

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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April 15, 2024, 8pm ET

**Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:15pm ET on April 15. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 16 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Ukrainian officials continue to warn that US security assistance is vital to Ukrainian forces' ability to defend against current and future Russian offensive operations forecasted to begin in late spring and summer.** Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Lieutenant General Kyrlo Budanov stated that Ukrainian forces are preparing to repel a future Russian major offensive expected in late May or the beginning of June but noted that this will be “catastrophically difficult” without Western military assistance.[1] Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov stated on April 14 that the current situation in eastern Ukraine is “tense” and that Russian forces are focusing their efforts west of Bakhmut in the Chasiv Yar direction.[2] Umerov stated that Ukrainian forces are successfully using modern technology against Russia’s larger quantities of personnel. The spokesperson for the Ukrainian Khortysia Group of Forces, Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Voloshyn, stated on April 15 that Ukrainian forces in the Bakhmut and Avdiivka directions can only use one to five artillery shells for every 10 artillery shells that Russian forces fire, but that Ukrainian artillery is more precise than Russian artillery.[3] Ukrainian forces’ ability to repel recently intensified Russian offensive operations in eastern Ukraine has degraded due to materiel shortages and will likely continue to degrade in the near future should delays in US security assistance continue.[4] ISW continues to assess that Russian forces are currently capitalizing on Ukrainian materiel shortages resulting from the lack of US security assistance to make marginal tactical advances but that future Russian assaults may be able to achieve more significant and threatening gains, particularly west of Bakhmut, should the US continue to withhold assistance to Ukraine.[5]

**A senior Estonian military official described intensified Russian offensive frontline operations and deep rear area strike campaigns as intended to degrade both Ukraine’s will to fight and Western unity.** Chief of the Estonian General Staff Major General Enno Mots stated in an interview published on April 14 that Russian forces’ attempts to exploit vulnerabilities on the frontline across the theater — which Mots described as “amoeba tactics” — and Russia’s escalation of deep rear strikes are attritional tactics ultimately aimed at exploiting the Ukrainian military’s current materiel shortages, which is consistent with ISW’s recent observations about Ukrainian air defense, artillery, and manpower shortages.[6] Mots noted that Ukraine needs significant resources for repelling Russian aggression and reconstruction, and that fragmenting Western unity creates a dilemma that interrupts the “smooth” timely and consistent flow of supplies to Ukraine, ultimately backfiring and reducing support for Ukraine.[7] Mots’ interview underscores several salient observations, including: that US failures to provide timely and consistent military aid to Ukraine (which only the US can provide at scale) has negative ripple effective on Ukraine’s international partners globally; that materiel shortages are forcing Ukraine to husband materiel and prioritize areas of the front at the expense of others; and that persistent Russian information operations are aimed at convincing Western policymakers that Russia can and will outlast Western military assistance to Ukraine.[8] Mots emphasized that Russia does not care about manpower or materiel losses. Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council Secretary Oleksandr Lytvynenko similarly stressed that Russian President Vladimir Putin is “addicted” to the idea conquering Ukraine and will not give up his aims of completely seizing Ukraine and destroying the Ukrainian state.[9] Lytvynenko emphasized the importance of not conceding territory to Putin and ensuring meaningful Western security guarantees for Ukraine to deter future aggression.[10]

**Russian forces continue to adapt their drone tactics along the frontline as part of an offense-defense arms race to mitigate Ukrainian technological adaptations designed to offset Russian materiel advantages along the frontline.** Ukrainian drone operators told the *Washington Post* in an article published on April 14 that the number of drones that both Russian and Ukrainian forces use has made the battlefield “almost transparent,” but that Russian forces have significantly increased electronic warfare (EW) jamming since fall 2023.[11] The Ukrainian drone operators stated that it can be difficult to distinguish between Ukrainian and Russian drones because about 100 Russian and Ukrainian reconnaissance and attack drones can operate simultaneously within a 10-kilometer radius. The Ukrainian drone operators also reported that Russian forces understand how valuable Ukrainian drone operators are and specifically target them with guided glide bomb and multiple rocket launch system (MLRS) strikes. A Ukrainian drone instructor and brigade commander stated on April 15 that the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) is rapidly developing drones that operate at a wide range of frequencies to make it more difficult for Ukrainian EW systems to down them, and observed that both sides are increasingly using first-person view (FPV) drones that were not as prominent a year ago.[12] The instructor reported that his brigade detects 70 to 90 FPV drones per day but cannot down all of them, and that Russian forces sometimes equip drones with munitions that can detonate after Ukrainian forces down them. ISW has observed an increase in Russian

reconnaissance and FPV drone usage along the frontline and Russian complaints about the lack of sufficient EW, especially in southern Ukraine, in fall 2023.[13]

**Russian officials doubled down on efforts to amplify Iran’s “justification” for the April 13 large-scale Iranian strikes against Israel that falsely equates them with an April 1 Israeli strike targeting Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officials in Damascus.** Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) Vasily Nebenzya claimed at an April 14 UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting that Iran conducted the April 13 strikes in response to the UNSC’s inaction following Israel’s April 1 strike against IRGC officials. Nebenzya also claimed that Israel constantly bombs Syria.[14] Nebenzya called on Israel to “abandon its military actions in the Middle East” and reiterated Russian calls for a ceasefire in Gaza.[15] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov claimed that Russia opposes escalation and supports a political and diplomatic resolution of conflicts in the Middle East.[16] The Russian government will likely continue to amplify information operations designed to justify Iran’s April 13 strikes against Israel to the international community.

**A Russian insider source claimed that Russian officials are preparing to redeploy some former Wagner Group elements serving in Africa Corps to Belgorod Oblast.** The insider source claimed on April 15 that the Kremlin believes that Russian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GRU) Lieutenant General Andrei Averyanov failed to meet the Kremlin’s deadlines to develop the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD)-controlled Africa Corps.[17] The insider source claimed that Russian authorities are preparing to redeploy unspecified detachments of the Africa Corps from Africa to Belgorod Oblast. The insider source implied that the Wagner Group’s ongoing efforts to recruit personnel for its activities in Africa are actually meant to recruit personnel to deploy to Belgorod Oblast. Russian Africa Corps soldiers deployed to Niger on April 12, and it is unclear if the insider source is claiming that the Africa Corps will cease operations in Africa completely or if only some Africa Corps detachments will redeploy to the Ukrainian-Russian border area.[18] Averyanov previously participated in the Russian delegation that met with officials in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali and appeared to be heavily involved in the Russian government’s efforts to subsume the Wagner Group.[19] Averyanov is notably the commander of GRU unit 29155, who is responsible for the 2018 assassination attempt against Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom and whom a joint investigation by *60 Minutes*, *Der Spiegel*, and the *Insider* has recently implicated in non-lethal directed energy or acoustic weapons attacks against US government personnel within the US and internationally.[20]

