

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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Note: The data cut-off for this product was 2pm ET on April 8. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the April 9 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian drone strikes against Russian oil refineries are reportedly forcing Russia to seek gasoline imports from Kazakhstan. Three unnamed industry sources told *Reuters* in an article published on April 8 that Russia asked Kazakhstan to establish an “emergency reserve” of 100,000 metric tons of gasoline that Kazakhstan could supply to Russia in case of shortages exacerbated by Ukrainian drone strikes and resulting refinery outages.[1] One of the unnamed sources stated that Kazakhstan and Russia have already reached an agreement allowing Russia to use Kazakh gasoline reserves in some unspecified capacity. Advisor to the Kazakh Energy Minister Shyngys Ilyasov denied that the Kazakh Energy Ministry had received such requests from Russia, however.[2] *Reuters* reported on April 2, citing its own data, that constant Ukrainian drone strikes have shut down about 14 percent of Russia’s overall oil refining capacity.[3] *Reuters* also previously reported on March 27 that Russia has significantly increased its gasoline imports from Belarus following Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian oil refineries and that Russia has imported 3,000 metric tons of gasoline from Belarus in the first half of March as compared to 590 metric tons in February and no gasoline imports in January.[4] Recent Russian efforts to import gasoline from Belarus and Kazakhstan indicate that Russia is likely increasingly concerned about the immediate domestic supply of distillate petroleum products following Ukrainian strikes on Russian oil refineries.

Ukraine’s Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) indirectly suggested that it may have been responsible for an explosion that disabled a Russian Baltic Fleet small missile carrier at the naval base in Baltiysk, Kaliningrad Oblast on April 7. The GUR published footage on April 8 allegedly of an explosive detonating in the control room of the Russian Baltic Fleet’s *Serpukhov* Project 21631 Buyan-M class corvette on April 7.[5] The GUR reported that the resulting fire destroyed the *Serpukhov*’s automation and communications systems and that repairs will take a long time to complete. Some Ukrainian media outlets cited their sources within GUR as stating that GUR conducted the attack against the ship.[6] ISW has not observed independent confirmation of damage to the *Serpukhov*. Baltic Fleet elements in Kaliningrad Oblast have notably conducted several recent electronic warfare (EW) exercises, and Estonian and United Kingdom (UK) officials have linked Russian EW forces in Kaliningrad with multiple recent GPS jamming incidents in the Baltic region since December 2023, including one incident that jammed the satellite signal of a plane carrying UK Defense Secretary Grant Shapps.[7]

Recent discourse among select Russian milbloggers highlights contradictory Russian rhetoric in the Russian information space between narratives that seek to portray Russian forces as more capable than Ukrainian forces and other narratives that criticize the Russian military for shortcomings that result in high Russian infantry casualties. Several milbloggers recently discussed and criticized the tactic of having infantry ride atop armored vehicles to frontline positions before dismounting to conduct frontal assaults.[8] This is not a novel tactic for either Russian or Ukrainian forces, but the tactic, which exposes unprotected infantry to threats, recently appears to have attracted more scrutiny from Russian military commentators. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) posted footage on April 8 that shows elements of the 98th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division apparently employing this tactic on the outskirts of Chasiv Yar (east of Bakhmut), wherein armored vehicles transported infantry to frontline positions, the infantry dismounted, and the armored vehicles quickly withdrew.[9] One milblogger responded to separate footage that reportedly shows about 25 Russian personnel riding on the side of a tank in an unspecified area, before Ukrainian forces either struck the tank or the tank ran over a mine, forcing the personnel to rapidly dismount and run across an open area without cover or concealment.[10] The milblogger called this kind of tactic “extremely crazy,” but another milblogger refuted this characterization and claimed that this practice of using armored vehicles to rapidly transport and dismount infantry reveals more about the lack of Russian armored vehicles on certain sectors of the front than it does about the underlying tactics of such assaults.[11] The second milblogger claimed that Ukrainian fires have significantly attrited Russian armored vehicle numbers especially near Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast, and Krynky, Kherson Oblast, so Russian troops must make do with very few armored vehicles to transport personnel to compensate for losses in armor and prevent further such losses.[12]

Another milblogger questioned why Russian media fixated on footage of failed Ukrainian armored attacks during the summer 2023 counteroffensive even though Russian forces themselves struggle with many of the same tactical issues when conducting similar attacks, especially due to the saturation of drones in the battlespace.[13] A milblogger affirmatively responded and noted the reality of Russian soldiers on the ground in Ukraine differs dramatically from conversations propagated in the Russian information space, emphasizing that Russian commentators can “laugh at [Ukraine’s] counteroffensive in the Zaporizhia direction, and then lose many times more [Russian soldiers] on the Avdiivka front,” and concluding that Russia is lying to itself about the losses it is suffering in the war.[14] The discourse between Russian milbloggers about the use of Russian armored vehicles and their survivability on the battlefield, as well as about the conduct of Russian assaults, highlights arguments that many Russian milbloggers continue to have over how the war is being fought

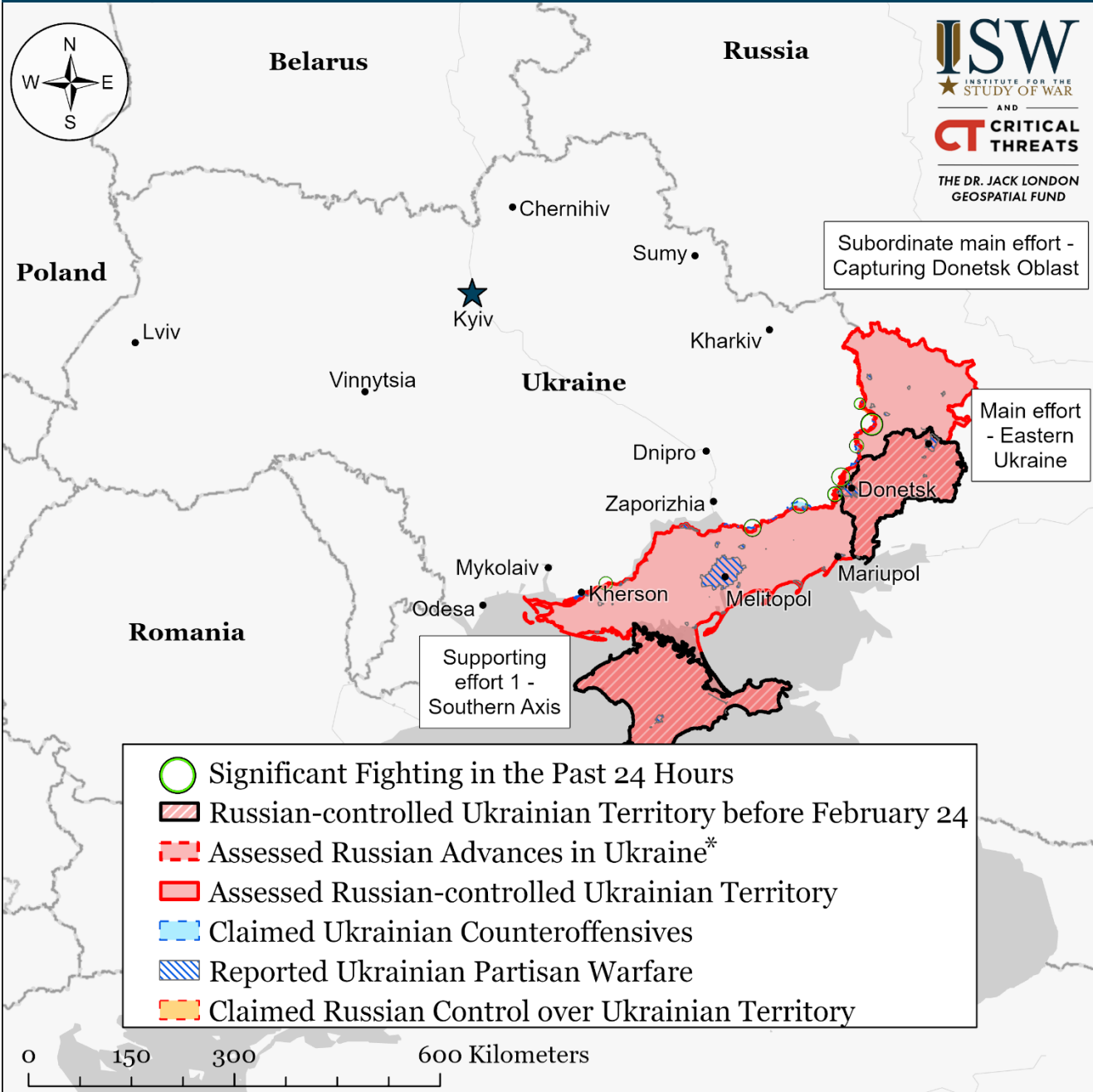
and suggests that many milbloggers are very attuned to the impacts these conversations are having on the wider understanding of the war.

