**Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment** 

### Daria Novikov, Nicole Wolkov, Olivia Gibson, Davit Gasparyan, and George Barros with William Runkel

### April 26, 2025, 5p m ET

## Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12 pm ET on April 26. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 27 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov claimed on April 26 that Russian forces pushed all Ukrainian forces from Kursk Oblast. Gerasimov told Russian President Vladimir Putin on April 26 that Russian forces had fully defeated Ukrainian forces in Kursk Oblast and seized Gornal (southwest of Sudzha), the last Ukrainian-held settlement in Kursk Oblast.[1] Gerasimov credited elements of the Russian 22nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (72nd Motorized Rifle Division, 44th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]), 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet [BSF]), 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet), 177th Naval Infantry Regiment (Caspian Flotilla), and 1427th Motorized Rifle Regiment (formed during the 2022 partial reserve call up) with seizing Gornal. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov was visiting a Russian command post in Kursk Oblast to hear reports from Kursk Grouping of Forces Commander Colonel General Valery Solodchuk when Russian forces seized Gornal.[2] Geolocated footage published on April 26 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced along Gora Street in central Gornal.[3] The Ukrainian General Staff refuted the Russian claims later on April 26 and stated that Ukrainian forces maintain unspecified positions in Kursk Oblast.[4] The General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled five Russian assaults in Kursk Oblast on April 26. Russian milbloggers similarly claimed on April 26 that fighting continued near Oleshnva (northwest of Gornal), Guyevo (south of Sudzha near the international border), and St. Nicholas Monastery (southwest of Guyevo).[5]

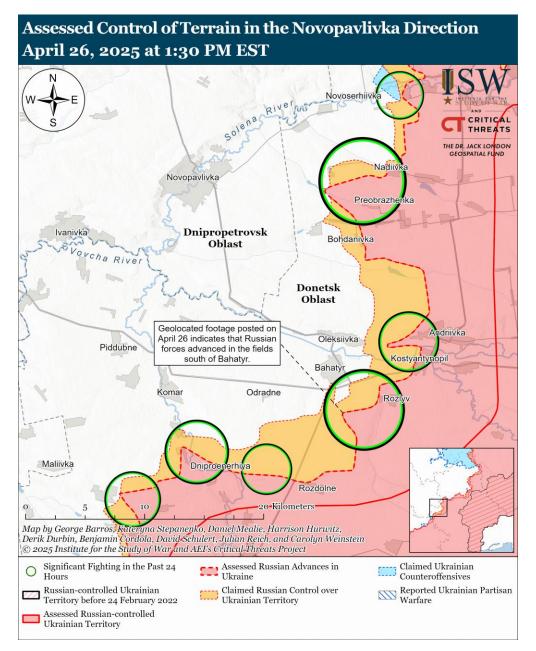
**Ukraine's August 2024 incursion into Kursk Oblast successfully pinned some Russian combat power, including elite airborne (VDV) and naval infantry units, but its long-term effects remain unclear at this time.** The Russian military command generally regards VDV and naval infantry units as elite forces (even though many Russian elite units have been heavily attritted and lost their elite status over the course of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine) and deploys them to critical sectors of the frontline.[6] ISW previously observed reports that Russia redeployed elements of each of the seven VDV formations and four of the six naval infantry formations from frontline positions in Ukraine to Kursk Oblast in the months following the incursion, although some units remained split between Kursk Oblast and occupied Ukraine.[7] Putin claimed on April 26 that the most effective Russian forces operating in Kursk Oblast included elements of the 104th, 234th, and 237th airborne (VDV) regiments (all of the 76th VDV Division); 51st, 119th, and 138th VDV regiments (all of the 106th VDV Division); 51st, 119th and 83rd VDV brigades; 204th "Akhmat"

Spetsnaz Regiment and 1434th "Akhmat" Motorized Rifle Regiment (both Chechen units); 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet); 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet); and 22nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (72nd Motorized Rifle Division, 44th AC, LMD).[8] Ukraine's incursion into Kursk Oblast likely has continued to pin these VDV or naval infantry elements, as ISW has not observed reports of such units redeploying from Kursk Oblast to the frontline in Ukraine. ISW observed on April 18 the first reports that Russian forces redeployed unspecified drone units from the Kursk direction to the area southwest of Toretsk near Kalynove and that these units are now operating in the Kostyantynivka direction.[9] Russian forces intensified offensive operations to push Ukrainian forces from Kursk Oblast in early March 2025 after tactically exploiting the temporary US intelligence sharing cutoff with Ukraine and by using an underground gas pipeline and deception tactics to covertly attack behind Ukrainian positions in Sudzha.[10] Russian forces, including VDV and naval infantry elements, took almost two months since their seizure of Sudzha to advance roughly nine kilometers to the Kursk-Sumy Oblast international border — an average rate of about 200 meters per day.[11]