**Crimean occupation administration head Sergei Aksyonov passed a decree restricting migrant labor in occupied Crimea, undermining the Kremlin’s effort to mitigate labor shortages.** The decree banned businesses from hiring migrants for 35 different types of jobs, including transportation, agriculture and food production, natural resource supplies, public utilities, trade (except trade in motor vehicles and motorcycles), culture, and education.[21] The decree notably does not ban migrants from construction work, which indicates that Crimean occupation officials may be able to legally employ migrants to build fortifications, logistics routes, or other infrastructure in support of Russia’s war effort.[22] Aksyonov stated that the uncontrolled presence of labor migrants in occupied Crimea and in Russia is “unacceptable” and that Crimean occupation law enforcement identified more than 500 individuals who had violated Russian migration laws.[23] Russian authorities have notably imported migrants from Russia to occupied Ukraine as part of efforts to repopulate and rebuild in occupied areas, as ISW has previously reported.[24] Some Russian milbloggers welcomed these restrictions and noted that Russian officials should enforce more measures to control migrant labor and enforce stricter visa and citizenship requirements.[25] Aksyonov’s decree and milblogger suggestions, however, contradict the Kremlin’s recent attempts to balance opposing efforts to set social expectations for a protracted Russian war effort and to assuage Russian society’s concerns about the economic consequences of the war and labor migration.[26] Putin implied on April 4 that Russia needs to continue importing foreign laborers given that Russia will experience a high demand for human capital and face labor shortages in the coming years.[27] ISW assessed on April 4 that Putin appeared to be telling Russia’s xenophobic ultra-nationalist community that Russia must continue to rely on migration, while Aksyonov’s decree appears to be directly appealing to this ultra-nationalist community while disregarding Putin’s messaging.

**Russian state media seized on Georgian protests against a proposed law similar to Russia’s “foreign agent” law, likely as part of Kremlin efforts to amplify political discord in Georgia.** Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported extensively on Georgian parliamentary debates on April 15 about a proposed law that would require non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that receive more than 20 percent of their budget from foreign sources to register as “an organization pursuing the interests of a foreign power” - a label that notably replaces the term “foreign agent” that Russia uses and was featured in previous versions of the proposed law.[28] The Georgian parliament passed the first reading of the bill in 2023, then withdrew it from further consideration following widespread public protests opposing the bill.[29] *TASS* particularly focused on the protests in Tbilisi against the proposed law and repeatedly emphasized that Western diplomats in Georgia, such as the EU mission and US embassy in Georgia, opposed the bill.[30] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitri Peskov responded on April 4 to the reintroduction of the bill in the Georgian Parliament and called claims that this is a “Russian project” absurd.[31] Peskov claimed that such laws are a “global practice” and that “no sovereign states wants interference from other countries in domestic politics.” Russian media similarly largely highlighted public protests and societal discord during the 2023 protests in opposition to the first version of the foreign agent law.[32] Russia has routinely attempted to portray

Ukraine's and other post-Soviet countries' politics as chaotic in an attempt to destabilize target states and make them easier for Russia to influence or outright attack.[33]

**Key Takeaways:**

- **Ukrainian officials continue to warn that US security assistance is vital to Ukrainian forces' ability to defend against current and future Russian offensive operations forecasted to begin in late spring and summer.**
- **A senior Estonian military official described intensified Russian offensive frontline operations and deep rear area strike campaigns as intended to degrade both Ukraine's will to fight and Western unity.**
- **Russian forces continue to adapt their drone tactics along the frontline as part of an offense-defense arms race to mitigate Ukrainian technological adaptations to offset Russian materiel advantages along the frontline.**
- **Russian officials doubled down on efforts to amplify Iran's "justification" for the April 13 large-scale Iranian strikes against Israel that falsely equates them with an April 1 Israeli strike targeting Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officials in Damascus.**
- **A Russian insider source claimed that Russian officials are preparing to redeploy some former Wagner Group elements serving in Africa Corps to Belgorod Oblast.**
- **Crimean occupation administration head Sergei Aksyonov passed a decree restricting migrant labor in occupied Crimea, undermining the Kremlin's effort to mitigate labor shortages.**
- **Russian state media seized on Georgian protests against a proposed law similar to Russia's "foreign agent" law, likely as part of Kremlin efforts to amplify political discord in Georgia.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Siversk (northeast of Bakhmut), Avdiivka, and west of Donetsk City on April 15.**
- **Russian prosecution rates of men who had fled compulsory military service have reportedly increased since fall 2022.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

***We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because 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

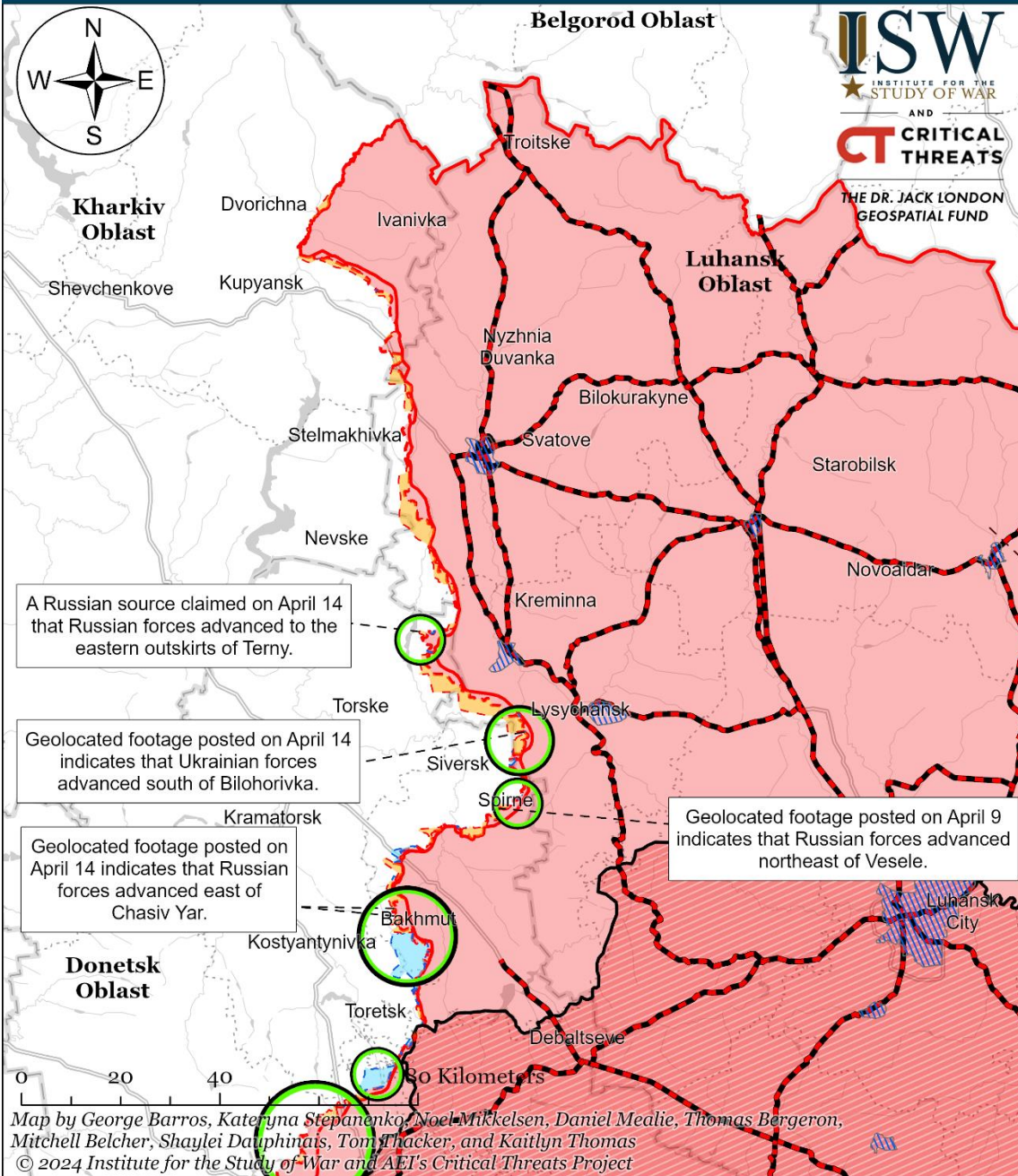
### **Russian Main Effort — Eastern Ukraine**

