

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, April 4, 2023
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April 4, 7pm ET

Click [here](#) to see ISW’s interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Click [here](#) to access ISW’s archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain maps that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

The Kremlin will likely attempt to coerce Belarus into further Union State integration when Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko meet in Moscow on April 5 and 6. The Kremlin announced on April 4 that Putin and Lukashenko will meet for private bilateral discussions on April 5 and attend a meeting of the Supreme State Council of the Union State in Moscow on April 6.¹ The Kremlin stated that the Union State Supreme State Council meeting will address the implementation of the Union State Treaty through 28 different Union State programs from 2021 to 2023 —likely the package of 28 integration roadmaps that Lukashenko ratified in November 2021.² The Kremlin stated that Russian and Belarusian officials also plan to agree on other unspecified “practical issues of further integration,” possibly in the area of intelligence sharing, as Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Director Sergey Naryshkin met with Lukashenko in Minsk and discussed Russian-Belarusian intelligence sharing on April 4.³ The Kremlin may pressure Belarus for more integration concessions under the rubric of defending the Union State from claimed Western military and/or terrorist threats.⁴

The Kremlin continues to attempt to employ nuclear threats to deter Western military aid provisions to Ukraine ahead of Ukraine’s planned counteroffensive. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu justified Russia’s decision to deploy tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus by accusing NATO of intensifying combat training and reconnaissance activities near the Russian and Belarusian borders and accused the West of escalating the war in Ukraine by providing additional military aid to Ukraine on April 4.⁵ Shoigu reinforced existing Russian nuclear threats by stating that Belarus has nuclear-capable attack aircraft and nuclear strike-capable Iskander-M systems.⁶ Shoigu also stated that Belarusian missile forces began training in Russia to operate Iskander-M systems, including the use of tactical nuclear weapons, on April 3.⁷ Shoigu’s statements do not present any new information on Belarusian training and are likely part of an information operation. ISW previously reported that Belarusian servicemen were training with Iskander systems in Russia as of February 2023.⁸ Shoigu’s reinvigorated nuclear blackmail rhetoric coincides with Finland joining NATO and a new US aid package to Ukraine.⁹ ISW continues to assess that the risk of nuclear escalation remains extremely low and that Russian deployments of tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus are highly unlikely to affect battlefield realities in Ukraine.¹⁰ Russian-deployed nuclear weapons in Belarus additionally will almost certainly remain under the control of Russian personnel permanently deployed in Belarus.

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin’s demonstrative response to the assassination of Russian milblogger Maxim Fomin (Vladlen Tatarsky) indicates

Prigozhin likely believes that the attack was in part directed at himself. Prigozhin held an event on April 4 at the remnants of the restaurant where Fomin was killed by an improvised explosive device on April 2.¹¹ Prigozhin claimed that he arrived at the scene from the Bakhmut frontline as quickly as he could to commemorate Fomin. Prigozhin announced that he intends to expand “Kiber Front Z”—the Wagner-affiliated ultranationalist group that held Fomin’s fatal event—into a social movement that fights against external threats.¹² Prigozhin stated that the Wagner Group has been thwarting attempts by unnamed actors to eliminate the group since 2014.¹³ Prigozhin also noted that he will offer financial compensation to the event’s attendees. Prigozhin’s publicly demonstrative response and vague accusations of a campaign against Wagner suggest that Prigozhin is likely attempting to indirectly frame the incident as an attack on him.¹⁴ Prigozhin’s response also shows that he intends to continue to pursue a central position within the Russian pro-war ultranationalist community, despite the threat of violence and pushback.

The Kremlin continued efforts to (falsely) reassure the Russian public that the war in Ukraine will not have significant long-term economic consequences. Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the Tula Railway Engineering Plant and attempted to address workers’ economic concerns on April 4.¹⁵ Putin later held a State Council Presidium meeting to discuss developing Russian industry in the face of sanctions pressure, during which he claimed that sanctions are having positive outcomes by forcing Russian firms to embrace import substitution, an argument the Kremlin has made sporadically since the 2014 annexation of Crimea.¹⁶ Putin suggested in both meetings that Russian industry as a whole will be able to grow like the Russian agricultural sector did following the imposition of Western sanctions in 2014.¹⁷ Putin has previously relied on the example of post-2014 Russian agricultural growth to assuage Russians of their economic anxieties but has yet to offer concrete proposals for how Russian industry would increase domestic production in a similar way.¹⁸ ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin will likely struggle to reassure Russians about their economic concerns while also setting informational conditions for a protracted war in Ukraine and mobilizing a wider portion of Russia’s defense industrial base (DIB).¹⁹

The Kremlin is likely trying to shift responsibility for expanding Russian industry onto regional bodies to insulate itself from possible criticism about Russia’s deteriorating economic situation. Putin emphasized the need for regionally based industrial development funds to assume a greater role in supporting Russian industry and stated that the Russian government should consider refinancing regional funds for these efforts, including from federal reserve funds.²⁰ Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov also attempted to reassure the Russian public on April 3 by stating that there will be no problems financing budget obligations and that reserves will cover falling oil and gas revenues for the federal budget.²¹ Siluanov stated that Russian officials are unlikely to replenish reserves in the National Welfare Fund in 2023.²² A growing Russian overreliance on funding through reserves could lead to further economic instability.

