to help Russia to win the war and avoid an internal conflict within Russia.<sup>[10]</sup> Members of the club stated that Russia will imminently face defeat in Ukraine and may experience a pro-Western coup or civil war if Moscow does not drastically improve the situation on the frontlines. The members claimed that Russian officials are unable to improve the war effort and its effects on Russian society because most Kremlin officials belong to an anti-war faction. The anti-war faction reportedly advocates for a peace settlement with the West to regain access to its overseas wealth and is not actively attempting to improve the war effort – not out of a fundamental disagreement with war aims or genuine desire for peace. The club claimed that it seeks to help Russian authorities – likely implying the pro-war grouping within the Kremlin – complete the “special military operation” in a timely manner, claiming that a protracted war in Ukraine could prompt the anti-war officials to revolt. The group also stated that it is attempting to build a defense network to resist a coup in Russia in such an event. The members declared that the group is functioning within the framework of Russian law and will not engage in armed conflict, but will instead focus on raising public awareness in Russia so that Russian executive officials realize the danger to the Russian regime. Members of this club had previously warned Russian President Vladimir Putin in May and September 2022 about the negative repercussions on the battlefield if Russia did not immediately declare mobilization.<sup>[11]</sup>

Girkin’s movement is already reportedly facing resistance from Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin. A Russian milblogger claimed Pushilin ordered DNR officials to spread rumors about the “Club of Angry Patriots,” claiming bizarrely that the movement is preparing a pro-Western coup.<sup>[12]</sup> A member of the movement also accused Pushilin’s administration of discrediting the movement.<sup>[13]</sup>

**The “Club of Angry Patriot’s” creation may offer several important insights into Kremlin dynamics and the danger to Putin’s regime elements within his inner circle fear.** ISW previously reported that successful Ukrainian counteroffensives in Kharkiv Oblast and Lyman in September-October 2022 exposed a rift between the Kremlin’s anti-war and pro-war factions.<sup>[14]</sup> Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin also made similar remarks about the schisms among Kremlin officials.<sup>[15]</sup> The club’s preoccupation with the anti-war faction may indicate that the rift within the Kremlin deepened during the failed Russian winter offensive campaign or ahead of the Ukrainian counteroffensive. The concern over the expansion of the anti-war faction may also indicate that there is concern that Putin may be driven to accept a peace settlement by the threat of replacement. The group may be attempting to preempt the anti-war faction’s efforts to reduce the urgency of full-scale war in Ukraine.

**Girkin may be advancing political goals of unnamed figures within Russian power structures, possibly within the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB).** Girkin has been ruthlessly criticizing Putin throughout the war, and it is likely that he is receiving some protection from a *silovik*. Russian independent outlet *The Insider* and *Bellingcat* have previously reported that Girkin had been consistently using passports under fictitious names that he received from the FSB.<sup>[16]</sup> While

it is unclear which *silovik* is protecting Girkin and what his motivations might be, Girkin's protector may be attempting to gain Putin's attention and shape his decisions via public discourse. Prigozhin and Wagner had previously showed that the Kremlin monitors and reacts to the public's attitudes, which prompted notable changes within the Russian military command in the fall of 2022.<sup>[17]</sup> Prigozhin similarly announced plans for a Wagner-affiliated social movement on April 4.<sup>[18]</sup>

**Russian nationalists seized on assassinated Russian milblogger Maxim Fomin's (also known as Vladlen Tatarsky) funeral to promote pro-war narratives.** Footage from Fomin's funeral at Troekurovsky Cemetery in Moscow shows hundreds to thousands of people in attendance including Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and Russian Liberal Democratic Party Leader Leonid Slutsky.<sup>[19]</sup> Images showing the Order of Courage medal, Wagner awards, and an engraved sledgehammer at Fomin's coffin circulated in Russian nationalist media.<sup>[20]</sup> Prigozhin commended the "difficult work" of war reporters and claimed that he would do everything to ensure that Fomin's work continues to resonate.<sup>[21]</sup> Former Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Spokesperson Eduard Basurin used Fomin's funeral to reiterate the narrative that Russia must reject negotiations and pursue the unconditional surrender of Ukraine.<sup>[22]</sup> Footage from the funeral service and burial show Russian forces giving Fomin military honors.<sup>[23]</sup> Fomin's funeral could be the first instance of a Wagner-affiliated funeral receiving official Russian military honors.

**Russia's missile campaign to degrade Ukraine's unified energy infrastructure has failed definitively, and Russia appears to have abandoned the effort.** Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko announced on April 8 that Ukraine is resuming energy exports for the first time since October 11, 2022.<sup>[24]</sup> Russian authorities began efforts in October to degrade Ukrainian energy infrastructure to a significant extent by the end of winter, which Russians consider March 1;<sup>[25]</sup> however, the series of large-scale Russian missile strikes on energy infrastructure failed to achieve the assessed Russian aims of causing a humanitarian disaster, weakening Ukrainian military capabilities, and forcing Ukraine to negotiate. State-run Russian media acknowledged this failure on March 1.<sup>[26]</sup> Russia likely abandoned the effort soon after. The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) noted on April 8 that the frequency of Russian large-scale, long-range attacks on energy infrastructure has decreased since March 2023. The UK MoD assessed that Russia continues small-scale strikes (strikes using fewer than 25 munitions) with predictably less effect.<sup>[27]</sup> Russia maintains the capability to renew such strikes though, if it so desired. Halushchenko stated that Ukraine has the flexibility to adjust Ukrainian energy exports if the situation changes.<sup>[28]</sup>