Gerasimov made the first official Russian acknowledgement of North Korean troop participation in Russian operations in Kursk Oblast by thanking North Korean servicemembers for their assistance in Russian efforts to push Ukrainian forces out of the region. Gerasimov stated on April 26 that North Korean forces "provided significant assistance" in pushing Ukrainian forces from Kursk Oblast, in accordance with the Russian-North Korean Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.[12] Gerasimov commended North Korean officers and soldiers for demonstrating "professionalism" and "fortitude, courage, and heroism" during military operations in Kursk Oblast. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova stated on April 26 that Russia would never forget its "friends" from North Korea.[13] Neither Gerasimov nor Zakharova indicated what role, if any, North Korean forces would now play in supporting Russian military operations against Ukraine.

US President Donald Trump stated that the United States is no longer pursuing a concrete deadline for achieving a resolution to the war in Ukraine – a departure from the administration's previously stated goal of ending the war within its first 100 days.[14] Trump told reporters on April 25 that the United States has "no deadline" to negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine.[15] Trump also stated on April 26 that there was "no reason" for Russia's strikes on civilian areas and reiterated a previously stated concern that "[Russian President Vladimir Putin] is just tapping me along" by disingenuously ceasefire and peace negotiations.[16] Trump stated that Putin's actions make Trump think that "maybe [Putin] doesn't want to stop the war" and "has to be dealt with differently." Russian officials have repeatedly to leverage heightened US interest in negotiating a swift resolution to the war in Ukraine to make demands tantamount to Ukrainian surrender and incompatible with Trump's stated goal of achieving a stable and enduring peace in Ukraine.[17] Russian forces have also conducted a string of strikes against civilian areas in recent weeks, including a devastating strike on Kyiv City on the night of April 23 to 24.[18] Trump and Ukrainian President Zelensky met in Vatican City on April 26 to discuss the ongoing peace talks.[19] Zelensky reported on April 26 that he and Trump discussed civilian safety, a full and unconditional ceasefire, and a lasting peace that prevents resumption of hostilities.[20] White House Communications Director Steven Cheung stated that Trump and Zelensky had a "very productive discussion."[21]

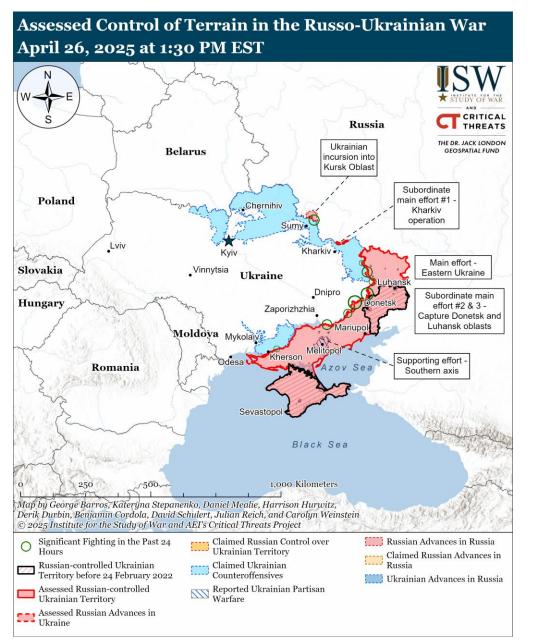
Russia is likely preparing to systematically integrate motorcycle usage into offensive operations in Ukraine for Summer and Fall 2025, likely to offset adept Ukrainian drone capabilities. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) published footage on April 26 showing likely elements of the 299th (Airborne) VDV Regiment (98th VDV Division) practicing offensive and defensive tactics on motorcycles in groups of two to three people at a Russian training ground.[22] The video indicates that the Russian military is likely developing a tactical doctrine for systematic offensive motorcycle usage and may be preparing to issue an increased number of motorcycles to Russian personnel in Ukraine. Ukrainian Kharkiv Group of Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Pavlo Shamshyn reported that Ukrainian intelligence noted that the Russian military is training its soldiers in combat tactics with motorcycles, suggesting that Russian forces will likely increasingly integrate motorcycles into offensive operations in Ukraine in Summer and Fall 2025.[23] Shamshyn noted that motorcycles allow Russian soldiers to enhance their speed and maneuverability, which is crucial for evading Ukrainian drone strikes, but that the loud noise of the motorcycle prevents the rider from hearing approaching Ukrainian drones. ISW has observed an increased trend of Russian units conducting mechanized and combined motorized assaults and transporting infantry with motorcycles and civilian vehicles throughout the frontline as Russian command continues to adapt its tactics to offset Ukrainian drone strikes and likely to mitigate the Russian military's equipment constraints resulting from high armored vehicle losses in Summer and early Fall 2024.[24] Russian forces notably recently advanced during a motorized assault near Bahatyr comprised entirely of motorcycles and civilian vehicles.[25]