Key Takeaways

- **The Kremlin will likely attempt to coerce Belarus into further Union State integration when Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko meet in Moscow on April 5 and 6.**
- **The Kremlin continues to attempt to employ nuclear threats to deter Western military aid provisions to Ukraine ahead of Ukraine’s planned counteroffensive.**

- **Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin's demonstrative response to the assassination of Russian milblogger Maxim Fomin indicates that Prigozhin likely believes that the attack was in part directed at himself.**
- **The Kremlin continues to attempt to (falsely) reassure the Russian public that the war in Ukraine will not have significant long-term economic consequences.**
- **The Kremlin is likely trying to shift more responsibility for growing Russian industry onto regional bodies to insulate itself from possible criticism about Russia's deteriorating economic situation.**
- **Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations in and around Bakhmut, and along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City frontline.**
- **Russian forces continue to prepare for a rumored pending Ukrainian counteroffensive in the southern direction.**
- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu claimed that Russia's ongoing spring conscription cycle is going according to plan, progressing as quickly as planned, and has completed initial military registration.**
- **Russian occupation officials denied Ukrainian reports that Russian occupation authorities are preparing evacuation plans from occupied regions of Ukraine.**
- **Belarusian state media claimed that the Belarusian State Security Committee (KGB) reportedly arrested two men under the suspicion of attempted terrorist attacks in Grodno.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because those 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 population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

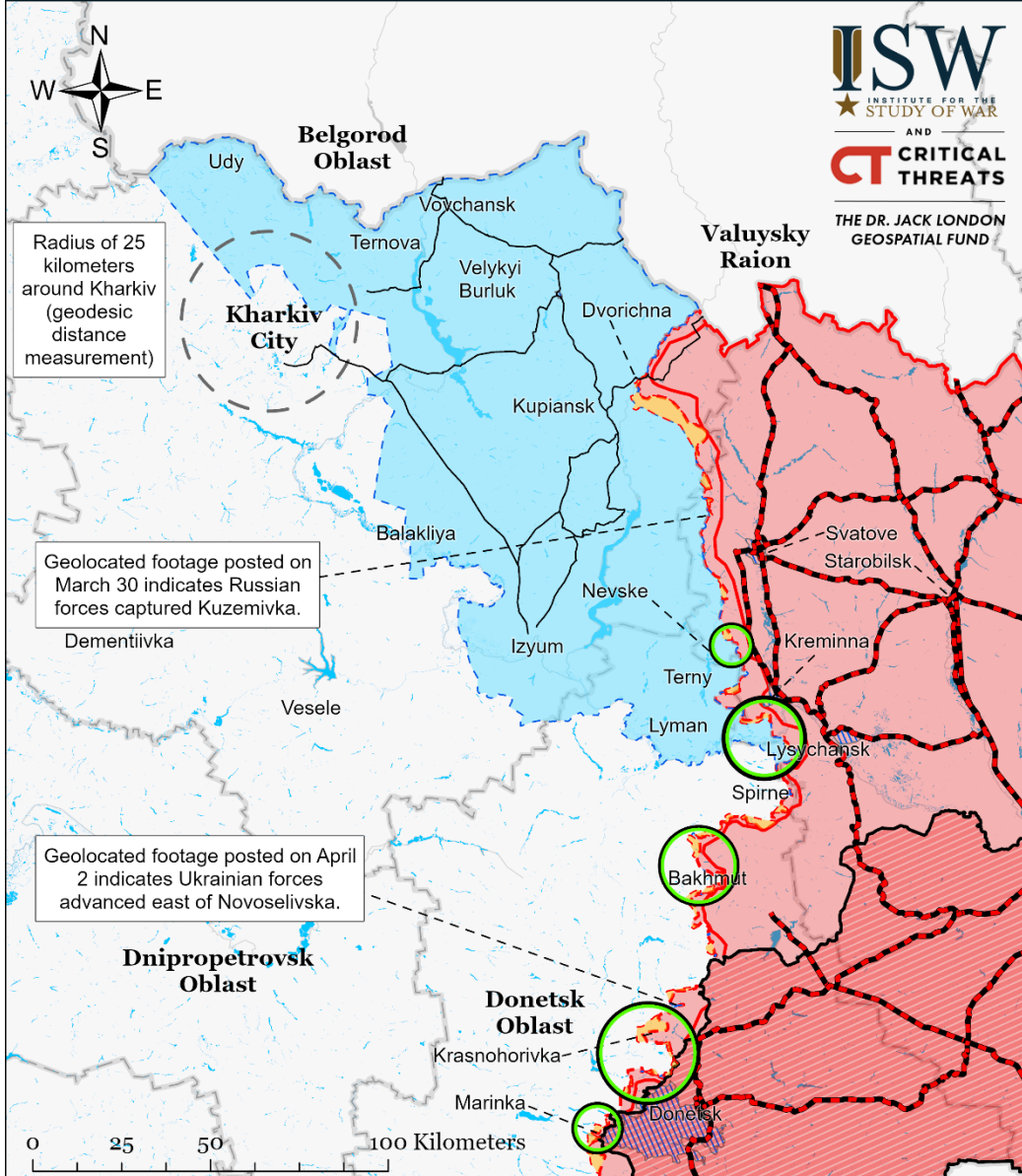
- Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1—Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2—Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort—Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied Areas

Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1— Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and continue offensive operations into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line on April 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Kreminna, Nevske (20km northwest of Kreminna), Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna), and Serebrianska forest area (10km south of Kreminna).²³ Russian milbloggers claimed on April 3 that Russian forces attacked Ukrainian positions near the Zhuravka gully (18km west of Kreminna) and that elements of the 1st Guards Tank Army (Western Military District) attacked Ukrainian positions near Kuzemivka (14km northwest of Svatove).²⁴ A milblogger claimed on April 4 that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to advance near Nevske, Torske (14km west of Kreminna), and Bilohorivka (10km south of Kreminna). Geolocated footage published on April 4 indicated a limited Ukrainian advance northeast of Verkhokamianske (18km south of Kreminna).²⁵ Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty stated that Russian conventional and mobilized forces operating in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction are using more armored vehicles and act more cautiously in ground battles than Russian personnel in other sectors of the frontline.²⁶ Russian forces may be attempting to conserve forces in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction ahead of an anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of April 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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Radius of 25 kilometers around Kharkiv (geodesic distance measurement)

Geolocated footage posted on March 30 indicates Russian forces captured Kuzemivka.
Dementivka

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

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

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

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

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

Russian forces continued offensive operations within Bakhmut on April 4. Geolocated footage published on April 3 indicates that Russian forces likely advanced in southern Bakhmut closer to the Avangard stadium.²⁷ Russian milbloggers claimed on April 4 that Wagner forces captured the Bakhmut-1 railway station, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.²⁸ Russian sources claimed that Wagner forces completely cleared the territory of the AZOM industrial complex in northern Bakhmut, advanced in northwestern Bakhmut, and continued fighting in Bakhmut city center.²⁹ A Russian milblogger claimed that Wagner fighters completely control central Bakhmut, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim, and it is unclear how the milblogger defines “central Bakhmut.”³⁰ Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces are gradually transferring personnel to the western part of Bakhmut from elsewhere in the city and that Wagner fighters are currently probing Ukrainian defenses in the city in search of the most favorable areas for future assaults.³¹ A Ukrainian withdrawal to secondary lines of defense in the city and a Wagner focus on probing attacks would likely result in a temporary decrease in Russian forces’ operational tempo within Bakhmut.