**The Kremlin is likely intensifying legal punishments for terrorism-related crimes as part of a larger effort to promote self-censorship and establish legal conditions for intensified domestic repressions.** Duma Chairman of the Committee on Security and Anti-Corruption Vasily Piskarev stated on April 7 that the State Duma has introduced amendments to increase prison terms for committing acts of terrorism, assistance to terrorist activities or organizations or participation in a terrorist community, sabotage, and acts of international terrorism.<sup>[29]</sup> Russian President Vladimir Putin also recently signed two bills expanding legal punishment for the discreditation of all Russian personnel fighting in Ukraine and for the misappropriation of Russian military assets, likely to promote self-censorship and facilitate crackdowns on anti-war dissent.<sup>[30]</sup> Russian sources have previously reported that the Federal Security Service (FSB) is increasingly detaining Russian civilians under suspicions of financially assisting Ukrainian forces and that Russian authorities appear to be cracking down against bars in urban areas that host Russian civil society groups.<sup>[31]</sup> The Kremlin has introduced indefinite terrorism warning regimes in occupied territories and maximum, medium, and elevated

levels of martial law in many western Russian oblasts, and Russian authorities in these areas may more readily apply the expanded terrorism terms to further stifle resistance to occupation authorities as well as dissent in Russia itself.[\[32\]](#)

Russian authorities are likely planning to further expand what they deem to be terroristic and extremist affiliations to encourage self-censorship. Duma Deputy Head of the Committee on Information Policy Oleg Matveichev stated on April 4 that he has prepared a bill to recognize feminism as an extremist ideology and argued that feminists overwhelmingly oppose the “military operation” in Ukraine.[\[33\]](#) Matveichev argued that Ukrainian feminism consists of women serving together with men fighting against Russians and alleged that the woman accused of killing of Russian milblogger Maxim Fomin (Vladlen Tartarsky) was motivated by feminist ideology.[\[34\]](#) Matveichev has not specified how the bill would define feminism, and the bill may use a vague overarching definition in order to further promote widespread self-censorship. Russian authorities may increasingly portray other ideologies and groups not explicitly aligned with the Kremlin as being against the war in Ukraine in order to set conditions for increased crackdowns and self-censorship. Ukrainian “feminism” would appear to be giving Ukraine an advantage in this war since, as Matveichev notes, it has brought many talented and determined Ukrainian women into the fight.

**The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) may be setting conditions for a false flag attack in Sumy Oblast.** The Russian MoD claimed on April 8 that Ukrainian forces have been delivering dead bodies from morgues to Okhtyrka, Sumy Oblast and applying toxic chemicals to the remains and the area in order to allege that Russian forces used chemical weapons.[\[35\]](#) Russian forces may be attempting to set informational conditions for future chemical weapons attacks in Sumy Oblast or to justify previous chemical weapons use, although ISW has not observed Russian forces recently using chemical weapons in the area. It is unclear what overarching effect the Kremlin intends to achieve with increasingly outlandish and ineffective Russian information operations alleging Ukrainian false flag attacks.

### Key Takeaways

- **Ukrainian and Russian sources discussed the decreased rate of Russian offensive operations along the entire frontline on April 8, supporting ISW’s assessment that the overall Russian offensive is approaching culmination.**
- **The dynamics of battlefield artillery usage in Ukraine reflect the fact that Russian forces are using artillery to offset their degraded offensive capabilities.**
- **Former Russian officer and ardent nationalist Igor Girkin launched a new effort likely aimed at protecting the influence the Russian pro-war faction within the Kremlin.**
- **The “Club of Angry Patriot’s” reveals several key implications about the Kremlin dynamics and the perceived danger to Putin’s regime.**
- **Girkin may be advancing the political goals of unnamed figures within Russian power structures possibly within the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB).**
- **Russian nationalists seized on assassinated Russian milblogger Maxim Fomin’s funeral to promote pro-war narratives.**
- **Russia’s missile campaign to degrade Ukraine’s unified energy infrastructure has failed definitively, and Russia appears to have abandoned the effort.**

- **The Kremlin is likely intensifying legal punishments for terrorism-related crimes as part of a larger effort to promote self-censorship and establish legal conditions for intensified domestic repressions.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) may be setting conditions for a false flag attack in Sumy Oblast.**
- **Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line.**
- **Russian forces have continued to make gains around Bakhmut, and tensions between the Wagner Group and conventional Russian forces over responsibility for tactical gains in Bakhmut appear to be intensifying.**
- **Russian sources continued to speculate about the planned Ukrainian counteroffensive in southern Ukraine, including hypothesizing about the possibility of a Ukrainian amphibious landing across the Kakhovka Reservoir.**
- **The Russian Federal Antimonopoly Service (FAS) on April 6 proposed a defense industrial base (DIB) deregulation reform that could expedite defense production but will more likely facilitate corruption and embezzlement.**
- **Ukrainian officials reported that 31 children returned to Ukraine after having been deported to Russia as Russian officials continue to discuss the adoption of Ukrainian children into Russian families.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 8, 2023, 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 these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and 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 Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas

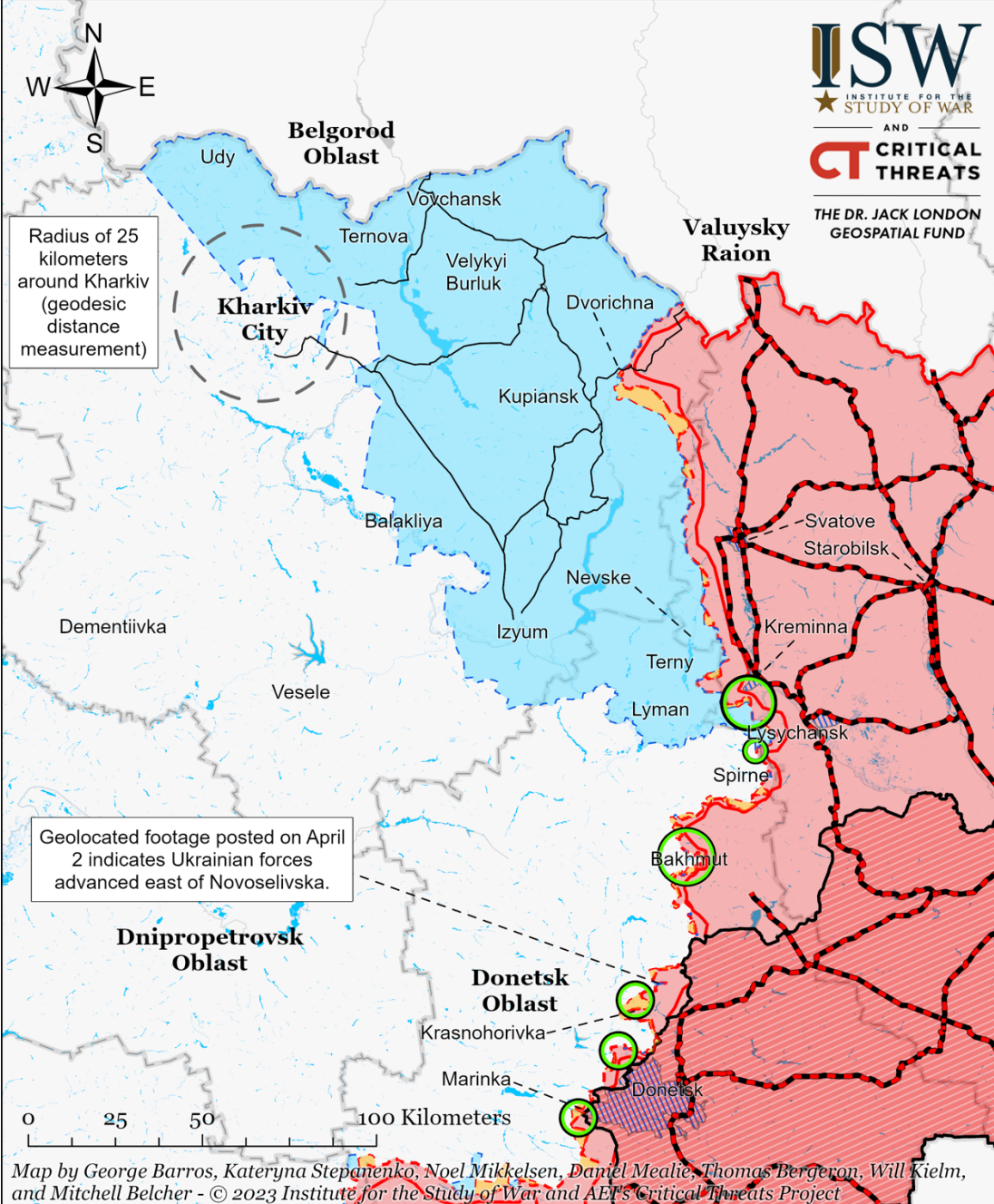
### **Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine**

#### **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 continue to fortify Russian border regions. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continue to construct fortifications in areas of Kursk Oblast that border Ukraine and maintain a presence in border areas of Kursk and Belgorod oblasts.[36] ISW previously assessed that Russian forces may be constructing fortifications in Russian oblasts bordering Ukraine to support the information operation to frame the war as an existential threat to Russia, as well to disperse Ukrainian forces by pinning them to border areas away from the frontline.[37]

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line on April 8. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Kreminna itself, Kuzmyne (3km southwest of Kreminna), the Serebrianska forest area (10km south of Kreminna), and Verkhokamianske (18km south of Kreminna).[38] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted ground attacks near Terny (17km northwest of Kreminna) and Nevske (20km northwest of Kreminna).[39] Another Russian milblogger claimed that a newly-formed artillery battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Army Corps comprised of volunteers operate on the Kreminna-Bilohorivka line.[40]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of April 8, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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THE DR. JACK LONDON  
GEOSPATIAL FUND

- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Key Ukrainian Roads
- 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.