### Key Takeaways:

- Russian Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov claimed on April 26 that Russian forces pushed all Ukrainian forces from Kursk Oblast.
- Ukraine's August 2024 incursion into Kursk Oblast successfully pinned some Russian combat power, including elite airborne (VDV) and naval infantry units, but its long-term effects remain unclear at this time.
- Gerasimov made the first official Russian acknowledgement of North Korean troop participation in Russian operations in Kursk Oblast by thanking North Korean servicemembers for their assistance in Russian efforts to push Ukrainian forces out of the region.

- US President Donald Trump stated that the United States is no longer pursuing a concrete deadline for achieving a resolution to the war in Ukraine a departure from the administration's previously stated goal of ending the war within its first 100 days.
- Russia is likely preparing to systematically integrate motorcycle usage into offensive operations in Ukraine for Summer and Fall 2025, likely to offset adept Ukrainian drone capabilities.
- Ukrainian forces recently advanced near Pokrovsk. Russian forces recently advanced near Novopavlivka, Kurkakhove, and Velyka Novosilka.



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are wellcovered 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.

- Alleged Ceasefire Violation
- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Supporting Effort Northern Axis
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas, and possibly advance into Dnipropetrovsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Significant Activity in Belarus

### Alleged Ceasefire Violations

There are no active ceasefires in Ukraine.

### Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation

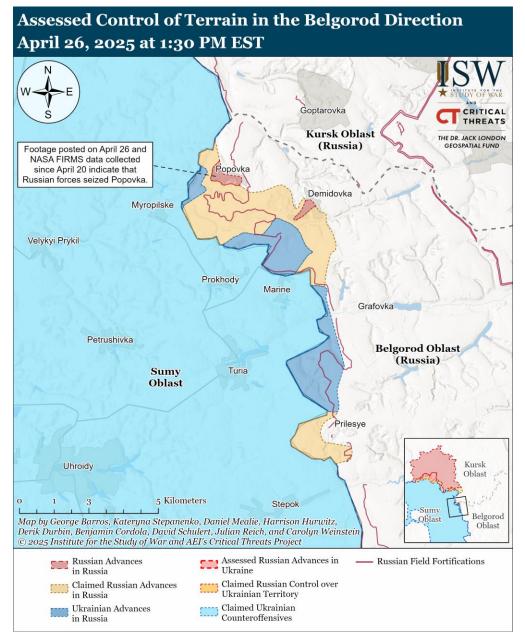
See topline text for updates in Kursk Oblast.

## Russian forces likely recently seized Popovka amid continued fighting in northwestern Belgorod Oblast on April 26.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 26 indicates that Russian forces recently seized Popovka (northwest of Belgorod City).[26] Russian Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov and several Russian milbloggers claimed on April 26 that Russian forces seized Popovka.[27] NASA Fire Information for Resource Management (FIRMS) data shows satellite-detected heat anomalies near Popovka since April 20, suggesting that fighting has been ongoing in the area.[28]

Unknown actors recently assassinated the head of a Russian company that designs electronic warfare (EW) equipment for the Russian military. Sources in Ukraine's Ministry of Defense (MoD) told *RBC*-