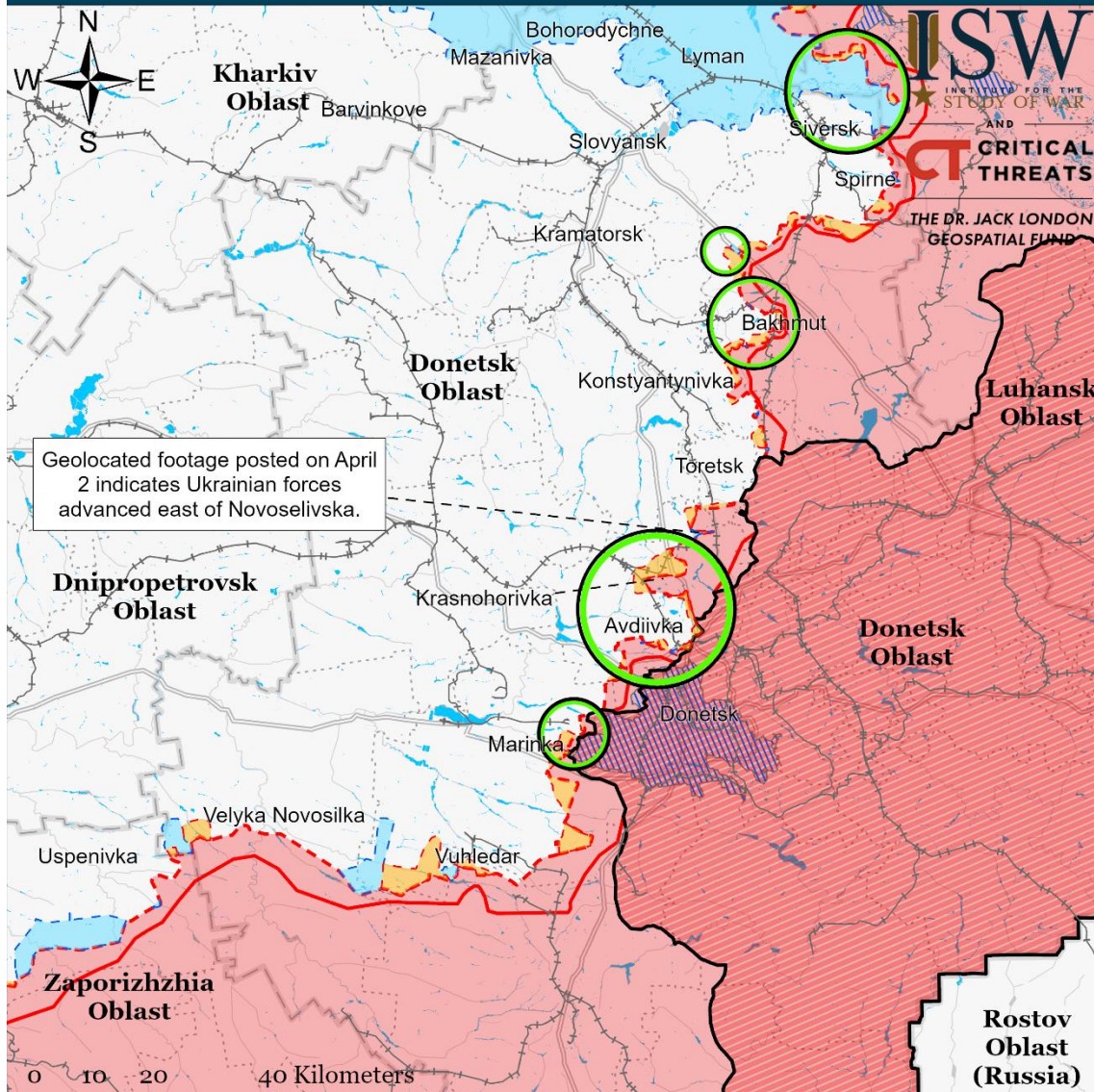
Russian forces continued offensive operations around Bakhmut on April 4. Russian sources claimed that battles took place near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut), Khromove (2km west of Bakhmut), and Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut).³² A Russian source claimed that Russian forces transitioned to positional defensive tactics near Orikhovo-Vasylivka in preparation for expected Ukrainian counterattacks.³³ A Russian milblogger claimed that recent Ukrainian counterattacks to push Wagner fighters away from Ivanivske and the T0504 have been unsuccessful.³⁴ The milblogger also claimed that Russian forces conducted assaults west of Klishchiivka (6km southwest of Bakhmut) and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).³⁵ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Orikhovo-Vasylikva, Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), and Ivanivske.³⁶ Ukrainian Eastern Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty reported that Russian forces conducted 32 attacks in the Bakhmut area with 26 combat clashes in Bakhmut City and its surroundings.³⁷ Cherevaty also reported that Russian conventional forces are continuing to reinforce Wagner fighters in the Bakhmut area because of Wagner’s extensive losses, likely in an effort to maintain Russian forces’ current tempo of offensive operations in and around the city.³⁸

Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City frontline on April 4. Geolocated footage published on April 4 indicates that Russian forces made marginal gains west of Novobakhmutivka (13km northwest of Avdiivka).³⁹ Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attempted to advance towards Avdiivka from the southwest and east and conducted assaults near Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka) and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka) as well as within Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka).⁴⁰ Russian Southern Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Ivan Bigma claimed that an unspecified motorized rifle unit of the Southern Grouping of Forces repelled a Ukrainian reconnaissance-in-force operation near Marinka.⁴¹ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Avdiivka itself, within 13km north of Avdiivka near Novokalynove and Krasnohorivka, and within 27km southwest of Avdiivka near Sieverne, Pervomaiske, and Marinka.⁴²