The Kremlin-affiliated governor of the pro-Russian Moldova autonomous region of Gagauzia, Yevgenia Gutsul, insinuated that Romanian officials control the Moldovan government — the latest in a series of recent Kremlin efforts to question European pro-Western governments' sovereignty. Gutsul claimed on April 8 during an interview on Russian state television channel *Channel One (Perviy Kanal)* that if Gagauzia begins the process of seceding from Moldova, there will be a reaction not only from the Moldovan government in Chisinau, but also from Bucharest, Romania, which Gutsul claimed “controls” Moldovan authorities, implying that Moldova is not sovereign.[15] Gutsul claimed that Moldovan authorities may respond to Gagauzian secession with “loud, threatening statements” or deploy forces to Gagauzia and claimed that unification between Moldova and Romania would be the “death” of Moldova and Moldovan language and culture.[16] Gutsul claimed on April 5 that Gagauzia would “immediately” begin the process of seceding from Moldova should Moldova unify with Romania.[17] Gutsul’s April 8 interview on Russian state television is likely aimed at setting conditions to justify potential future Russian aggression against Moldova to Russian-speakers and pro-Russian audiences in Gagauzia, Moldova’s pro-Russian breakaway republic of Transnistria, and other pro-Russian areas of Europe and Central Asia and in Russia itself. The Kremlin likely views its efforts in Moldova as part of Russia’s wider existential geopolitical conflict with the West. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and MFA officials recently insinuated that Western countries are somehow guiding the Armenian government’s national security policy and claimed that Finland has “lost its independence in making foreign policy decisions” since its accession to NATO.[18] The Kremlin previously made similar false claims that NATO controls Ukraine and is using Ukraine to threaten Russia in order to undermine Ukrainian sovereignty and justify Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.[19] The Kremlin will likely continue claiming that its various target states are not fully sovereign to set information conditions for Russian hybrid or conventional operations against them. ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin is likely attempting to use pro-Russian actors in Moldova to destabilize Moldovan democracy and society, prevent Moldova’s accession to the European Union (EU), or even justify future hybrid or conventional operations against in Moldova.[20]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian drone strikes against Russian oil refineries are reportedly forcing Russia to seek gasoline imports from Kazakhstan.**
- **Ukraine’s Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) indirectly suggested that it may have been responsible for an explosion that disabled a Russian Baltic Fleet small missile carrier at the naval base in Baltiysk, Kaliningrad Oblast on April 7.**
- **Recent discourse among select Russian milbloggers highlights contradictory Russian rhetoric in the Russian information space between narratives that seek to portray Russian forces as more capable than Ukrainian forces and other narratives that seek to criticize the Russian military for shortcomings that result in high Russian infantry casualties.**
- **The Kremlin-affiliated governor of the pro-Russian Moldova autonomous region of Gagauzia, Yevgenia Gutsul, insinuated that Romanian officials control the Moldovan government — the latest in a series of recent Kremlin efforts to question European pro-Western governments’ sovereignty.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Kreminna, Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin instructed the Russian Cabinet of Ministers and Russian machine construction company KONAR JSC to increase the production of components for the domestic machine tools industry, likely as part of ongoing efforts to expand the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) and mitigate the effects of international sanctions.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 8, 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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* 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

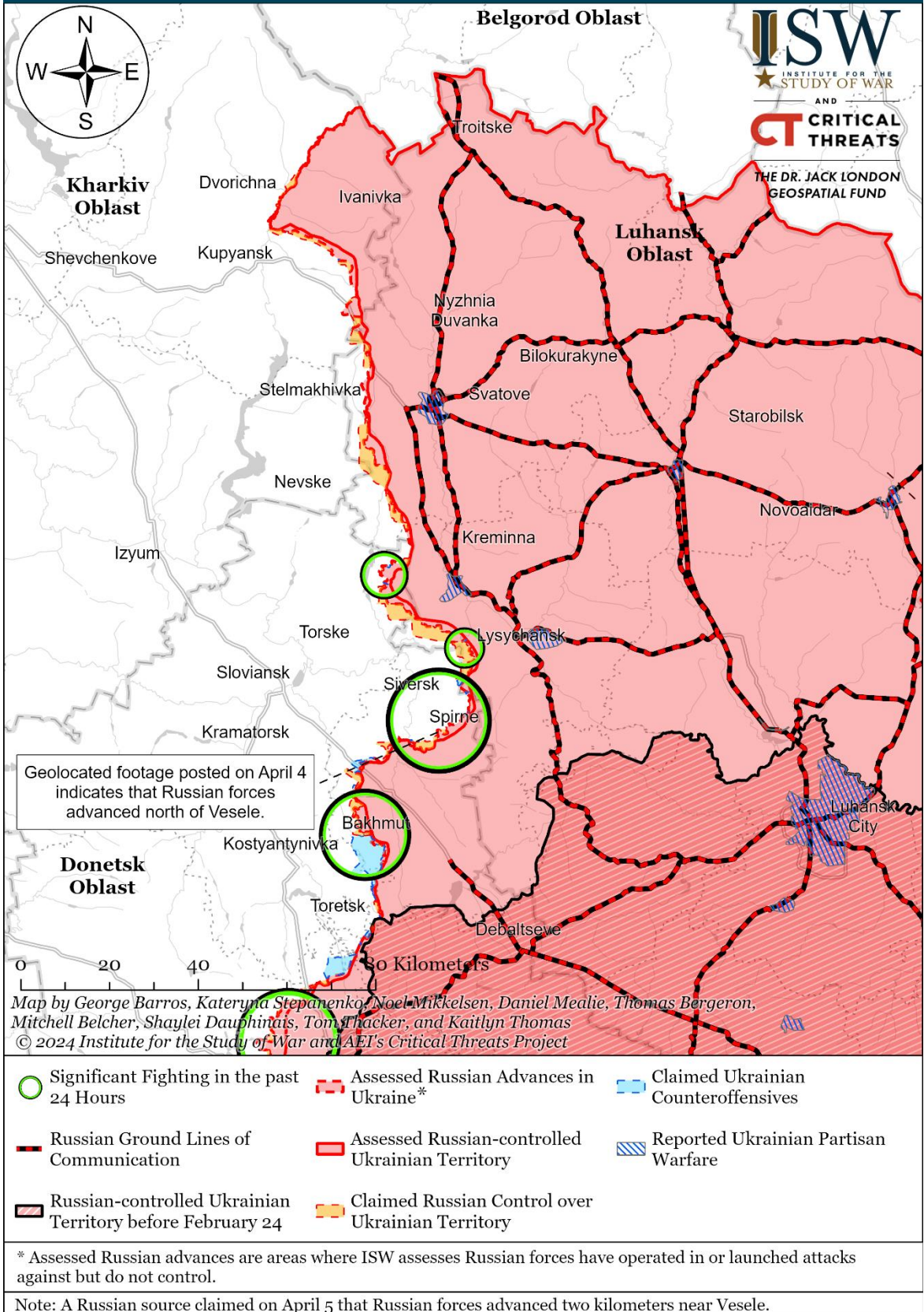
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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)