*Ukraine* on April 25 that unknown actors detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) in Bryansk Electromechanical Plant Head Evgeny Ritikov's car as he was entering the vehicle in Bryansk City on the night of April 17 to 18.[29]



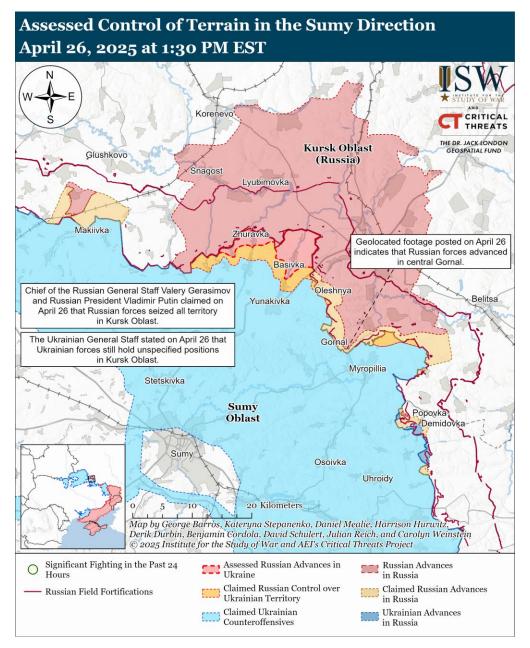
<u>Russian Supporting Effort – Northern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Create defensible buffer zones in northern Ukraine along the international border and approach to within tube artillery range of Sumy City)

Russian forces continued ground attacks in Sumy Oblast on April 26 but did not make any confirmed advances.

Russian forces attacked northeast of Sumy City near Zhuravka, Bilovody, and Loknya on April 25 and 26.[30]

The spokesperson of a Ukrainian border guards detachment stated on April 26 that Russian forces are conducting 50 to 100 guided glide bomb strikes per day against Sumy Oblast and are using fiber-optic drones in the area.[31] The spokesperson noted that Russian forces currently do not have enough personnel and materiel to conduct a large offensive operation against Sumy Oblast.

Russian Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov stated on April 26 that the Russian military is trying to create a buffer zone in the Sumy Oblast border area, have seized four settlements in the area, and occupy 90 square kilometers in Sumy Oblast.[32] ISW assesses that Russian forces have occupied Novenke, Basivka, Zhuravka, and Veselivka (all northeast of Sumy City) but has only collected verified evidence to assess that Russian forces occupy roughly 54 square kilometers in Sumy Oblast as of April 26.



#### <u> Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine</u>

<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)

## Neither Russian nor Ukrainian forces reported ground activity in the Kharkiv Oblast on April 26.

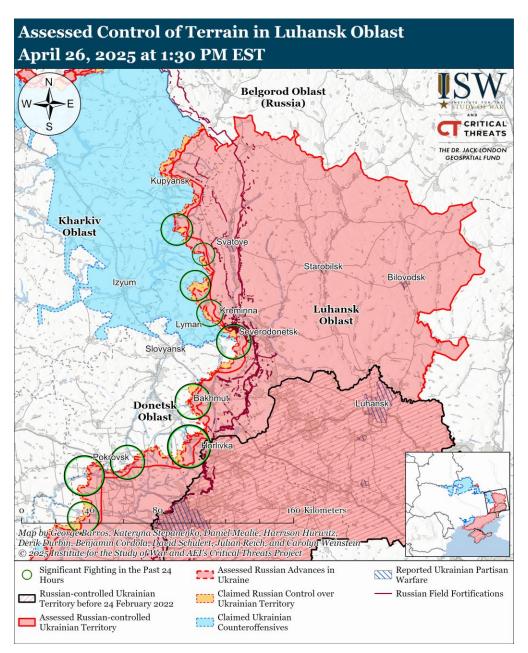
Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 41st Motorized Rifle Regiment (72nd Motorized Rifle Division, 44th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly operating in Kharkiv Oblast.[33]

<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

## Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction on April 26 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed on April 25 that Russian forces advanced north of Stepova Novoselivka (southeast of Kupyansk).[34]

Ukrainian Kharkiv Group of Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Pavlo Shamshyn reported on April 26 that Ukrainian forces recently repelled Russian attempts to establish pontoon bridges across the Oskil River.[35] Shamshyn noted that Russian forces are especially active near Dvorichna (northeast of Kupyansk). Shamshyn stated that Russian forces concentrate their attacks along the P-79 Kupyansk-Dvorichna highway southwest of Zapadne (north of Kupyansk) but are unsuccessful due to a lack of pontoon bridges.



## Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Borova direction on April 26 but did not advance.

Russian forces attacked northeast of Borova near Zahryzove and Nova Kruhlyakivka; east of Borova near Nadiya and Novoyehorivka; and southeast of Borova near Druzhelyubivka, Cherneshchyna, Novoserhiivka, and Hrekivka on April 25 and 26.[36]

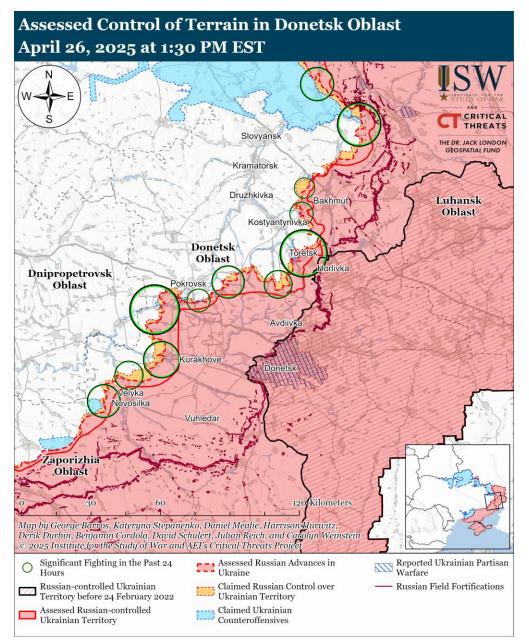
## Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Lyman direction on April 26 but did not advance.

Russian forces attacked northeast of Lyman near Ridkodub, Nove, Hlushchenkove, Novomykhailivka, Novyi Mir, Yampolivka, and Kolodyazi and east of Lyman near Torske on April 25 and 26.[37]

# <u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas, and possibly advance into Dnipropetrovsk Oblast)

## Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Siversk direction on April 26 but did not advance.

Russian forces attacked northeast of Siversk near Bilohorivka and Hryhorivka, and east of Siversk near Verkhnokamyanske on April 25 and 26.[38]



Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Chasiv Yar direction on April 26 but did not advance.

Russian forces attacked near Chasiv Yar itself, north of Chasiv Yar toward Markove, southeast of Chasiv Yar near Kurdyumivka, and south of Chasiv Yar near Bila Hora and Stupochky on April 25 and 26.[39]

Order of Battle: Drone elements of the Russian 6th Motorized Rifle Division (3rd Army Corps [AC]) and 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions in the Chasiv Yar direction.[40] Drone elements of the 331st Airborne (VDV) Regiment (98th VDV Division) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions in Chasiv Yar itself.[41]

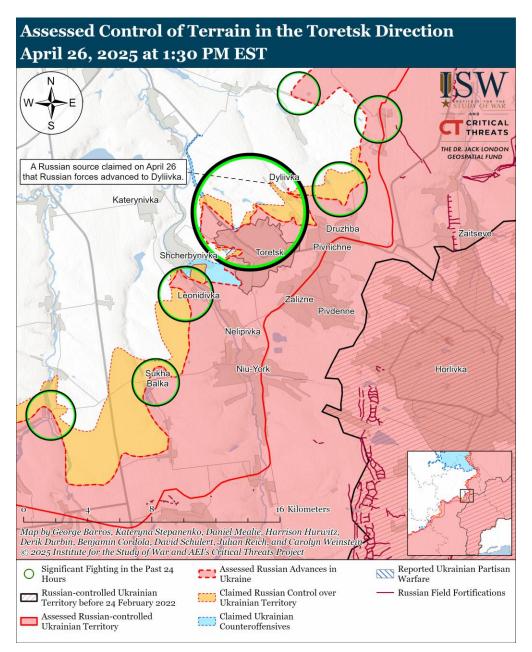
## Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Toretsk direction on April 26 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces recently advanced north of Druzhba (east of Toretsk), along the Donetsk Railroad Line to southeastern Dyliivka (northeast of Toretsk), and to the southern outskirts of Stara Mykolaivka (southwest of Toretsk).[42]