## **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 have continued to make gains in Bakhmut as of April 8. Geolocated footage published on April 7 indicates that Russian forces likely advanced close to the T0504 highway in southwestern Bakhmut.[41] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in southern and central Bakhmut.[42] A Russian source claimed on the night of April 7 that Wagner forces had entirely captured Bakhmut and that Ukrainian forces were retreating to Chasiv Yar, but later retracted the claim on April 8 and stated that Ukrainian forces only retreated from the central part of Bakhmut to the western parts of the city.[43] ISW has not seen visual confirmation of Russian claims that Wagner forces control all of central Bakhmut, and the relatively decreased rate of Wagner’s advance in the center of the city indicates that Ukrainian forces are still actively defending their positions in that part of the city. Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Wagner fighters are attempting to advance from the south and east towards Bakhmut city center to pressure Ukrainian forces to withdraw from the area.[44]

Russian forces continued offensive operations around Bakhmut on April 8. A Russian milblogger claimed that Wagner fighters conducted assaults near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut), Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), and Bila Hora (14km southwest of Bakhmut).[45] Another Russian milblogger claimed on April 7 that Russian forces continued offensive operations west of Klishchiivka (6km southwest of Bakhmut) and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut) and that Russian and Ukrainian forces are both unable to advance near Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut) and along sections of the T0504 highway southwest of Bakhmut.[46] Russian sources widely claimed that Wagner forces have started to heavily interdict or completely cut off all Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) into Bakhmut.[47] A Russian milblogger added that muddy road conditions are constraining Ukrainian abilities to supply their grouping in Bakhmut.[48] Previous Russian claims about the ability of Russian forces to interdict Ukrainian GLOCs in the Bakhmut area have been exaggerated, and Ukrainian forces likely do not need to move heavy equipment into Bakhmut itself to conduct the current urban combat operations occurring in the city. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Bohdanivka and Ivanivske.[49]

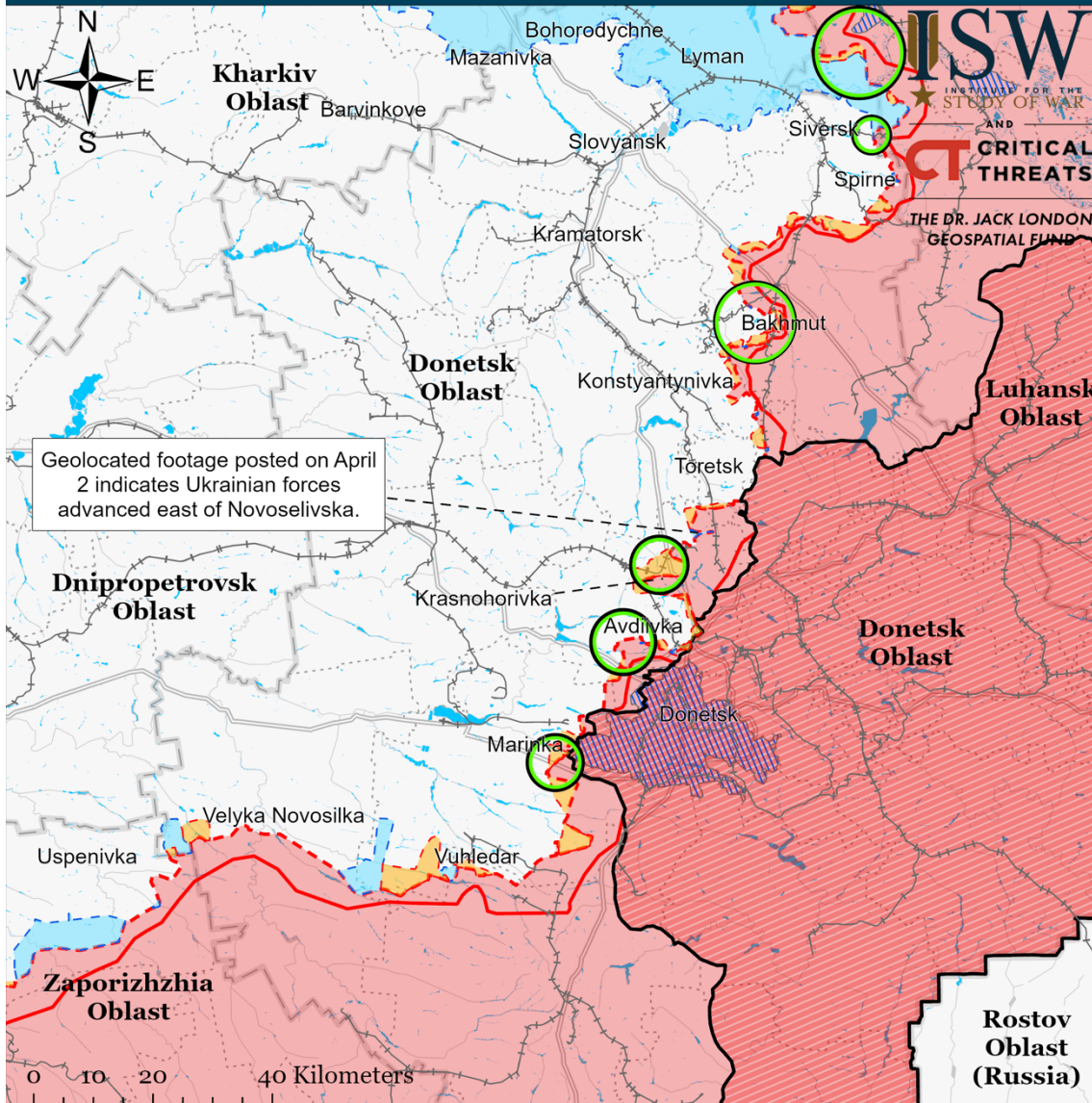
Tensions between the Wagner Group and conventional Russian forces over responsibility for tactical gains in Bakhmut appear to be intensifying. Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin responded to advisor to the head of Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Yan Gain’s claims about that Russian forces captured the Bakhmut-1 railway station and stated that he is little aware of Russian forces’ actions in Bakhmut since he did not see conventional Russian forces there.[50] Prigozhin claimed on April 7 that Wagner fighters are still engaged in fierce fighting near the railway station, likely in an effort to portray himself as a reliable and pragmatic source for tactical information in Bakhmut in comparison to other overly optimistic Russian sources.[51] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) previously faced intense backlash over claims that Russian forces captured Soledar (12km northeast of Bakhmut) after Wagner forces captured the settlement on January 11.[52] Tensions over responsibility for tactical success in Bakhmut will likely continue to feed into the conflict between Prigozhin and the Russian MoD.