Russian forces recently marginally advanced near Kreminna amid continued positional engagements along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on April 8. Geolocated footage published on April 7 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced southwest of Bilohorivka (south of Kreminna).[21] Russian milbloggers claimed on April 8 that elements of the Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz “Aida” Detachment marginally advanced southeast of Bilohorivka.[22] Positional engagements also continued near Terny (west of Kreminna).[23] Elements of the Russian “GORB” Detachment are reportedly operating near Bilohorivka.[24]

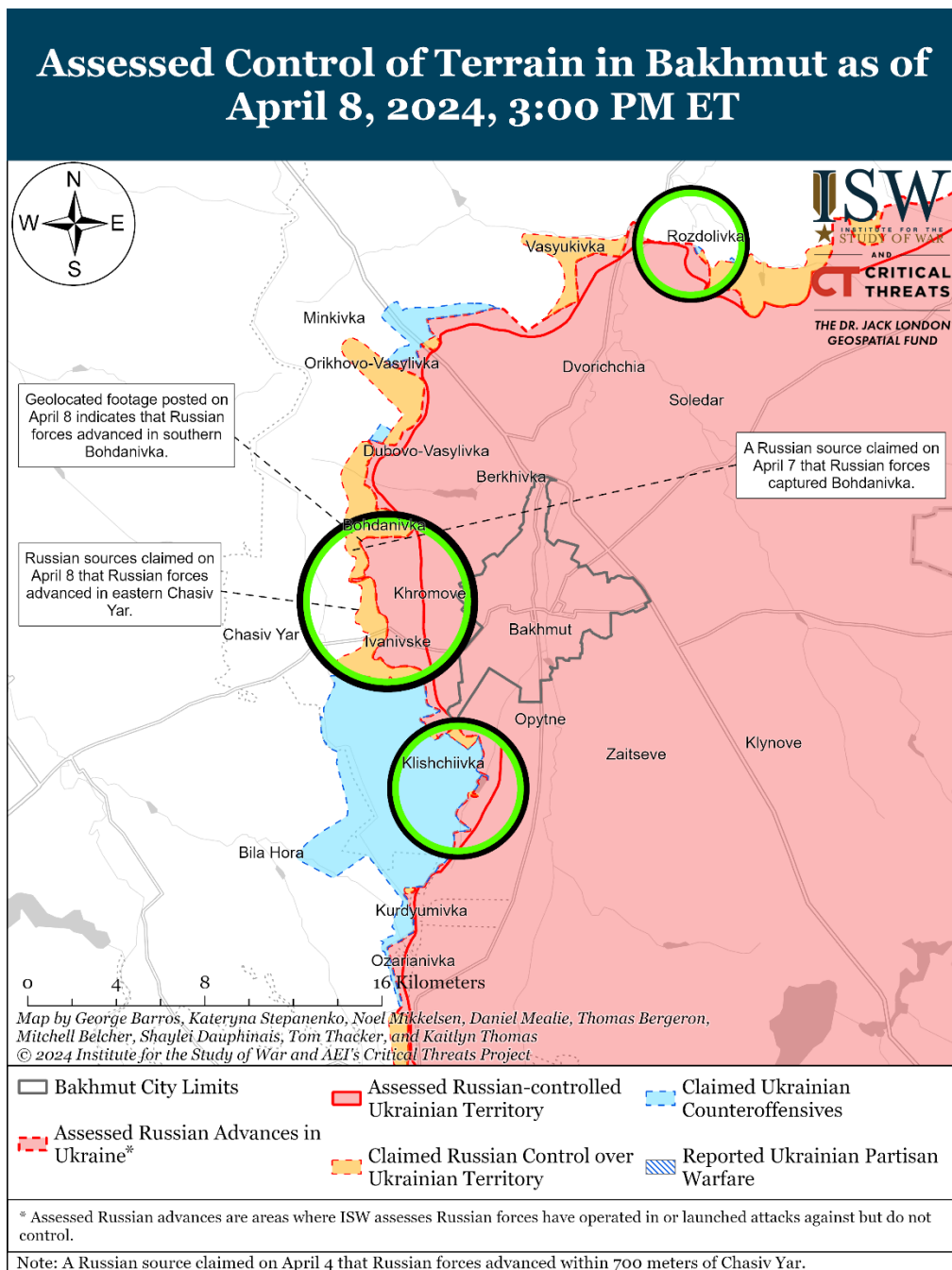
Ukrainian Border Service Spokesperson Andriy Demchenko on April 8 stated that Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups continue to conduct limited cross-border incursions into Ukraine, particularly in Sumy Oblast.[25]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of April 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