#### **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)**

The Ukrainian State Border Guard Service reported on April 15 that Ukrainian border guards repelled a Russian sabotage and reconnaissance group that attempted to cross the international border in an unspecified area in Sumy Oblast on April 14.[34]

Positional engagements continued near Kreminna on April 15, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional engagements continued west of Kreminna near Terny and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[35] Elements of the Russian 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) reportedly continue operating near Bilohorivka.[36]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of April 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



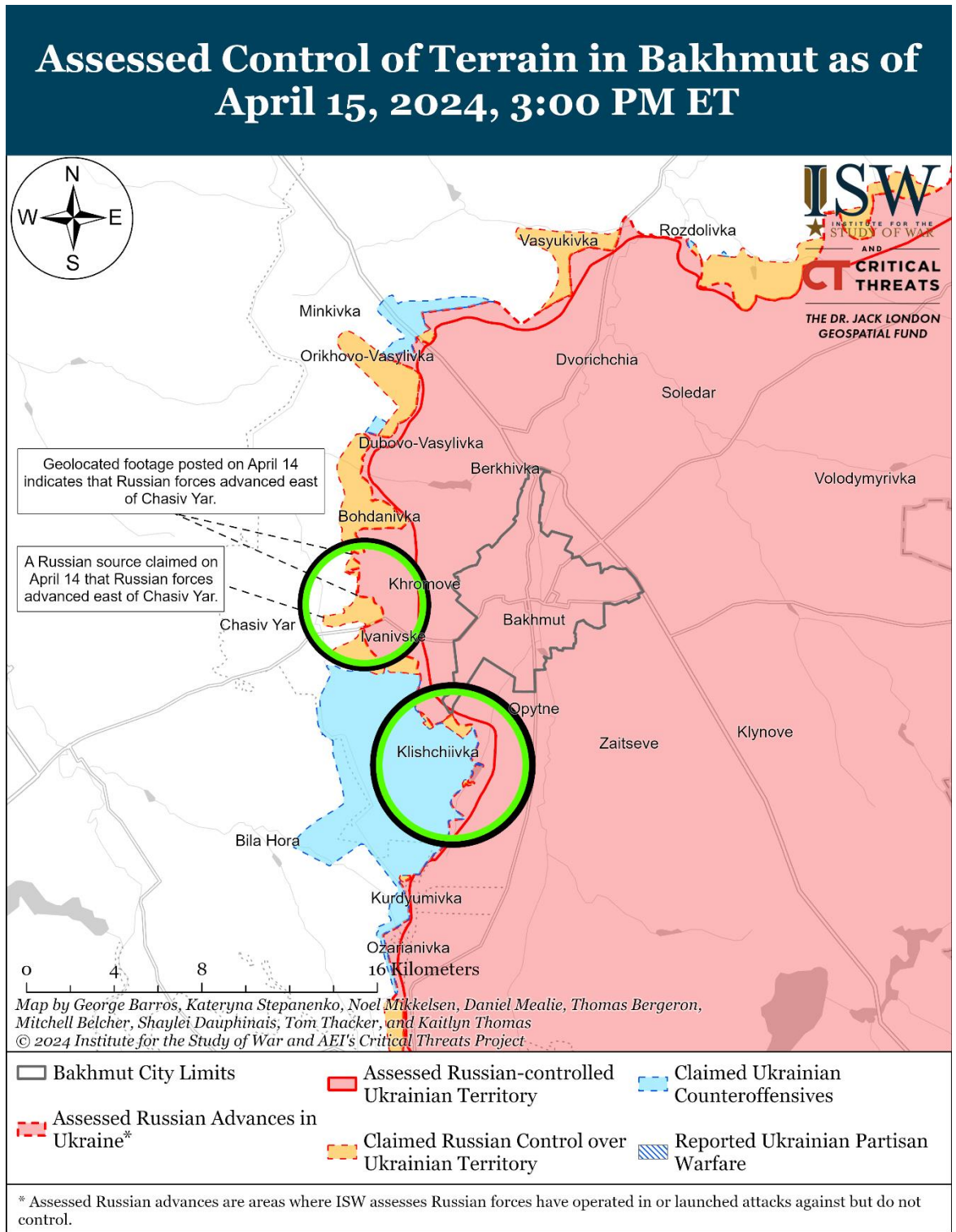
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February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