Ukrainian forces likely conducted a counterattack northeast of Avdiivka. Geolocated footage published on April 2 indicates that Ukrainian forces likely recaptured positions northwest of Novoselivka (17km northeast of Avdiivka) and advanced close to the settlement.⁴³ It is unclear if Ukrainian forces still hold these positions or if Ukrainian forces conducted reconnaissance-in-force operations and subsequently left the area. A Russian milblogger claimed on April 3 that Ukrainian forces are preparing for counterattacks in the Avdiivka area after several unsuccessful counterattack attempts.⁴⁴

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on April 4. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces resumed assault operations near Mykilske (27km southwest of Donetsk City) in an attempt to bypass Vuhledar (30km southwest of Donetsk City) from the east.⁴⁵

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of April 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

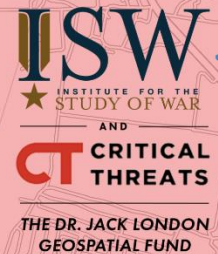
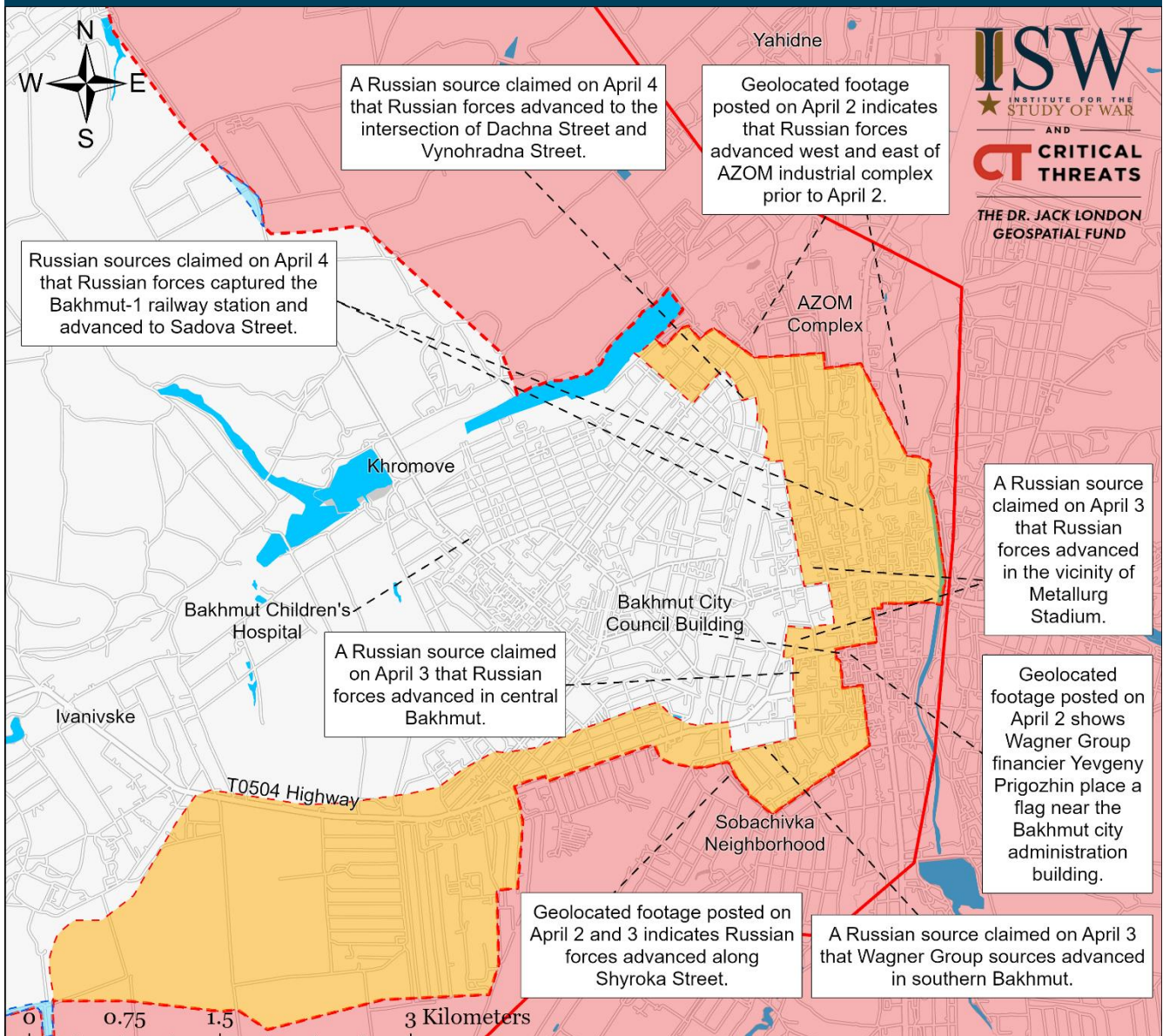


Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Will Kiern, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AET's Critical Threats Project