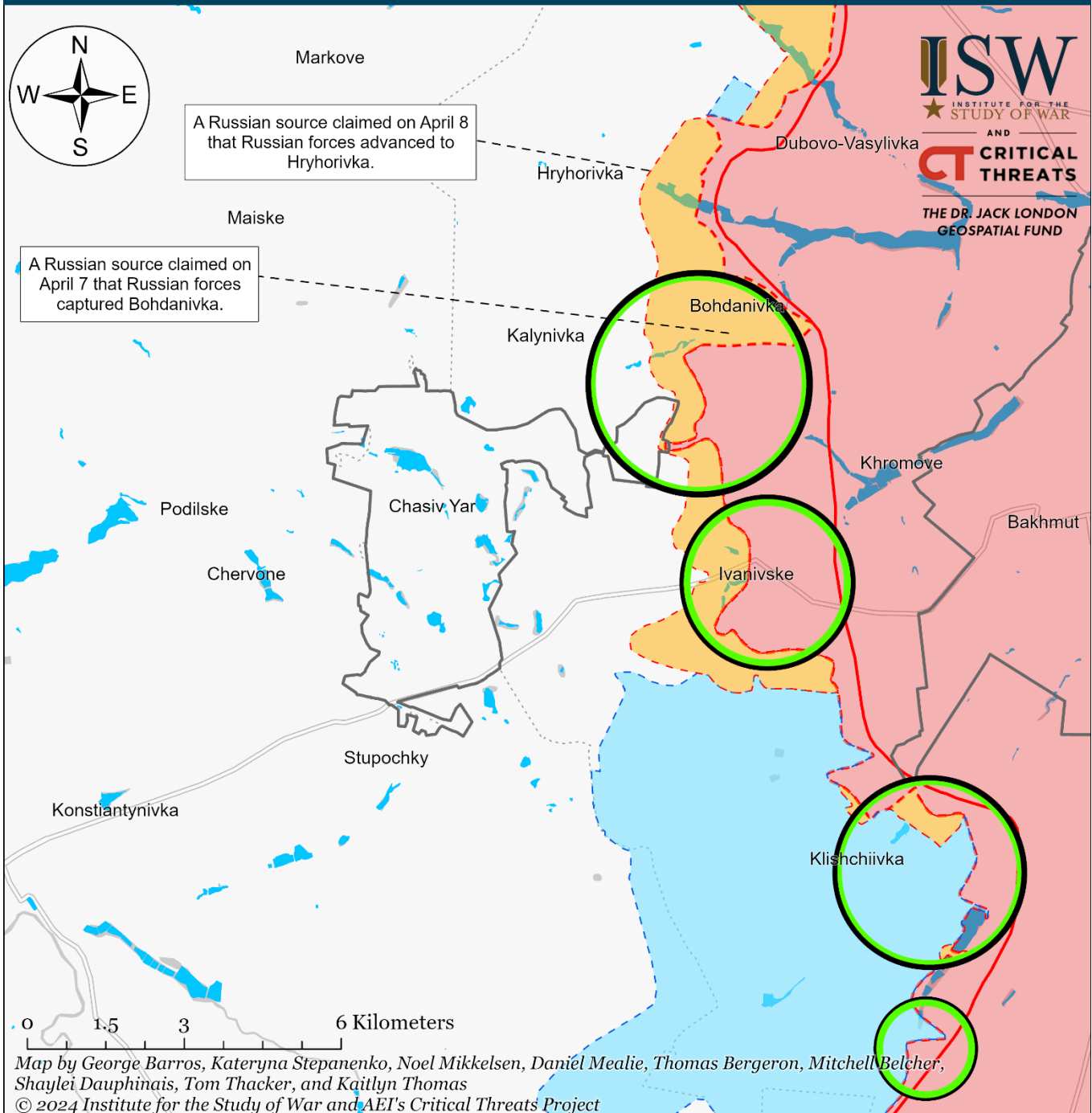


Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces recently advanced northwest of Bakhmut. Geolocated footage published on April 8 shows that Russian forces recently advanced into southwestern Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut).[26] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in fields west of Bohdanivka, but ISW has not yet observed visual evidence of Russian advances beyond southwestern Bohdanivka.[27] Russian milbloggers additionally claimed that Russian forces advanced up to the eastern outskirts of Hryhorivka (northwest of Bohdanivka), but ISW has not observed visual evidence to confirm this claim.[28] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced into forested areas east and southeast of Chasiv Yar (west of Bakhmut), as well as west of Ivanivske (also west of Bakhmut), though these claims remain unconfirmed.[29] Several milbloggers noted that Russian forces’ main objective is to cross the Siverskyi Donets-Donbas Canal that runs through eastern Chasiv Yar but warned that Ukrainian forces have heavily mined the western side of the canal.[30] Positional fighting continued northeast of Bakhmut near Spirne, Verkhokamyanske, Vyimka, Fedorivka, Rozdolivka, and Vesele; west of Bakhmut near Chasiv Yar and Ivanivske; and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[31] Elements of the Russian 98th and 106th Airborne (VDV) divisions and 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps, Northern Fleet) are operating west and northeast of Bakhmut.[32]



Assessed Control of Terrain near Chasiv Yar as of April 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

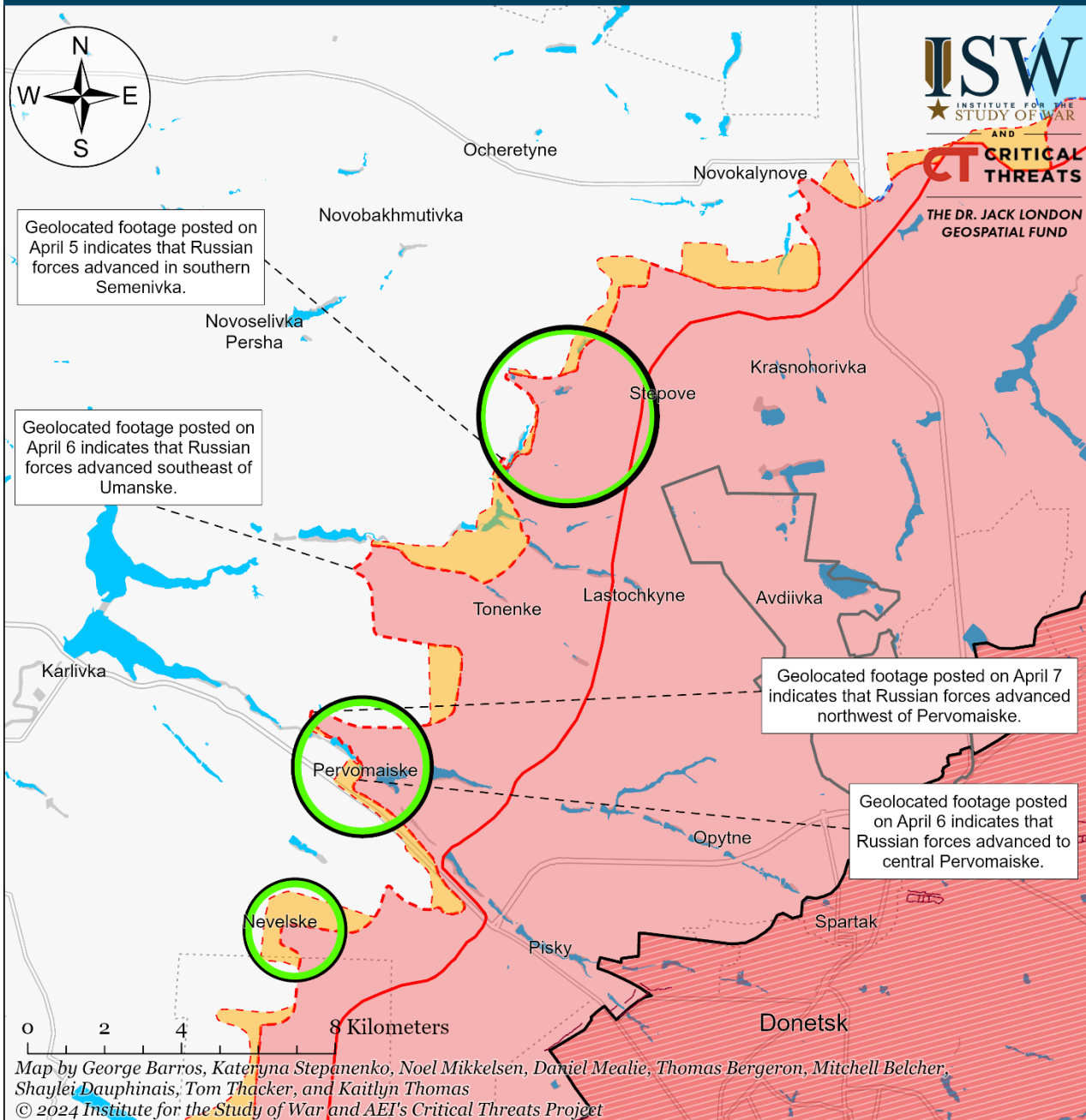


- Chasiv Yar and Bakhmut City Limits
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

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

Russian forces recently captured limited positions north of Avdiivka, but Ukrainian forces counterattacked and regained some of these lost positions. Geolocated footage published on April 8 shows that Russian forces initially advanced to a windbreak and forest area east of Novokalynove (north of Avdiivka) and to a small building on the southeastern outskirts of the settlement.[33] Russian milbloggers similarly reported that Russian forces advanced near a windbreak east of Novokalynove and captured a small farm on the southeastern outskirts of the settlement.[34] Additional geolocated footage published on April 8 shows that Ukrainian forces counterattacked in the same forest area east of Novokalynove.[35] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are now within 800 meters of the outskirts of Novokalynove.[36] The windbreak area depicted in the geolocated footage is about 650 meters from the settlement. The geolocated footage of the Ukrainian attack and the milblogger claim suggest that Ukrainian forces likely retook the windbreak, pushing Russian forces slightly to the east and away from the administrative boundaries of Novokalynove. Russian milbloggers additionally claimed that Russian forces advanced further north within Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka), west of Berdychi, and west of Vodyane (southwest of Avdiivka), although ISW has not yet observed visual evidence of Russian advances near Berdychi or Vodyane.[37] One Russian milblogger also claimed that Russian forces have advanced 800 meters deep and 780 meters in width near Umanske (west of Avdiivka), but another milblogger noted that Russian forces will be unable to develop meaningful offensives towards Umanske until they complete the capture of Semenivka (northwest of Avdiivka and north of Umanske).[38] Milbloggers claimed that there is heavy fighting near Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka).[39] The Ukrainian General Staff reported continued positional engagements near Berdychi and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske, Nevelske, and Netaylove.[40] Elements of the 1st Donetsk People's Republic (DNR AC) reportedly continue to support elements of the Russian "Center" Group of Forces along the Berdychi-Semenivka line.[41]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Avdiivka as of April 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