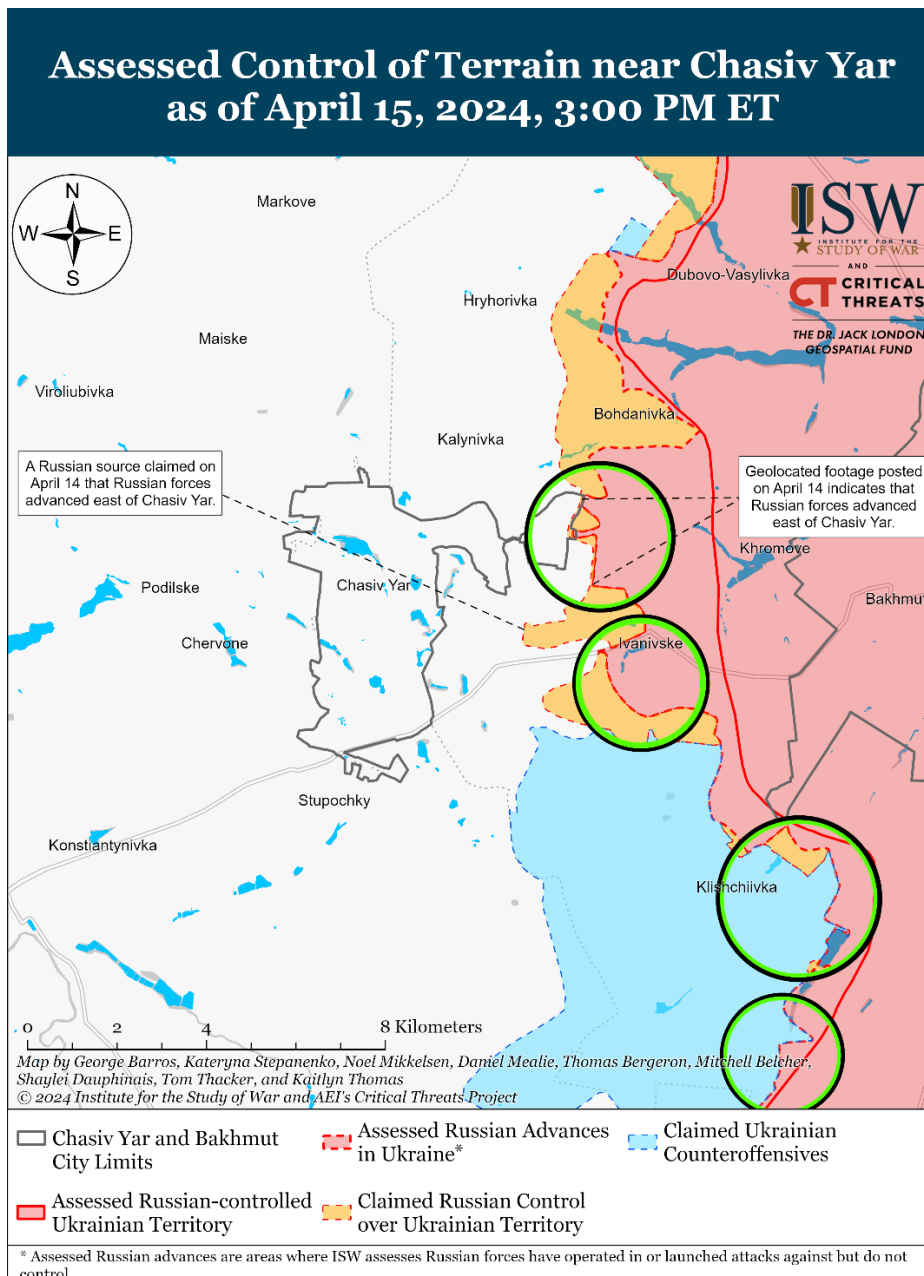
Note: A Russian source claimed on April 11 that Russian forces advanced one and one-half kilometers east of Terny.

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

Russian forces recently made confirmed advances northeast of Bakhmut near Siversk. Geolocated footage published on April 9 indicates that elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) advanced northwest of Vesele (northeast of Bakhmut and south of Siversk).[37] Positional engagements continued near Spirne (northeast of Bakhmut and east of Siversk) and Vesele.[38] Elements of the Russian “Irbis” detachment (Russian Volunteer Corps) are reportedly operating near Soledar (northeast of Bakhmut and south of Siversk), and elements of the Russian 106th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating in the Siversk direction.[39]