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

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

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of April 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Will Kielm, and Mitchell Belcher
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- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

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

Russian forces continue to prepare for a rumored upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive in the southern direction.⁴⁶ The Ukrainian General Staff reported on April 4 that Russian forces did not conduct offensive operations in the Kherson and Zaporizhia directions but rather continued to build up their defensive capabilities.⁴⁷ Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko stated that Russian forces moved heavy equipment, infantry fighting vehicles, and ammunition from the rear in Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast in the direction of Rozivka, Zaporizhia Oblast (45km northwest of Mariupol).⁴⁸ One Russian milblogger posted footage from an unspecified date and location allegedly showing Russian forces repelling a Ukrainian attack in the Zaporizhia direction.⁴⁹

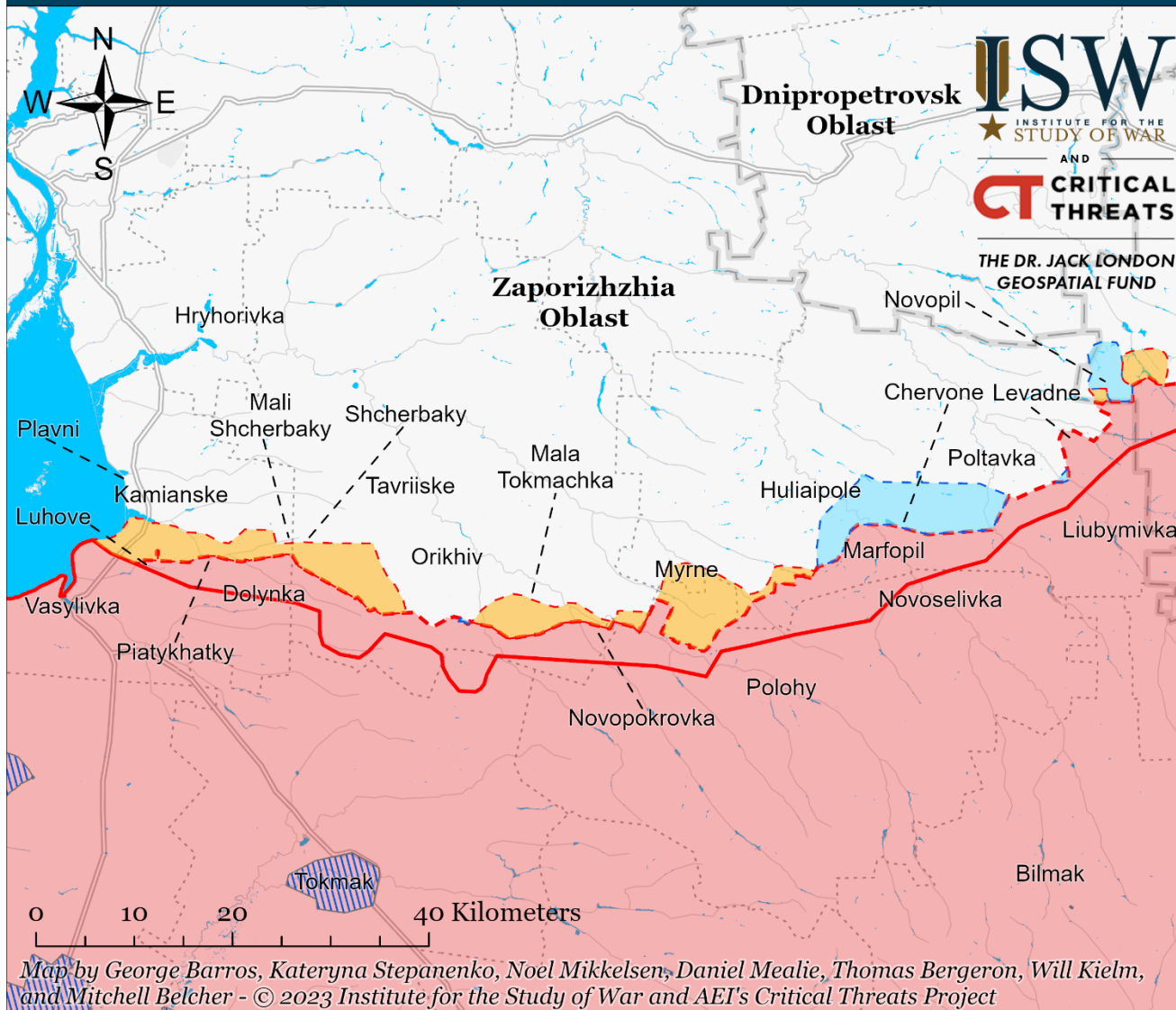
Russian forces struck Ukrainian infrastructure in Odesa and Mykolaiv oblasts between April 3 and 4. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported on April 4 that Ukrainian forces destroyed 14 of 17 Shahed-131 and -136 drones, 13 of which Ukrainian forces shot down over Odesa Oblast and one drone over Mykolaiv Oblast.⁵⁰ The Southern Operational Command stated that the drones caused a fire in an industrial facility in an unspecified location in Odesa Oblast.⁵¹ Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Shahed drones struck the military airfield in Shkilnyi Raion and Odesa Aircraft Repair Plant in Odesa City, though ISW cannot independently confirm these claims.⁵² Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported on April 4 that Russian forces struck agricultural territory and industrial areas in the Kherson City and Beryslav, Kherson Oblast directions with guided bombs from Su-35 aircraft.⁵³ Russian forces conducted routine shelling along the southern axis on April 3 and 4.⁵⁴