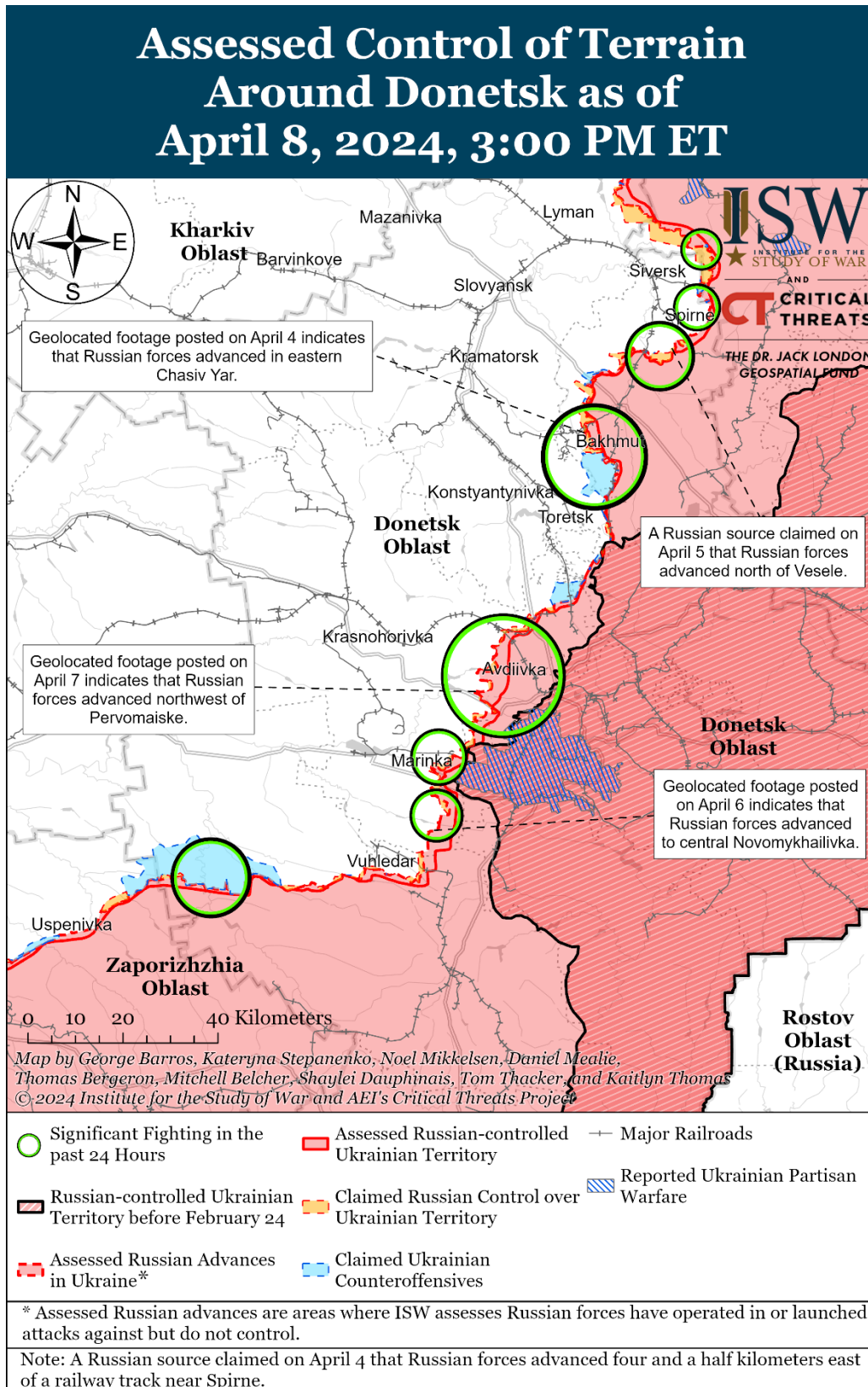


- Avdiivka City Limits
- ▬ Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- ▬ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- ▬ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▬ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- ▬ Russian Field Fortifications

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

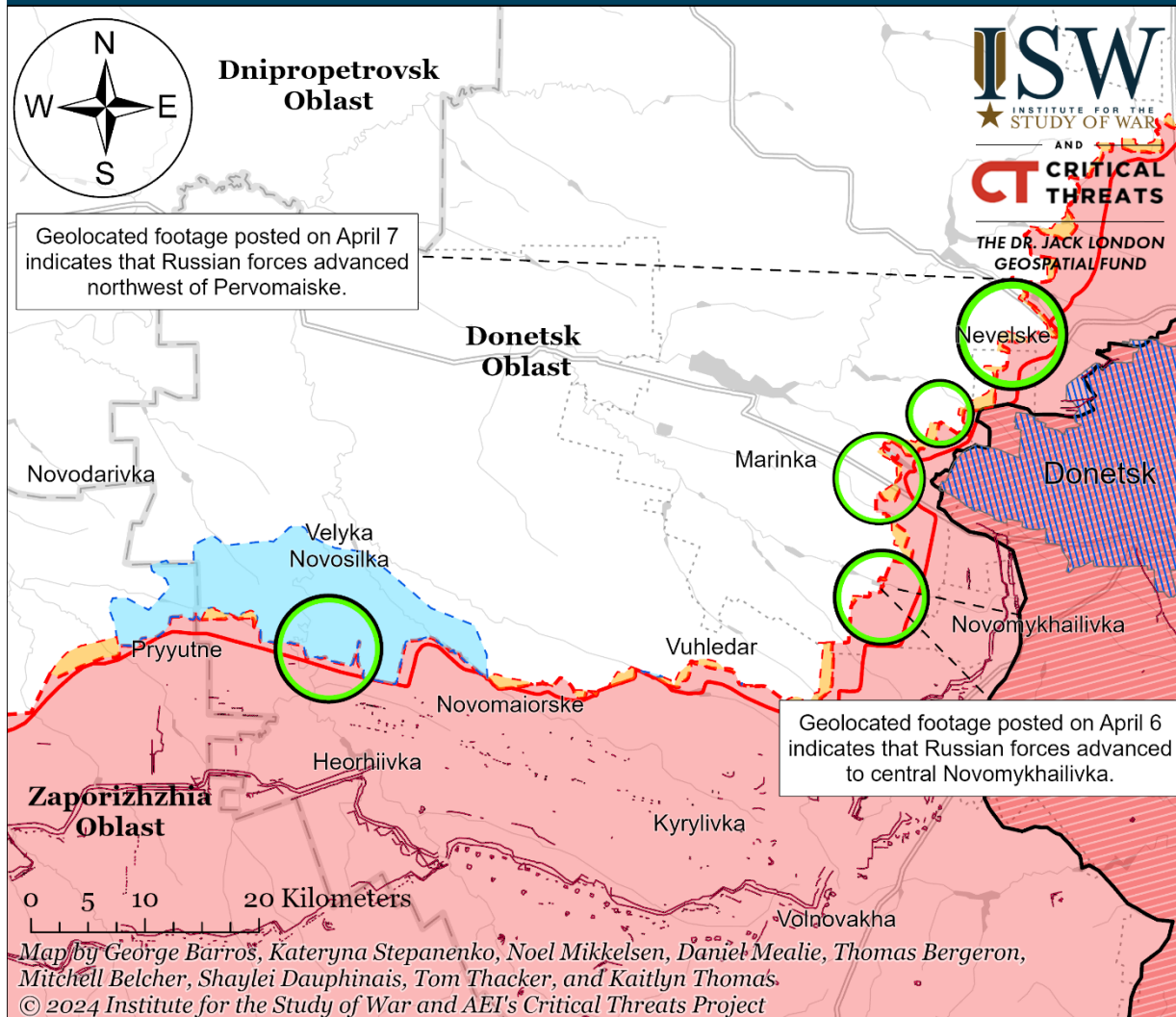
Note: A Russian source claimed on April 7 that Russian forces control 80 percent of Pervomaiske. A Russian source claimed on April 4 that Russian forces control between 20 to 25 percent of Semenivka. A Russian source claimed on April 4 that Russian forces advanced along two tree lines up to 830 meters north of Vodyane. A Russian source claimed on April 4 that Russian forces advanced along a 600 meter deep and 200 meter wide frontline near Semenivka.

Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Donetsk City. Geolocated footage published on April 7 of a roughly platoon-sized Russian mechanized assault shows that Russian forces advanced in a field north of Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[42] Ukrainian and Russian sources reported that positional engagements continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka and Pobieda.[43] A Russian milblogger claimed that the entire frontline between the area southwest of Donetsk City to the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area became more active in the past week.[44]



Limited positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area near Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka) on April 8.[45] Elements of the Russian 1171st Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th Combined Arms Army [CAA] Eastern Military District [EMD]), 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD), 36th Motorized Rifle Brigade (29th CAA, EMD), and 38th Motorized Rifle Brigade (35th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.[46]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Donetsk Oblast as of April 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



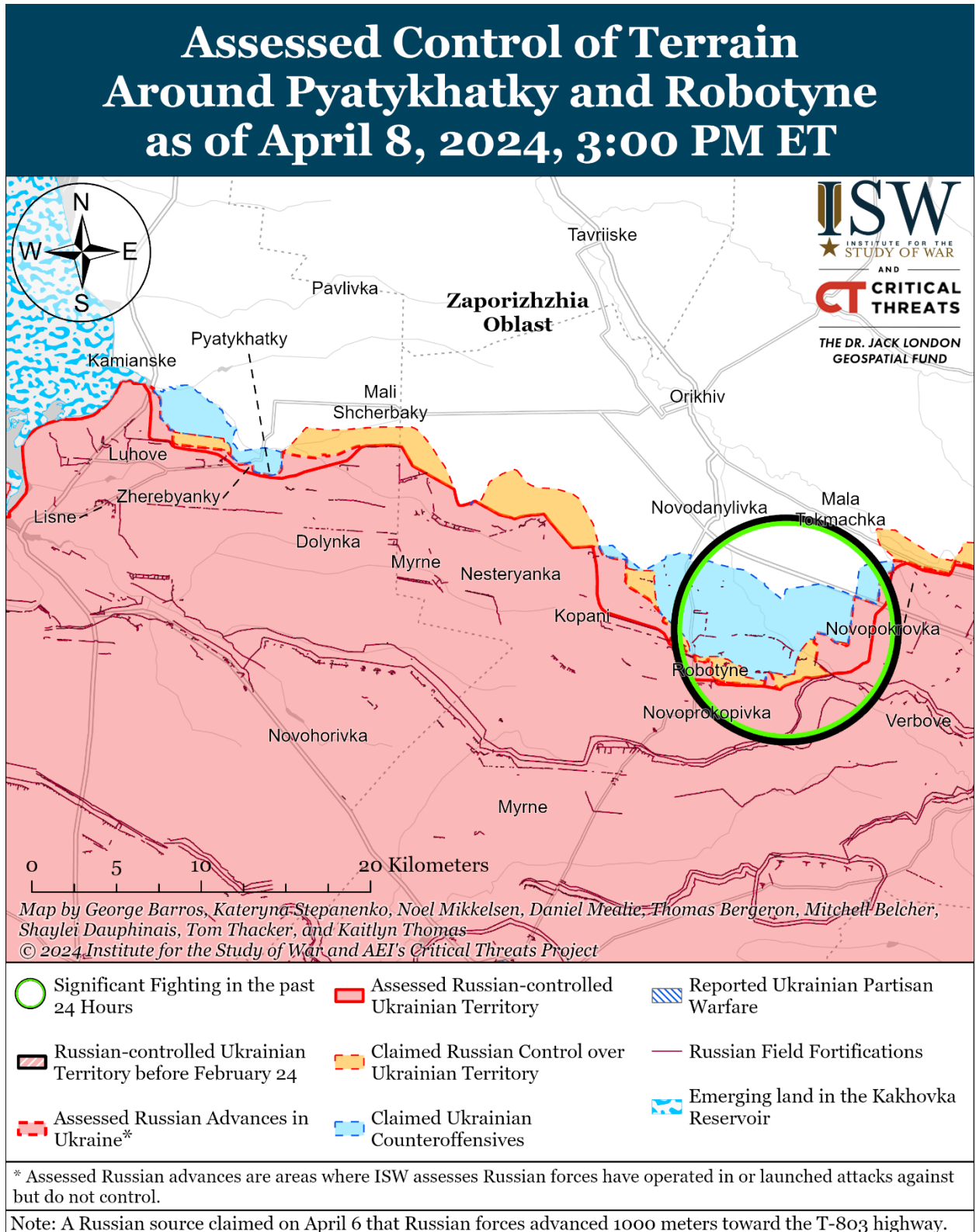
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Russian Field Fortifications
- Assessed Russian Advances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

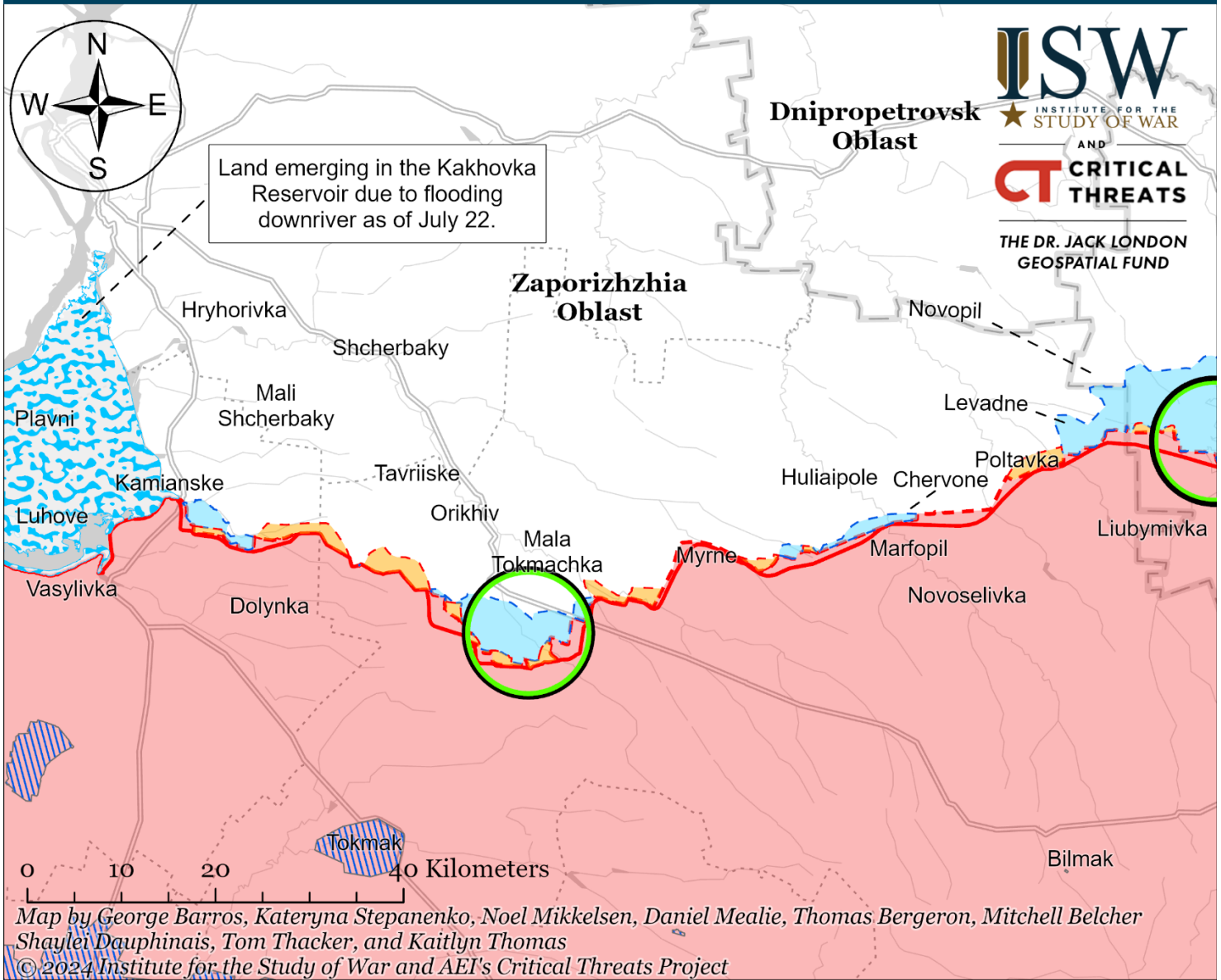
Note: A Russian source claimed on April 7 that Russian forces control 80 percent of Pervomaiske.