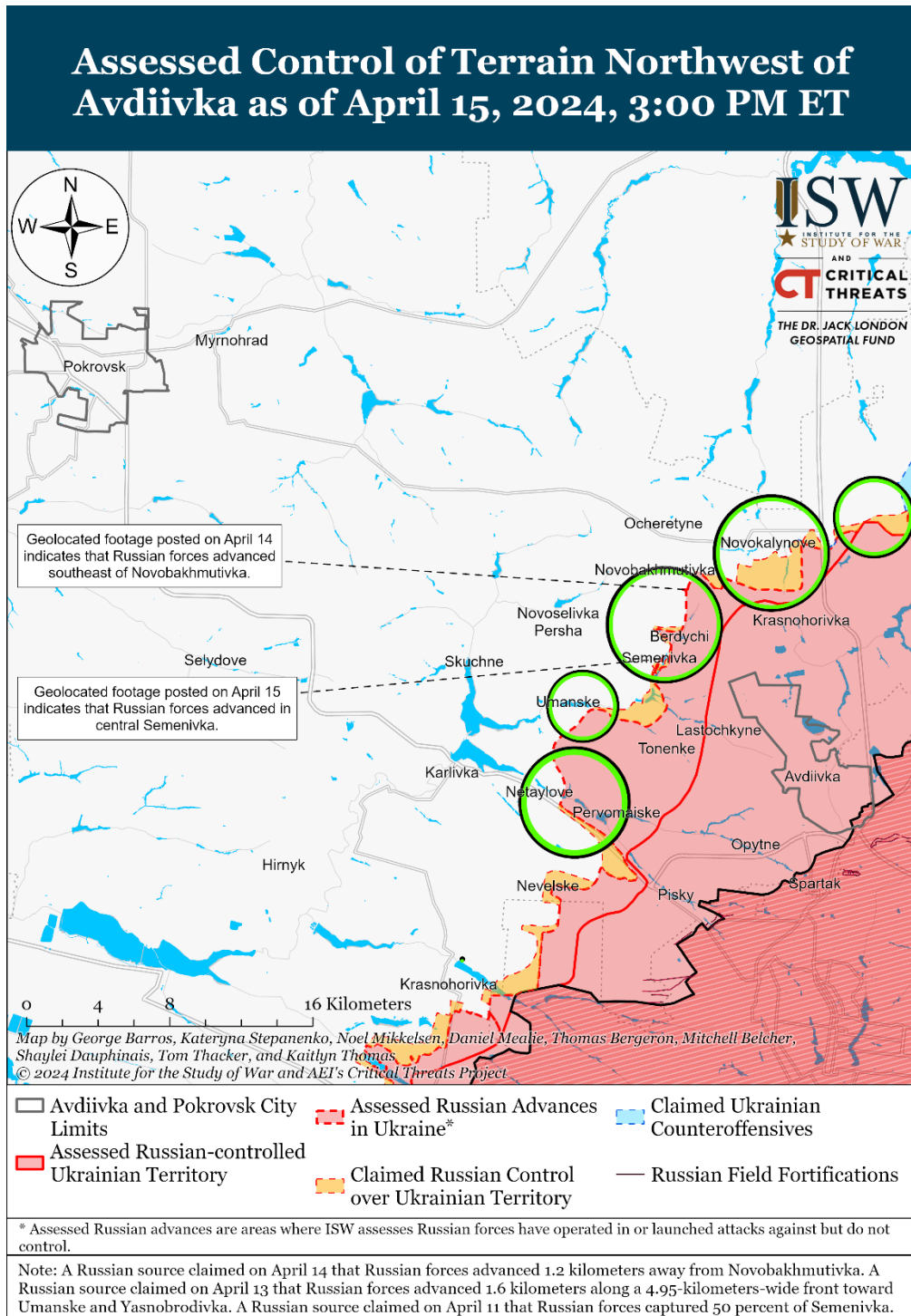


Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced near Chasiv Yar on April 15, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in the Kanal microrraion in easternmost Chasiv Yar, and one Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced 300 meters on the eastern outskirts of Chasiv Yar.[40] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced on the northeastern outskirts of Chasiv Yar in the dacha area.[41] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced near the Stupky-Holubivski 2 nature reserve (south of the Kanal microrraion).[42] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces also advanced near Bohdanivka (northeast of Chasiv Yar), Kalynivka (north of Chasiv Yar) and Ivanivske (southeast of Chasiv Yar).[43] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claimed advances, however. Positional engagements continued in southeastern Chasiv Yar near the Novyi microrraion; in the Kanal microrraion; southeast of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske, Andriivka, Klishchiivka, and Kurdymivka; and south of Chasiv Yar near Niu York.[44] Spokesperson for the Ukrainian Khortysia Group of Forces Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Voloshyn reported that Russian forces are trying to seize Chasiv Yar by advancing on the flanks near Bohdanivka and Ivanivske and that Russian forces are dropping 20 to 30 guided glide bombs in the area per day.[45] Elements of the Russian 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Leningrad Military District) are reportedly operating near Kalynivka; elements of the Russian 98th VDV Division are reportedly operating near the Kanal microrraion; elements of the Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz forces and the 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd LNR AC) are reportedly operating near Klishchiivka; and elements of the Sever-V Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) and 58th Spetsnaz Battalion (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar.[46]

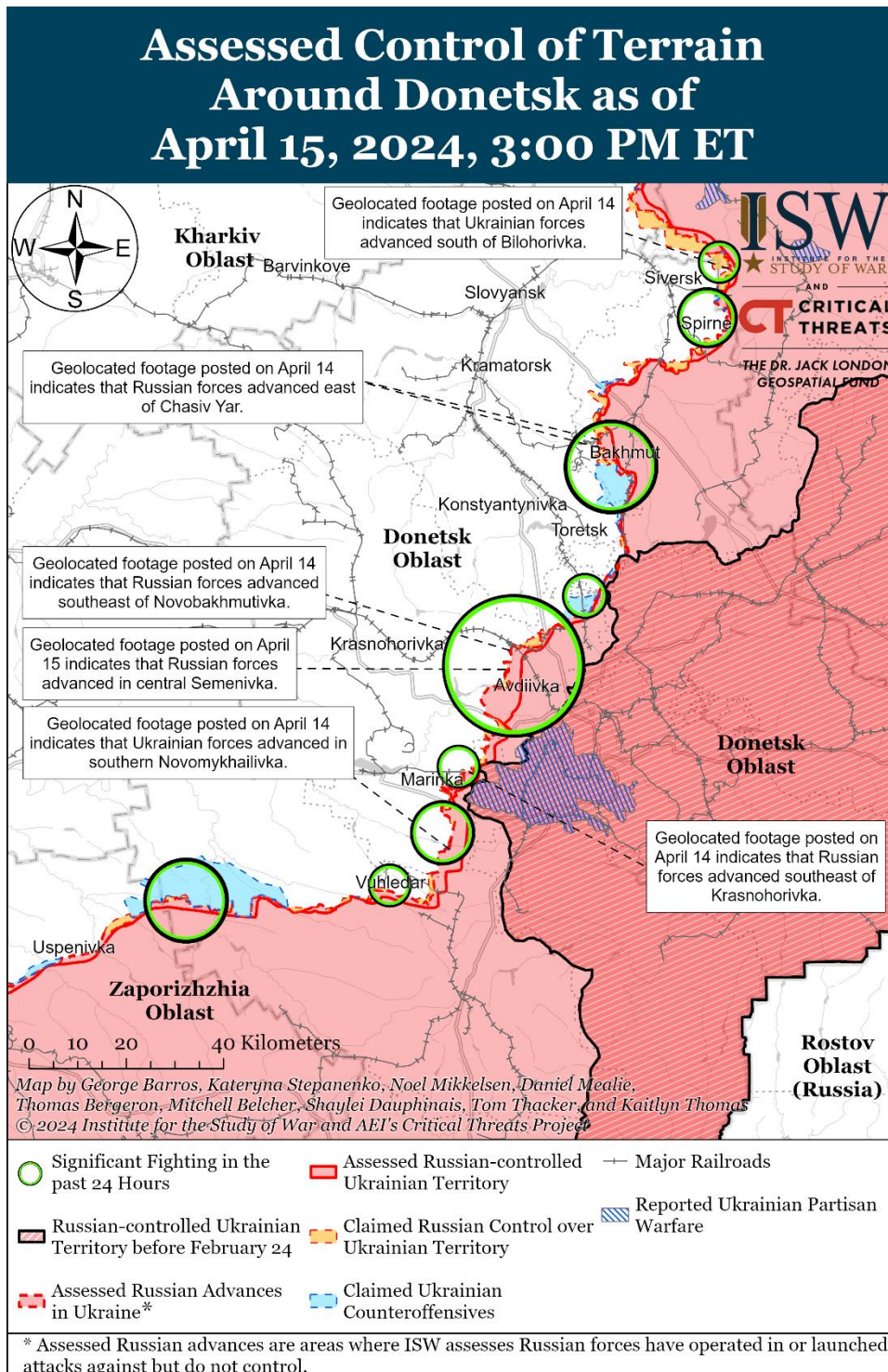




Russian forces recently advanced near Avdiivka. Geolocated footage published on April 15 indicates that Russian forces advanced in central Semenivka (west of Avdiivka), and Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in the area.[47] Additional geolocated footage published on April 14 indicates that Russian forces advanced southeast of Novobakhmutivka (northwest of Avdiivka), and a Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are approaching the outskirts of Ocheretyne (northwest of Avdiivka and north of Novobakhmutivka).[48] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces simultaneously advanced to the eastern part of the Zorya community garden (east of Novobakhmutivka and southeast of Ocheretyne) and reached the outskirts of Novobakhmutivka, and that Russian forces also advanced south of Novobakhmutivka.[49] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced south of Umanske (west of Avdiivka) and north of Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka).[50] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these Russian claims. Positional engagements continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novokalynove and Novobakhmutivka; west of Avdiivka near Umanske, Berdychi, and Semenivka; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Netaylove.[51]