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of April 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

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

Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu stressed that Russia's ongoing spring conscription cycle is going according to plan, progressing as quickly as planned, and has completed initial military registration on April 4.⁵⁵ Shoigu likely hoped to quash concerns that Russia's military lacks the administrative capacity to process, train, and account for the current class of approximately 147,000 conscripts after Russia's lackluster partial mobilization in September 2022. Shoigu framed the process as an example of Russian modernization successes, attributing alleged logistical ease to digitization and electronic recruitment. Shoigu claimed that 706,230 personnel arrived at Russian military registration and enlistment offices.⁵⁶ ISW maintains that spring conscription is extremely unlikely to increase Russian combat power in the short term due to intrinsic training requirements for conscripts and that Russian President Vladimir Putin is unlikely to openly deploy conscripts for fear of political costs.⁵⁷

The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) stated on April 4 that Russia seeks to sponsor and develop alternative private military companies (PMCs) to replace the Wagner Group's combat role.⁵⁸ The UK MoD Intelligence Service implied that Russian authorities desire to replace Wagner with a more-controllable alternative due to the feud between the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Wagner Group.⁵⁹ This supports ISW's ongoing assessments on the declining influence of Wagner and Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin.⁶⁰ Independent Russian news outlet *Meduza* reported on April 4 that the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service proposed mandating that members of the Public Monitoring Commission, which monitors prisoner's rights, give 48 hours' notice before visiting Russian detention centers.⁶¹ This reduction of prison oversight may enable the expansion of Russian military recruitment efforts in prisons for Wagner or other groups.

The Russian "Alexander Nevsky" volunteer reconnaissance and assault brigade is continuing to form new volunteer battalions.⁶² The Alexander Nevsky brigade reported that it formed three additional volunteer assault battalions named after Russian saints Daniil Moskovskiy, Dmitry Donskoy, and Alexander Peresvet. The Alexander Nevsky brigade also incorporated the "Borz" sabotage and reconnaissance detachment as a volunteer assault battalion.

Activity in Russian-occupied Areas (Russian objective: consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian civilians into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Russian occupation officials denied Ukrainian reports that they are preparing plans to evacuate from occupied regions of Ukraine. Ukrainian Kherson Oblast Military Advisor Serhiy Khlan reported that Russian occupation authorities offered "voluntary evacuations" to Ukrainians living in occupied Skadovsk in Kherson Oblast to Crimea or Russia.⁶³ Kherson Oblast occupation administration Head Vladimir Saldo denied the Ukrainian report and claimed that Russian forces are discussing plans to seize the west (right) bank in Kherson Oblast.⁶⁴ Zaporizhia Oblast occupation deputy Vladimir Rogov denied claims that occupation officials in Berdyansk organized civilian evacuations and claimed that Russian forces reliably defend Berdyansk and occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.⁶⁵ Russian occupation authorities rarely respond to Ukrainian claims about evacuations. Russian occupation officials' denial

of civilian evacuations far from the frontline could suggest doubt in Russian forces' ability to hold occupied territory.

Russian occupation officials continue to coerce Ukrainians in Russian-occupied areas to receive Russian passports. Ukrainian Kherson Oblast Military Advisor Serhiy Khlan reported that Russian occupation authorities on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River restricted movement and denied services to Ukrainian civilians who have not acquired Russian passports.⁶⁶ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that occupation officials in some areas of the Kakhovka Raion in Kherson Oblast have forbidden civilians from leaving their homes since April 2 and closed off public spaces such as hospitals and shopping centers during the day.⁶⁷

Russian occupation authorities are attempting to integrate occupied Ukrainian territories through healthcare and education measures. Kherson Oblast occupation chairperson Andrey Alekseenko claimed that all residents of occupied Kherson Oblast can receive free medical care through Russian medical insurance available only through a Russian government-run online portal and government-run centers.⁶⁸ ISW previously reported on Russian occupation officials using healthcare access to assert control over civilians living in occupied areas.⁶⁹ Zaporizhia Oblast occupation Head Yevgeny Balitsky claimed that Azov State Pedagogical University in Berdyansk will accept students in bachelor's, specialist, and master's programs for free and issue Russian graduate diplomas.⁷⁰