Russian forces attacked near Toretsk itself; northwest of Toretsk toward Pleshchiivka; northeast of Toretsk near Dachne and Druzhba, and toward Dyliivka; southwest of Toretsk near Sukha Balka, Stara Mykolaivka, and Berezivka, and toward Romanivka; and west of Toretsk near Leonidivka, Yelyzavetivka, Tarasivka, and Shcherbynivka on April 25 and 26.[43]

Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced to the former Berezka Pioneer Camp Site in western Toretsk and that seizing the camp will allow Russian forces to put pressure on Ukrainian positions near Dachne and Dyliivka.[44]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating in the Toretsk direction.[45] Elements of the 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd CAA, formerly 2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] AC, SMD) are reportedly operating near Dachne.[46] Elements of the 68th Tank Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division) are reportedly operating northwest of Sukha Balka.[47] Elements of the 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Oleksandro-Shultyne (north of Toretsk).[48]

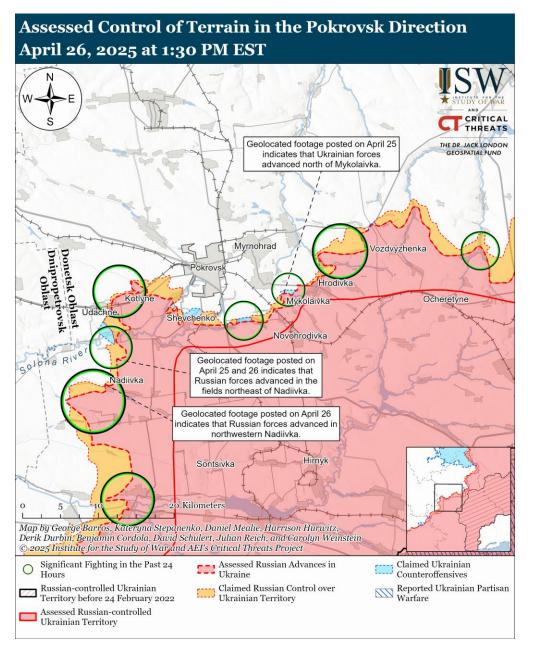


### Ukrainian forces recently advanced in the Pokrovsk direction.

Assessed Ukrainian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 26 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently advanced north of Mykolaivka (southeast of Pokrovsk).[49]

Russian forces attacked east of Pokrovsk near Promin, Myrolyubivka, and Novotoretske, and toward Malynivka; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka and Dachenske; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Udachne and Kotlyne on April 25 and 26.[50]

A Ukrainian servicemember operating in the Pokrovsk direction reported on April 26 that Russian forces rarely deploy armored vehicles, periodically use motorcycles and electric scooters, but mainly conduct dismounted infantry assaults in the Pokrovsk direction.[51] The servicemember noted that Russian forces typically conduct infantry assaults in groups of one to 15 personnel.



### Russian forces recently advanced in the Novopavlivka direction.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 25 and 26 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced northeast and northwest of Nadiivka (east of Novopavlivka).[52]

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 27th Motorized Rifle Division (2nd CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) advanced southeast of Novooleksandrivka (northeast of Novopavlivka).[53]

Russian forces attacked northeast of Novopavlivka near Uspenivka and Novooleksandrivka, east of Novopavlivka near Kotlyarivka and Nadiivka, and southeast of Novopavlivka near Bohdanivka and Preobrazhenka on April 25 and 26.[54] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Uspenivka.[55]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 35th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, CMD) are reportedly operating near Kotlyarivka.[56] Elements of the 90th Tank Division (41st CAA) are reportedly operating near Preobrazhenka and Troitske (southeast of Novopavlivka).[57]

### Russian forces recently advanced in the Kurakhove direction.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 26 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced south of Bahatyr (southwest of Kurakhove) during a motorized assault using 18 motorcycles and 10 civilian vehicles.[58] The Ukrainian Vuhledar Tactical Group reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed 15 motorcycles and damaged nine vehicles during the assault.