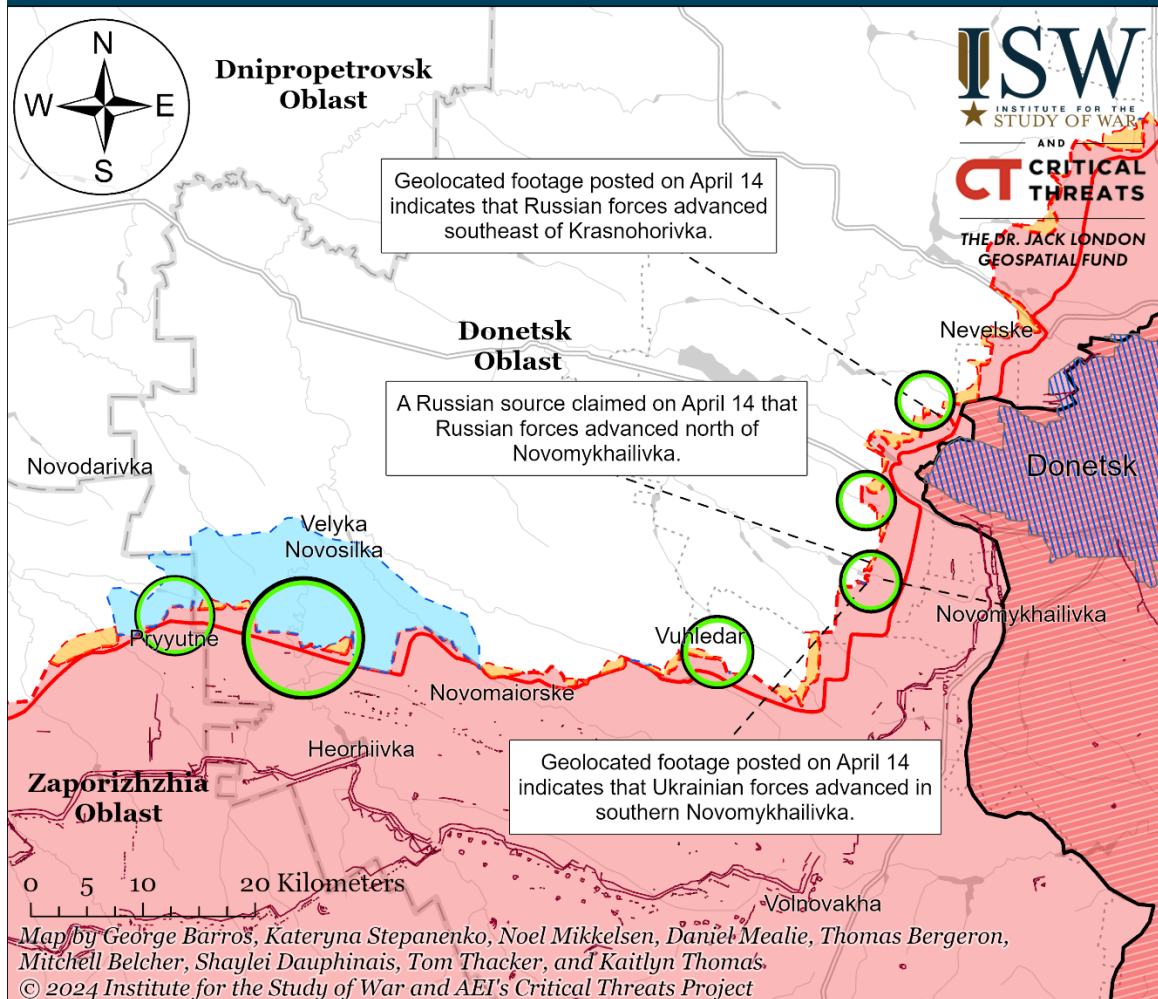


Ukrainian and Russian forces recently made confirmed advances west and southwest of Donetsk City. Geolocated footage published on April 14 indicates that Ukrainian forces regained positions in southwestern Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[52] Additional geolocated footage published on April 14 and 15 indicates that Russian forces advanced southeast of Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City) and in northwestern Pobieda (southwest of Donetsk City), respectively.[53] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Novomykhailivka and in the settlement itself.[54] Positional engagements continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda and Novomykhailivka.[55] Elements of the Russian 238th Artillery Brigade (8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR AC) are reportedly operating near Krasnohorivka.[56] Elements of the 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating near Heorhiivka (west of Donetsk City).[57]



Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on April 15, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. A Russian milblogger vaguely claimed that elements of the Russian 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) and 114th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th CAA, EMD) advanced in the Velyka Novosilka area, although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[58] Positional engagements continued south of Velyka Novosilka near Urozhaine and Staromayorske and southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Pryyutne.[59] Elements of the Russian 11th Air Force and Air Defense Army (Russian Aerospace Forces [VKS] and EMD) reportedly continued conducting FAB glide bomb strikes in the Velyka Novosilka area.[60]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Donetsk Oblast as of April 15, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