The tempo of Russian offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City frontline has reportedly decreased. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on April 8 that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Novokalynove (13km north of Avdiivka) and within 32km southwest of

Avdiivka near Sieverne, Pervomaiske, Marinka, and Pobieda.[53] The Ukrainian Head of the Council of Reservists of Ground Forces, Ivan Tymochko, reported that Russian advances on Avdiivka have stalled but that Russian forces are maintaining their operational tempo near Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka).[54] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted roughly a quarter of all their assaults in Ukraine in the Marinka area on April 8.[55] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attempted to advance through forest areas north and south of Marinka.[56] Another Russian milblogger claimed on April 8 that the tempo of Russian operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City frontline has noticeably decreased over the past day.[57]

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on April 8.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of April 8, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



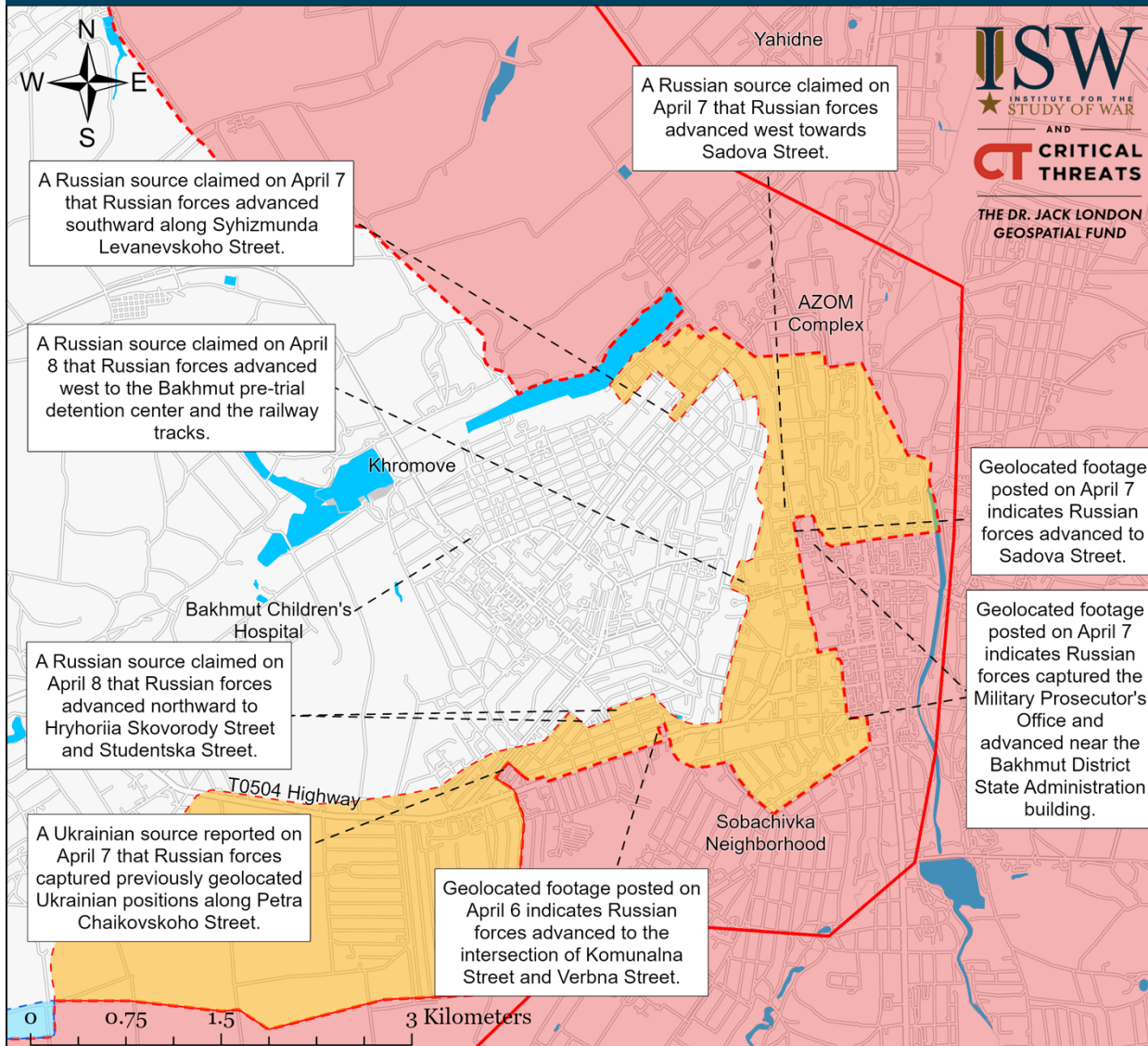
Geolocated footage posted on April 2 indicates Ukrainian forces advanced east of Novoselivska.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Will Kielm, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of April 8, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Will Kielm, and Mitchell Belcher © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