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

Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on April 8, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional engagements continued near Robotyne and northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne).[47] Elements of the Russian 3rd Motorized Rifle Battalion of the 429th Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) reportedly continue operating in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[48]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of April 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



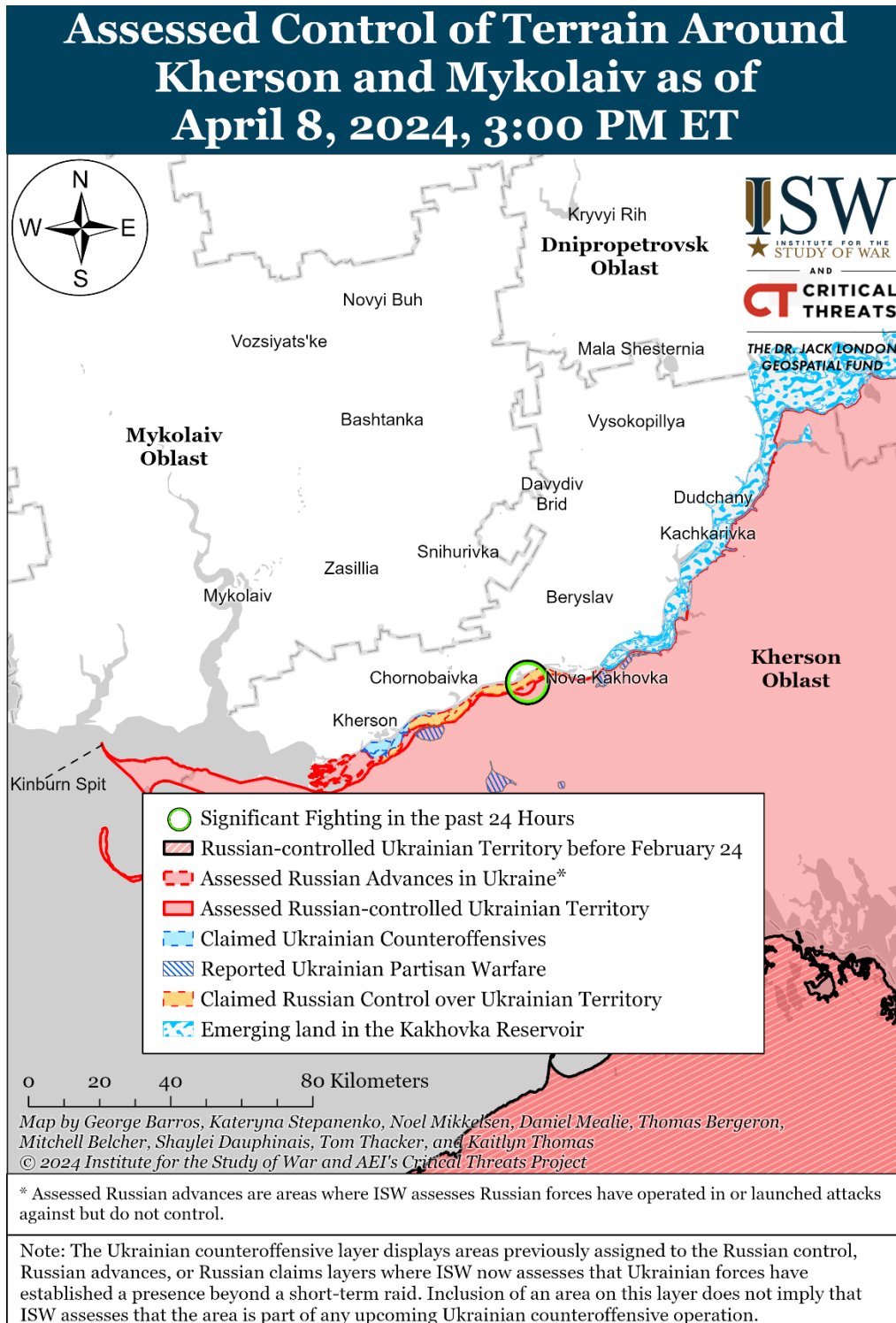
-  Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
-  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
-  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
-  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
-  Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
-  Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
-  Assessed Russian Advances 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.

Note: A Russian source claimed on April 6 that Russian forces advanced 1000 meters toward the T-803 highway.

Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov stated on April 7 that Ukraine is not involved in any military strikes or operations against the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) in response to Russian accusations that Ukrainian forces launched a series of drone strikes against the ZNPP on April 7.[49] Yusov stated that Russian forces often conduct “simulated” strikes against the ZNPP, suggesting that Russian forces may use staged attacks to falsely blame Ukraine for acting irresponsibly around the plant. ZNPP occupation officials claimed on April 8 that Russian forces shot down a Ukrainian drone, which allegedly fell onto the containment unit of reactor no.6, and that the drone did not cause any critical damages or casualties.[50]

Positional engagements continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast on April 8, including near Krynky, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline.[51] Elements of the 328th Airborne Assault (VDV) Regiment (104th VDV Division) continue operating near Krynky.[52]



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

Russian forces conducted a series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of April 7 to 8 and during the day on April 8. Ukrainian military officials reported on April 8 that Russian forces launched 24 Shahed-136/131 drones from Krasnodar Krai, Kursk Oblast, and occupied Crimea and a Kh-59 cruise missile from occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.[53] Ukrainian forces reportedly downed 17 Shahed drones over Odesa, Mykolaiv, Kirovohrad, Khmelnytskyi, and Zhytomyr oblasts and the Kh-59 missile over Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.[54] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces also conducted three missile strikes using likely Iskander-M ballistic missiles and Kh-59 missiles against Dnipropetrovsk Oblast and another strike with a Kh-35 anti-ship missile against Mykolaiv Oblast during the day on April 8.[55] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that unspecified Russian missiles struck infrastructure in southern Ukraine and that Russian drones struck Odesa City.[56] The Zvyahel City Council stated that Russian forces also struck an unspecified infrastructure facility in Zvyahel, Zhytomyr Oblast.[57]

Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko reported on April 8 that Russia is conducting a larger and more intense strike campaign against Ukrainian energy infrastructure than it did in late 2022 and early 2023.[58] Halushchenko stated that Russia has attempted to strike up to 80 percent of all of Ukraine's thermal power plants and has targeted most hydroelectric plants in Ukraine and "a large number" of substations in the current intensified strike campaign. *Financial Times* reported on April 8 that Russian forces are specifically using precision missiles to target Ukrainian energy infrastructure in areas less protected than Kyiv, with the aim of inflicting "permanent, irreparable damage" on Ukrainian infrastructure, very likely including Ukraine defense industrial base.[59] ISW has frequently noted that the lack of Western-provided critical air defense systems has forced Ukraine to make difficult decisions on where it allocates scarce air defense assets.[60]

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

Russian President Vladimir Putin instructed the Russian Cabinet of Ministers and Russian machine construction company KONAR JSC to increase the production of components for Russia's domestic machine tools industry, likely as part of ongoing efforts to expand the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) and mitigate the effects of international sanctions.[61] Putin also stated that Russia should localize the production of machine tool components and should increase the domestic production of domestic ship components. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishutin recently stated that Russia increased its production of machine tools by more than 60 percent by the end of 2023 (presumably compared to 2022) after Russia's machine tool production atrophied for the past 30 years.[62] ISW has observed recent reports that Russia continues to source foreign-made precision machine tools from China and other Western countries and operate them to produce Russian military equipment despite international sanctions.[63]

Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec Industry Director Bekhan Ozdoyev touted the claimed success of Rostec's 2023 contributions to Russian DIB production. Ozdoyev claimed that Rostec enterprises currently produce 90 percent of the military equipment that Russian forces use in Ukraine and that Rostec increased the production volume of self-propelled artillery 10-fold, towed artillery 14-fold, mortars 20-fold, and multiple rocket launch systems (MLRS) by twofold in 2023 compared to 2022.[64] Ozdoyev claimed that Rostec enterprises supplied 25 times more ammunition to the Russian military in 2023 than in 2022 and that Rostec's ammunition factories are working at full capacity and operate on a 24/7 work schedule.

The Russian government continues to standardize benefits for Russian personnel operating in Ukraine. Mishutin signed a decree on April 8 granting Rosgvardia volunteers (*dobrovoltsy*) the same social and financial benefits as personnel serving in volunteer units under the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD).[65] Russia has reportedly deployed at least 35,000 Rosgvardia personnel to occupied Ukraine.[66]

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

Rostec Industry Director Bekhan Ozdoyev stated that Rostec continues to develop and test new weapons for use in Ukraine. Ozdoyev stated in an interview to Russian state outlet TASS published on April 8 that Rostec has created a prototype of a TOS-3 thermobaric artillery system that will be mounted on a tracked vehicle and have a greater firing range than its TOS-1A and TOS-2 predecessors.[67] Ozdoyev also claimed that Rostec is producing gunpowder from alternate raw materials such as wood and flax cellulose and new munitions for Russian drones to drop on Ukrainian forces. Ozdoyev claimed that Rostec is also developing new ammunition with unspecified "new characteristics" designed to penetrate the armor of any improved armored vehicles that Ukraine may field. Ozdoyev claimed that Rostec is also developing a 30mm high-explosive fragmentation projectile, which has passed state tests for Russian tank support combat vehicles (BMPTs) and other vehicles

to fire. Ozdojev also stated that Russia developed several new systems in 2023, including: the 152mm 2S43 Malva wheeled howitzer, the 2S41 82mm Drok mortar, and the 2S38 57mm Derivatsiya-PVO air defense system.

Russian forces continue to field new weapons and military equipment in Ukraine. A Russian milblogger claimed on April 7 that Russian forces fielded RBK-500 Shoab-0.5 fragmentation aerial bombs against Ukrainian forces for the first time.[68] Other milbloggers claimed that Russia is testing a robotic “Stalker” mine clearing vehicle and posted footage of the vehicle allegedly operating near Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast.[69]

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

Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov signed an order on April 8 creating the Audit Committee, an advisory body for the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense’s (MoD) Department of Internal Audit.[70] The committee includes Ukrainian defense officials and external auditors, including NATO headquarters’ External Oversight Service Head Francois Gautier and the US Department of Defense (DoD) Office of the Inspector General analyst and evaluator Joseph Ingnoli.[71]

The *Financial Times* (*FT*) reported on April 8 that the European defense industries’ reliance on Chinese cotton threatens European states’ abilities to expand their domestic ammunition production for Ukraine.[72] *FT* reported that European defense contractors, notably Germany’s Rheinmetall, Sweden’s Saab, and the UK’s BAE Systems, warned that European defense industries are reliant on Chinese cotton linters to produce nitrocellulose, a necessary component of gunpowder for artillery shells and other explosives, and that any deterioration of relations with China may impact their ability to source the linters. Rheinmetall Head Armin Papperger told *FT* that Europe relies on China for “more than 70 percent” of these cotton linters. *FT* noted that China accounts for 49.3 percent of the global cotton linter market followed by the United States at 24.9 percent, Spain at 10.1 percent, Uzbekistan at 9.1 percent, and Estonia at 2.3 percent.

Ukraine’s Western partners continue efforts to provide, source, and finance military assistance to Ukraine. Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur stated that Estonia can purchase artillery shells and missiles worth two to three million euros (about 2.1 billion to 3.2 billion USD) outside of Europe and deliver them to Ukraine in the next two months if allied nations help fund the effort.[73] Pevkur stated that European Union (EU) states can provide up to 2.5 million projectiles to Ukraine in 2024 between the ongoing EU shell commitment, the Czech effort to source artillery shells from outside the EU, and additional UK efforts.[74] Lithuania also transferred an unspecified number of M577 Command Post Carrier vehicles to Ukraine that reached the country as of April 6.[75] Dutch Defense Minister Kajsa Ollongren stated on April 6 that the Netherlands will transfer 24 F-16s to Ukraine after Denmark begins transferring the promised F-16s to Ukraine, which Ollongren stated will begin in summer 2024.[76] Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė announced on April 5 that Lithuania will allocate two million euros to Ukraine to purchase 3,000 first person view (FPV) drone from the United Kingdom (UK).[77] The Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada announced on April 3 that Latvia has provided a comprehensive aid package to Ukraine worth about 10 million euros (about \$10.8 million), including 5.3 million euros (about \$5.7 million) for reconstruction and 4.3 million euros (about \$4.6 million) through the EU’s European Peace Fund to support the Ukrainian military.[78]

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

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

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

The Kremlin continues to accuse Ukraine of involvement in terrorist acts in order to discredit the Ukrainian government and military and undermine Western support for Ukraine. The Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation stated on April 8 that the Kremlin is conducting information operations accusing Ukraine of being involved in terrorism, including accusing Ukraine of conducting the April 7 drone strikes against the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) and being involved in the March 22 Crocus City Hall attack.[79] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) reiterated baseless claims that Ukrainian special services have previously conducted terrorist attacks against Russia and claimed that the US and other Western countries have enabled supposed “Ukrainian terrorism.”[80] Russian MFA Spokesperson Maria Zakharova claimed that the US and UK are complicit in Ukraine’s supposed April 7 drone strike against the ZNPP and are “sponsoring nuclear terrorism” because of US and UK military aid packages to Ukraine.[81] ZNPP occupation officials claimed on April 7 that Ukrainian drones struck the ZNPP, but the IAEA did not attribute responsibility for the strikes.[82]

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)

The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on April 8 that 400 Wagner Group personnel remain in Belarus and insinuated that Wagner personnel have been leaving Belarus to join units in Africa that receive better pay.[83]

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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