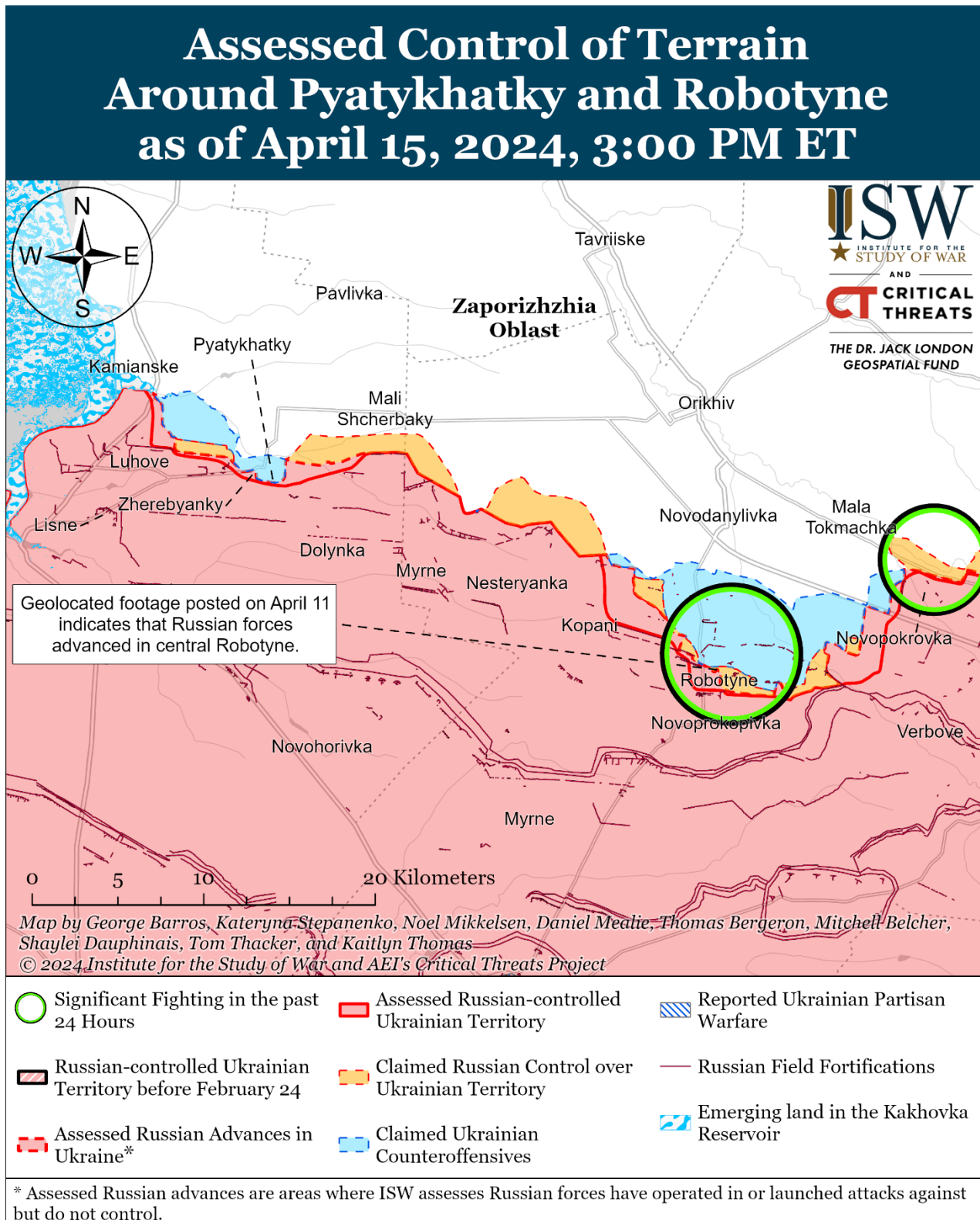
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Russian Field Fortifications
- Assessed Russian Advances 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.

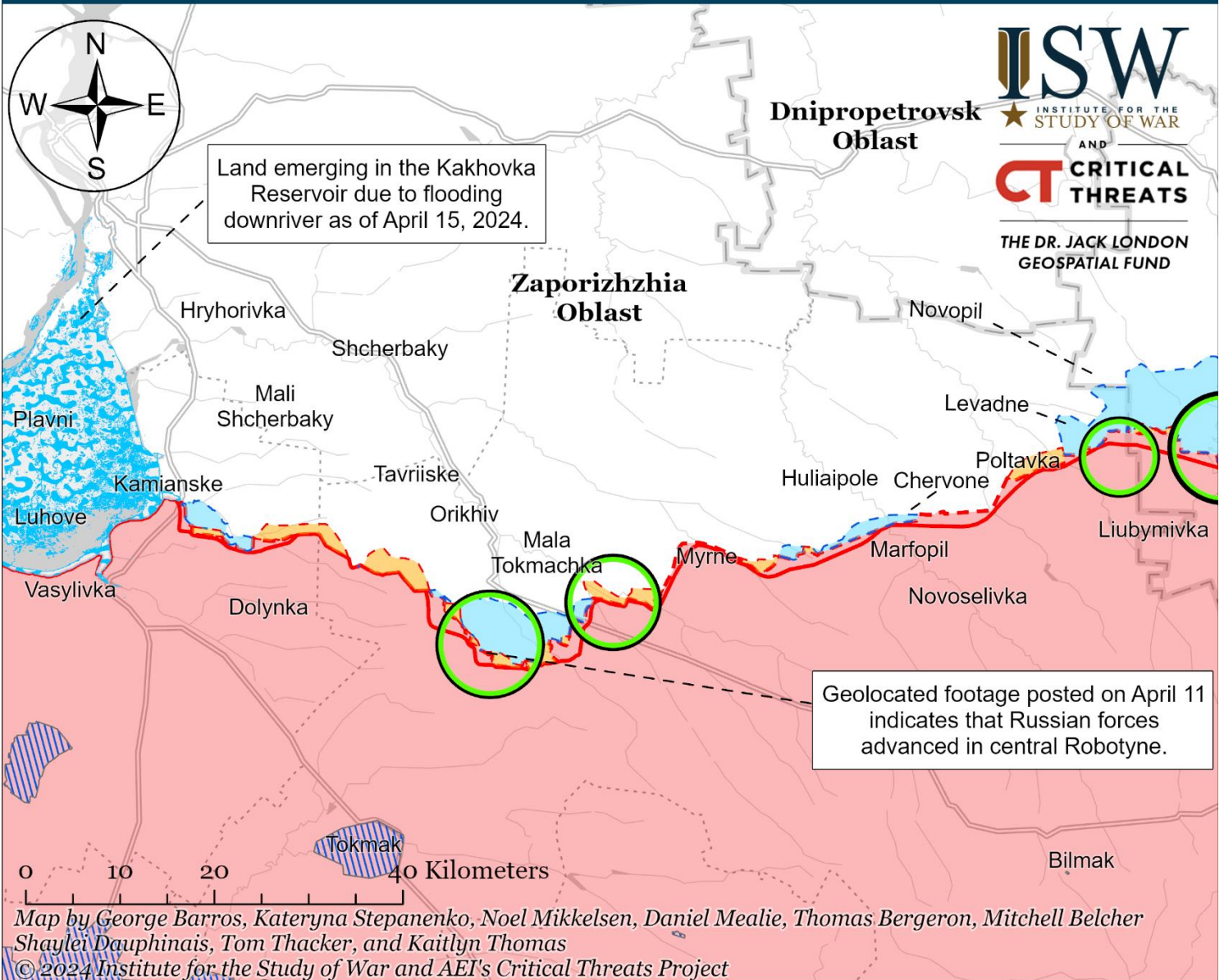
Note: A Russian source claimed on April 11 that Russian forces captured 50 percent of Semenivka.

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

Positional fighting continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on April 15, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional fighting continued in southern Robotyne, northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne), and southwest of Bilohirya (northeast of Robotyne).[61] Elements of the Russian 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) continue fighting near Robotyne.[62]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of April 15, 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
-  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
-  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
-  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
-  Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
-  Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
-  Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
-  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.