Russian forces attacked west of Kurakhove near Kostyantynopil and southwest of Kurakhove near Rozlyv and Odradne on April 25 and 26.[59] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Bahatyr (southwest of Kurakhove) and Odradne.[60]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 200th Artillery Brigade (29th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Bahatyr.[61]

### Russian forces recently marginally advanced in the Velyka Novosilka direction.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on April 25 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced marginally southeast of Vilne Pole (northwest of Velyka Novosilka).[62]

Russian forces attacked northwest of Velyka Novosilka near Dniproenerhiya, Vesele, and Vilne Pole and southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Novosilka on April 25 and 26.[63]

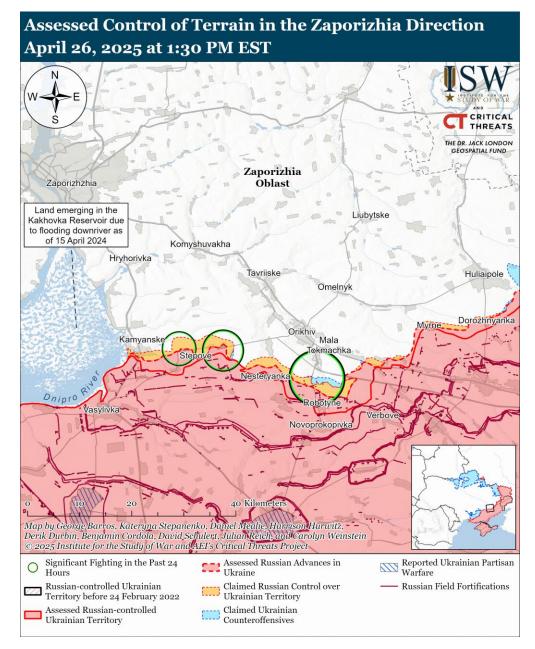
Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 305th Artillery Brigade (5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Vilne Pole, and elements of the 5th Tank Brigade (36th CAA, EMD) are reportedly striking Ukrainian targets near Komar (northwest of Velyka Novosilka).[64]

<u>Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions, secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes, and advance within tube artillery range of Zaporizhzhia City)

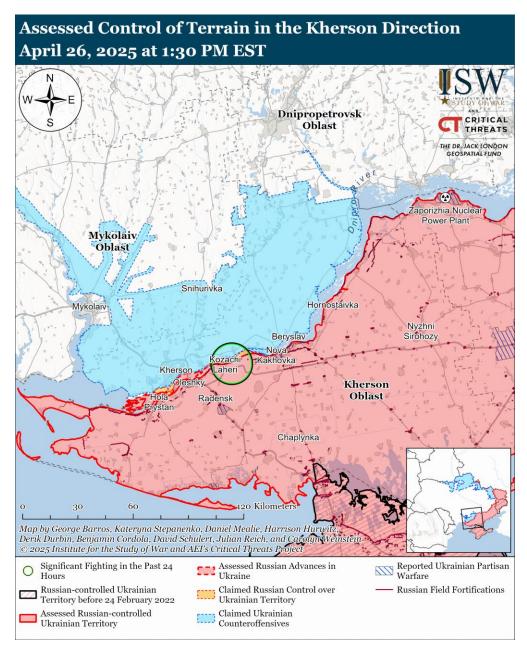
## Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on April 26butdidnotadvance.

Russian forces attacked south of Orikhiv near Novodanylivka, and southwest of Orikhiv near Stepove and Mali Shcherbaky on April 25 and 26.[65]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and "Viking" Spetsnaz Detachment are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhia direction.[66]



### Russian forces conducted limited ground assaults in the Kherson direction on April 26.



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

Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine overnight on April 25 to 26. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched one Onyx anti-ship cruise missile, two Kh-31P anti-radar missiles, and 114 Shahed drones from the directions of Kursk and Oryol cities; Millerovo, Rostov Oblast; and Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai.[67] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 66 Shahed drones over northern, eastern, southern, and central Ukraine and that 31 Russian decoy drones were "lost," likely due to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference. Ukrainian officials reported that drones struck residential and communications infrastructure in Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Kirovohrad, and Kyiv oblasts and that missiles struck critical infrastructure in Kherson Oblast.[68]

<u>Significant activity in Belarus</u> (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks)

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.



[1] http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/76800; https://t.me/tass\_agency/312253 ; https://t.me/opersvodki/26457; https://t.me/tass\_agency/312255

[2] https://t.me/mod\_russia/51782 ; https://t.me/tass\_agency/312273

[3] https://t.me/warriorofnorth/7850; https://t.me/creamy\_caprice/8997

### [4]

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[6] https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-28-2023; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-22-2024

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