The Kremlin continues to shift responsibility for integrating occupied Ukrainian territory onto regional authorities. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration claimed that Krasnodar Krai Department of Consumer Issues representatives visited occupied Kherson Oblast, stated that the Department plans to expand trade turnover and investment in occupied Kherson Oblast, and drafted a list of potential companies and individuals who could work with entities in Kherson Oblast.⁷¹ ISW previously reported on Kremlin efforts to promote programs between Russian regions and occupied Ukrainian territories in an attempt to promote socio-economic integration while shifting financial burdens away from the Kremlin.⁷²

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

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

Belarusian state media claimed that the Belarusian State Security Committee (KGB) reportedly arrested two men accused of attempting terrorist attacks in Grodno on April 4.⁷³ The KGB claimed that the Ukrainian State Security Service (SBU) recruited two Russian and Belarusian men to conduct terrorist attacks against a military recruitment center, a military unit, two tank storage facilities, and Russia's Consulate General in Grodno. KGB Chairman Ivan Tretel claimed that Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and the Czech Republic are preparing militants to intensify terrorist activity against Russia and Belarus in spring 2023, and claimed that Ukrainian special services are curating these attacks using

Belarusian and Russian citizens.⁷⁴ These statements and arrests occurred ahead of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin scheduled for April 5 and April 6 and may be an effort to set information conditions for more Russian-Belarusian integration under the guise of combating terrorism.⁷⁵

The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced the start of numerous readiness military exercises in Belarus on April 4. Lukashenko ordered Belarusian forces to begin combat readiness inspections focusing on the Belarusian military's ability to operate in a changing environment and check conscripts' readiness to staff brigades.⁷⁶ Belarusian Air Force and Air Defense Commander Colonel Andrey Lukyanovich is overseeing joint staff exercises of Belarus' Air Force and Air Defense Forces within the context of the joint Russian-Belarusian Regional Grouping of Forces.⁷⁷ Artillery and missile elements of the Belarusian Northwestern Operational Command are conducting field exercises at the Osipovich Training Ground in Mogilev Oblast.⁷⁸ Unspecified logistics elements of the Belarusian 120th Separate Mechanized Brigade deployed to an unspecified area after removing military equipment from storage.⁷⁹

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/70863>

² <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russia-review-october-20-%E2%80%93-november-9-2021>

³ <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/70863>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/56147>; <https://tass dot ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/17441863>

⁴ <https://t.me/ontnews/111432> ; <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/04/04/v-kgb-belarusi-zayavili-cto-predotvratili-terakt-v-konsulstve-rf-v-grodno-ego-yakoby-planirovali-pod-rukovodstvom-ukrainskoy-razvedki>

⁵ <https://telegra dot ph/Vstupitelnoe-slovo-Ministra-oborony-Rossijskoj-Federacii-general-a-armii-Sergeya-SHOjgu-na-tematichesk-om-selektorn-om-soveshchanii-04-04>

⁶ <https://news.yahoo.com/belarus-receives-aircraft-iskander-missiles-095207697.html>

⁷ <https://t.me/modmilby/25140>; <https://telegra dot ph/Vstupitelnoe-slovo-Ministra-oborony-Rossijskoj-Federacii-general-a-armii-Sergeya-SHOjgu-na-tematichesk-om-selektorn-om-soveshchanii-04-04>

⁸ <https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%2C%20February%2016%2C%202023%20PDF.pdf>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-1-2023>

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/04/us/politics/us-ukraine-military-aid.html>; <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/finland-set-join-nato-historic-shift-while-sweden-waits-2023-04-04/>

¹⁰ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-25-2023>

¹¹ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/683

¹² https://t.me/concordgroup_official/684

¹³ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/684

¹⁴ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-2-2023>

¹⁵ <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/70859>

¹⁶ <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/70860>

¹⁷ <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/70859> ; <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/70860>

¹⁸ <https://isw.pub/UkrWar031623> ; <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/70860>

- ¹⁹ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-16-2023>
- ²⁰ <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/70860>
- ²¹ <https://tass dot ru/ekonomika/17436751> ; <https://t.me/readovkanews/56140>
- ²² <https://www.kommersant dot ru/doc/5913221>
- ²³ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid09hgNePeV9U2SwNxExnPA7H8SHNsYV3u43xHa3dTwLUYSaSZgknZiyAoFXkfjQq3ul>
- ²⁴ https://t.me/boris_rozhin/82118; <https://t.me/rybar/45427>
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