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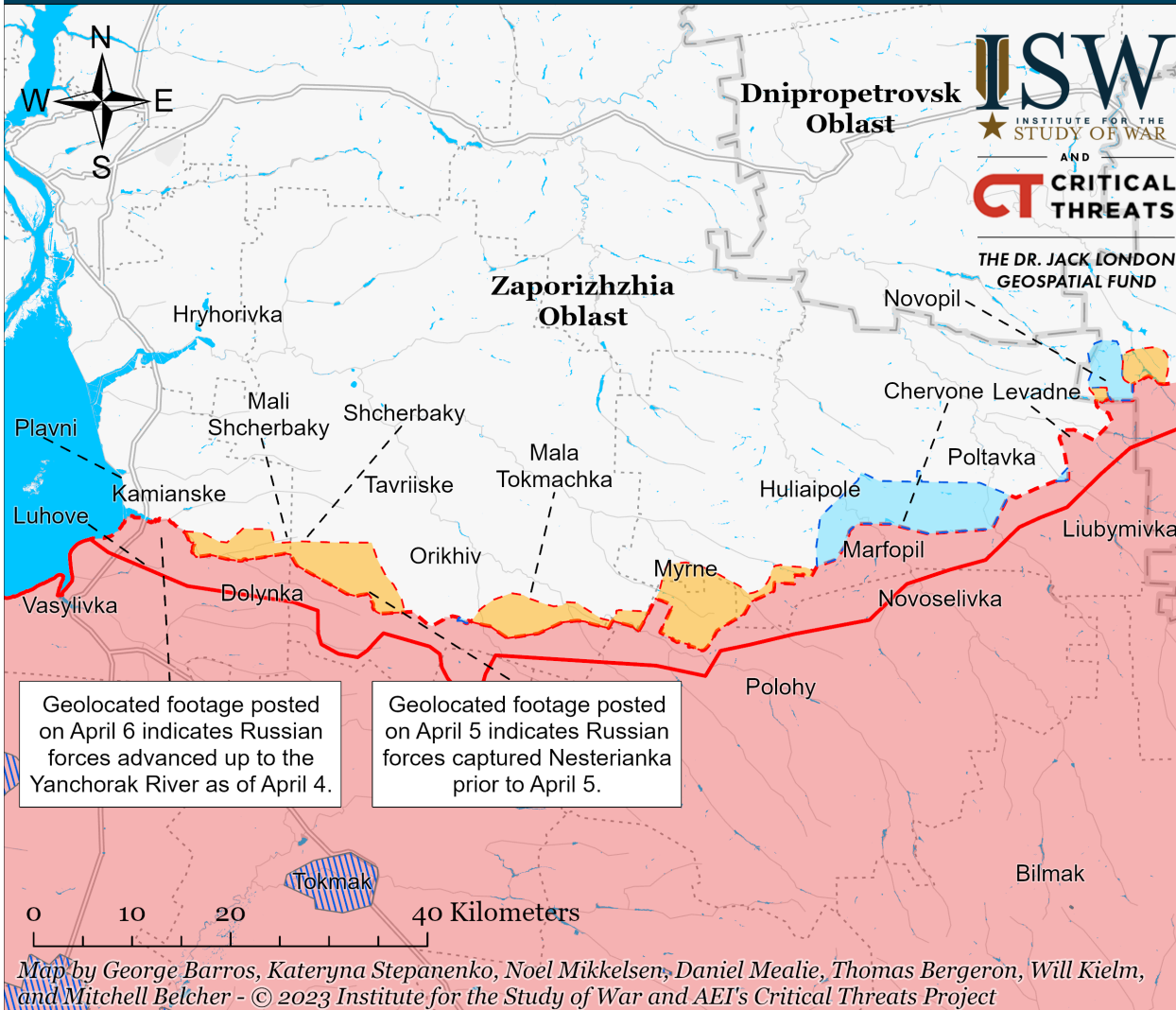
## **Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

Ukrainian special forces, intelligence, and naval sources revealed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attempted to stage an amphibious landing on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River on October 19, 2022, to liberate the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).[58] Ukrainian officials told *The Times* that about 600 Ukrainian servicemen on 30 armored boats attempted to land near the ZNPP, but that only one Ukrainian group was able to reach occupied territory due to the Russian artillery fire and Russian use of tanks to repel Ukrainian advances. The group retreated back to the west (right) bank of the Dnipro River after three hours of close combat on the outskirts of Enerhodar. Ukrainian sources stated that Ukrainian special forces anticipated that Russians would engage in infantry combat out of concern for the safety of the ZNPP and revealed that Russian forces set up dense defensive lines and mined the territory nearby. ISW reported on October 19 that Russian sources accused Ukrainians of attempting land near the ZNPP but failed to assess that a landing had taken place at that time.[59] Ukrainian state nuclear energy company Energoatom reported on April 8 that Russian forces are installing additional fences around the ZNPP and are restricting the movement of vehicles on the territory of the plant.