Ukrainian forces conducted strikes against occupied Berdyansk, Zaporizhia Oblast and Crimea on April 15. Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko reported that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian military base at the Pivdenhydromash manufacturing plant in Berdyansk.[63] Russian authorities claimed that Russian air defenses intercepted two Ukrainian Storm Shadow missiles, but some Russian sources claimed that the missiles hit unspecified targets.[64] Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* and *BBC Russian Service* cited sources in Ukrainian security services as confirming a Ukrainian strike on a Russian command post with unspecified high-ranking Russian officials in occupied Crimea.[65]

Positional fighting continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast near Krynky on April 15.[66]



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

Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported on April 15 that Russian forces struck Kirovohrad Oblast with unspecified missiles.[67] Ukraine's National police reported that Russian forces struck central Slovyansk, Donetsk Oblast with a "Grom-E1" missile a hybrid missile based on a Russian Kh-38 air-to-surface missile with a maximum range of 120 kilometers.[68] Russian forces previously used Grom-E1 missiles to strike Myrnohrad, Donetsk Oblast on March 13 and Kupyansk and Borova, Kharkiv Oblast on April 13.[69]

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

Russian prosecution rates of men who had fled compulsory military service have reportedly increased since fall 2022. Independent Russian outlet *Mediazona* reported that Russian officials sentence 34 men every day for avoiding compulsory military service.[70] *Mediazona* reported that Russian officials examined 700 cases of Russian men avoiding military service in March 2024 alone, reportedly marking the highest rate of military service evasion. *Mediazona* calculated that Russian courts considered 7,300 cases concerning Russian servicemen who went absent without leave since the Kremlin's announcement of partial mobilization in September 2022.

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

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on April 14 that the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) companies continue to evade international sanctions to procure foreign components for Russian missiles and drones. Zelensky reported that the Russian DIB continues to import electronics and chips used in Russian missiles and Shahed drones through foreign companies that transit the components through countries neighboring Russia.[71] *BBC News Russian Service* similarly reported on April 15 that sanctioned Russian military shipyards continue to source European-made components through Croatian and Italian companies.[72] *BBC News Russian Service* identified that a Croatian company, which supplies deck equipment for civilian vessels and military ships, continued to supply the Russian Severnya Verf shipyard in St. Petersburg and Zelenodolsk plant in the Republic of Tatarstan despite long-standing Western sanctions against these shipyards.[73] *BBC News Russian Service* added that Russia also acquires ship cranes and other parts from an Italian company via intermediary companies.

A Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian military began to deliver BMR-3MA Vepr mine clearing vehicles to Russian forces fighting in Ukraine.[74] The milblogger claimed that the Vepr mine clearing vehicles are equipped with the newest TMT-S mine clearing trawls, which will help Russian forces clear minefields and advance at a faster pace.

### **Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)**

The Ukrainian defense industrial base (DIB) developed new drones and launched new projects aimed at accelerating new weapon production rates. Spokesperson of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) Artem Dekhtiatenko announced that the Ukrainian DIB recently upgraded "Sea Baby" naval drones to carry almost a ton of explosives to hit targets at a range of about 1,000km.[75] Dekhtiatenko added that these drones will allow Ukraine to strike Russian naval targets almost anywhere in the Black Sea. Ukrainian Deputy Commander-in-Chief Colonel Andriy Lebedenko announced that Ukrainian forces and Ministry of Strategic Industries are launching the "Iron Range" initiative within a month to support Ukrainian DIB manufacturers and shortened the production time for new weapons.[76] Lebedenko stated that it was more challenging for manufacturers to test weapons and access training grounds for weapons testing prior to the "Iron Range" initiative and added that Ukrainian officials will use this initiative to support the development of robotic systems, drones, and electronic warfare (EW) systems. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister for Digital Transformation, Kateryna Chernohorenko, announced that the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) concluded a memorandum on the development of the Ukrainian "UA DroneID" technology with the Ministry of Digital Transformation, Aerorozvidka (a Ukrainian non-government organization focused on drone technology), and data security software company CossackLabs.[77] Chernohorenko stated that UA DroneID technology will help Ukrainian forces to integrate and deconflict command and control for drones, including with NATO partners, minimize friendly fire, preserve Ukrainian drones, and analyze drone usage.

Participating countries in the Ukrainian Drone Coalition pledged on April 14 and 15 to allocate additional funds and transfer drones to Ukraine. The Ukrainian MoD announced that Lithuania will allocate three million euros (\$3.2 million) to produce first-person view (FPV) drones for Ukraine and that the Netherlands confirmed its intent to contract a batch of Heidrun RQ-35 reconnaissance drones for 200 million euros (\$212.5 million) in cooperation with Denmark and Germany.[78] The

Ukrainian MoD added that Germany will also transfer VECTOR 211 reconnaissance drones to Ukraine, and Ukraine's Army of Drones initiative announced that Canada will transfer 450 SkyRanger drones to Ukraine in summer 2024 through the Drone Coalition framework.[79]

Ukraine's European partners continue to pledge and provide additional military and humanitarian support to Ukraine. The Netherlands announced on April 15 the allocation of an additional 4.4 billion euros (nearly \$4.7 billion) for Ukrainian military and humanitarian needs from 2024 to 2026.[80] The Lithuanian MoD announced on April 11 that Lithuania delivered a new aid package to Ukraine including anti-drone systems, generators, and cots.[81] Lithuanian Interior Minister Agne Bilotaite stated on April 14 that Lithuania is currently ready to provide 400,000 euros (\$425,056) in part to help rehabilitate Ukrainian servicemen.[82] Montenegro's MoD announced on April 12 that Montenegro will join the European Union (EU) mission to train Ukrainian forces.[83] The UK government announced on April 10 that British aerospace, defense, and information security company BAE Systems agreed to maintain and repair Ukrainian L119 howitzers.[84] Ukrainian and UK officials also signed a cooperation agreement for the procurement of defense materials on April 10.[85]

**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 area today.*

**Russian Information Operations and Narratives**

Russian officials and pro-Kremlin sources continue doubling down on their information operation aimed at falsely portraying military assistance to Ukraine and NATO defensive measures as escalatory to deter further military assistance to Ukraine and push the West to negotiate with Russia. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov claimed that the US must "radically" change its policies towards Russia and return to negotiations about "strategic stability" but that current US behavior makes it so that prospects of such measures are "very gloomy." [86] Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko reiterated the Kremlin's boilerplate rhetoric falsely framing Finland's and Sweden's NATO accession as escalatory and a situation to which Russia must respond.[87] Russian milbloggers also framed NATO assistance to Ukraine as escalatory and claimed that Russia is unable to agree to any peace plan in which Ukraine is not "loyal" to Russia.[88]

The Ukrainian Center for Disinformation published a list of more than 60 X (formerly Twitter) accounts that spread pro-Russian propaganda on April 15, including accounts of Kremlin officials, Russian state media, and other propaganda accounts.[89]

**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)**

Russia and Belarus are strengthening partnership in aircraft production and will likely strengthen their ability to jointly produce combat aircraft for Russia to use in Ukraine. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin announced during a meeting with Belarusian Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko on April 15 that he and Golovchenko signed an agreement on joint Russian-Belarusian production of Osvey light multipurpose aircraft.[90] Mishustin stated that Russia and Belarus are working to deepen cooperation in aircraft production through the Union State framework.

**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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