Russian sources continued to speculate about the planned Ukrainian counteroffensive in southern Ukraine, including hypothesizing about the possibility of a Ukrainian amphibious landing across the Kakhovka Reservoir. Prominent Russian milbloggers amplified *The Times*' report, which further corroborates that Russian forces have heavy military equipment in the immediate vicinity of the ZNPP.[60] Another prominent milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces can reach occupied Zaporizhia Oblast via the Kakhovka Reservoir in one to three minutes in certain areas.[61] The milblogger stated that a Ukrainian landing is unlikely due to Russian fortifications and mining, and because a combined regiment of personnel from the Republic of Bashkortostan and elements of an unspecified Far Eastern airborne unit will repel Ukrainian attacks. The milblogger claimed, however, that such a landing could pose a threat to Russian grouping of forces in western Zaporizhia Oblast if Ukrainians attempt to simultaneously advance in another area. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov amplified Sentinel-2 imagery showing a Russian 70km-long anti-tank ditch about 50km east of Melitopol claiming that Russians are prepared to resist Ukrainian counteroffensives.[62] Another milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are intensifying reconnaissance-in-force operations in Zaporizhia Oblast.[63]

Russian occupation officials and sources claimed that Russian air defenses shot down a Ukrainian missile over Feodosiya in southeastern Crimea on April 8.[64] Geolocated footage showed an explosion near the Russian anti-aircraft missile base in Feodosiya.[65] Russian milbloggers and news aggregators speculated that Ukrainian forces may have used the Ukrainian Hrim-2 short-range ballistic missile or US-provided ATACMS long-range missile systems, despite the fact that US has not sent such systems to Ukraine.[66]

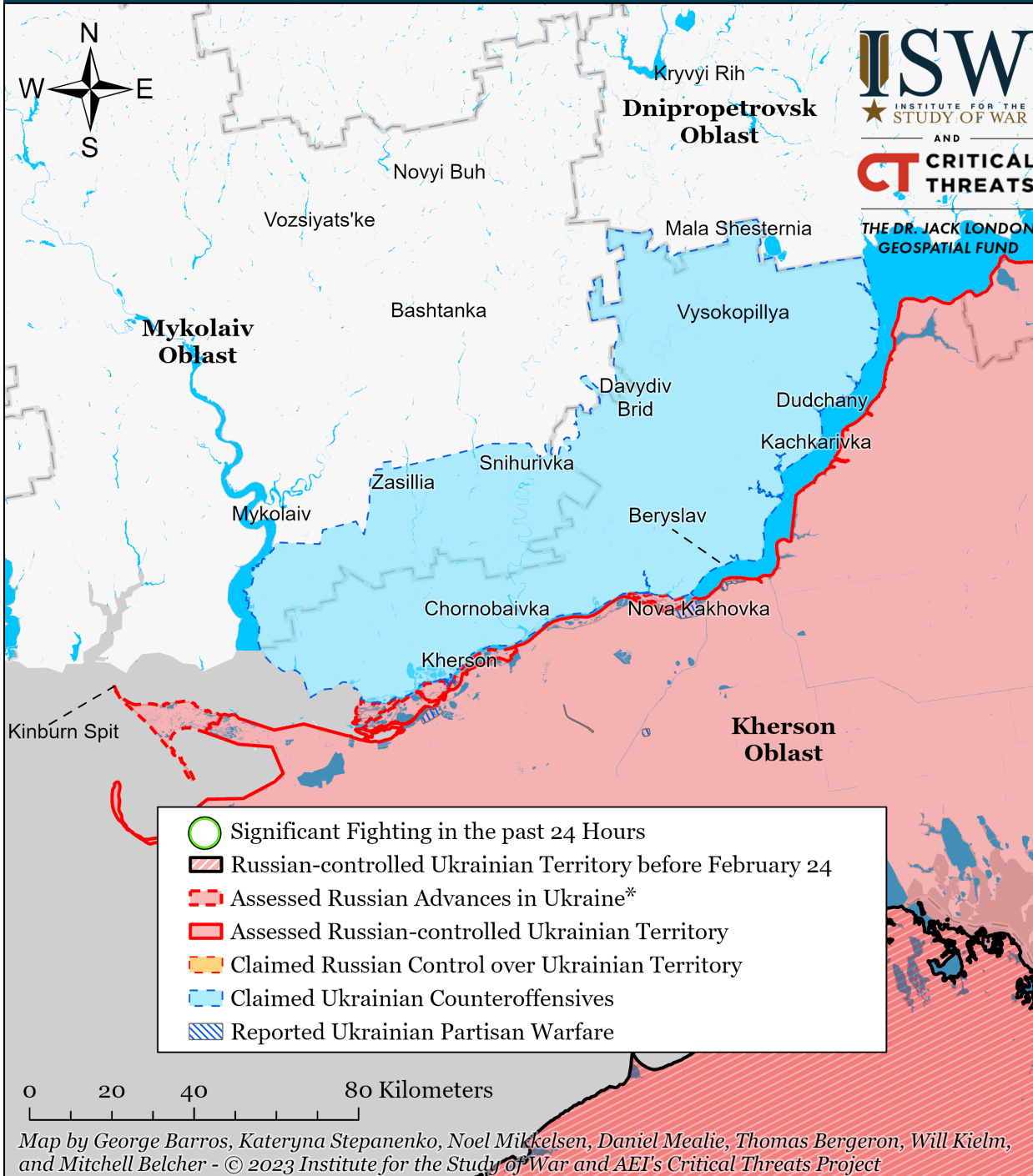
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of April 8, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- 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 in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 8, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

The Russian Federal Antimonopoly Service (FAS) on April 6 proposed a defense industrial base (DIB) deregulation reform that could expedite defense production but will more likely facilitate corruption and embezzlement. The FAS proposed that the state release state defense order executors and customers from the requirement to notify the department of an increase in material and service prices, a requirement theoretically controlling the artificial inflation of prices.[67]

The Russian defense industry likely heavily relies on Chinese components to support domestic drone production. A major Russian news source cited on April 7 the anonymous head of an unspecified kamikaze drone assembly facility in Khanty-Mansiysk, Khanty-Mansy Autonomous Okrug stating that the organization orders its main components in China for assembly in Khanty-Mansiysk.[68] A Russian milblogger claimed on April 7 that he received information about a factory in China that received an order for 100,000 units of kamikaze drone batteries.[69] If this report is true, Russian actors likely ordered these batteries.

Russian prioritization of military needs at the expense of domestic needs appears to be causing limited domestic discontent. A regional opposition news source reported on April 7 that ambulance drivers in Cheboksary, Chuvashia recorded a video complaint that they must purchase spare parts at their own expense when the Chuvashia Ministry of Health provided four ambulances for service on the front lines.[70] Regional Russian governments and organizations continue to make routine “donations” to the war effort, likely at the request of higher authorities.[71]

Russian authorities continue to rhetorically distance the spring conscription effort from the ongoing war in Ukraine, supporting ISW’s previous assessment that Russian authorities are concerned about the potential domestic response to the deployment of conscripts and are unlikely to use conscripts to fill personnel needs at the front. A St. Petersburg news source reported on April 7 that Western Military District Organizational Mobilization Department Headquarters Acting Head Colonel Igor Golovach denied that the Western Military District has called up more conscripts than usual due to the war. Golovach claimed that the “slightly higher” number of conscripts is due to an overall increase in the size of Russia’s armed forces.[72] A regional news source reported that Krasnodar Krai Governor Veniamin Kondratyev met with the Kuba military commissar on April 7 and stressed that Russian authorities will not send any of the territory’s spring conscripts to war.[73]

## **Activities in Russian-occupied areas (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian civilians into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)**

Russian occupation officials continue efforts to coerce residents of occupied Ukraine to obtain Russian passports. The Kherson Oblast occupation multifunctional center (center for the provision of state and municipal services) outlined the requirements for application for the compulsory health insurance policy, which includes a Russian passport and Russian SNILS (individual insurance account number issued by the Russian Pension Fund).[74] Occupation authorities in Kherson Oblast are institutionalizing coercive passportization measures by forcing residents to obtain Russian passports and register for SNILS numbers in exchange for mandatory enrollment in health insurance plans. The



Ukrainian Resistance Center similarly reported on April 8 that Russian occupation officials are issuing housing certificates in an amount of 2.9 million rubles (\$35,713) that would hypothetically allow Ukrainians to live in Russia in order to encourage Ukrainians to receive Russian passports.[75] Russian occupation officials may be pushing passportization efforts in part in order to facilitate the depopulation of occupied areas and bring large populations of Ukrainians to Russian regions.

Ukrainian officials reported that 31 children returned to Ukraine after being deported to Russia as Russian officials continue to discuss the adoption of Ukrainian children into Russian families. The “Save Ukraine” foundation announced on April 8 that 31 children returned to Ukraine following a fifth rescue mission led by “Save Ukraine.”[76] Russian Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Lvova-Belova praised Moscow Oblast residents on April 7 for taking in the largest number of children from occupied Donetsk Oblast.[77] Moscow Oblast Commissioner for Children’s Rights Ksenia Mishonov noted that she has personally visited 114 Moscow Oblast families who have adopted Ukrainian children from Donetsk Oblast.[78] The adoption of Ukrainian children into Russian families is likely further complicating Ukrainian efforts to repatriate deported children as adoption legally and administratively integrates deported children into Russian families.

**Significant activity in Belarus (ISW assesses that a Russian or Belarusian attack into northern Ukraine in early 2023 is extraordinarily unlikely and has thus restructured this section of the update. It will no longer include counter-indicators for such an offensive.)**

**ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus, but these are not indicators that Russian and Belarusian forces are preparing for an imminent attack on Ukraine from Belarus. ISW will revise this text and its assessment if it observes any unambiguous indicators that Russia or Belarus is preparing to attack northern Ukraine.**

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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