

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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April 12, 5:30pm ET

Russia continued offensive operations in eastern Ukraine on a limited basis as it worked to reconstitute forces withdrawn from the Battle of Kyiv and to establish necessary logistical bases for increased offensive operations in the Donbas area. Russian forces withdrawn from the Kyiv region have not yet been reintroduced into Ukraine to fight. The Russian military has continued to conduct small-scale limited offensive operations on the Izyum and Severodonetsk axes and has not yet gone over to a better-resourced or broader offensive campaign. The Battle of Mariupol continues even as Ukrainian officials accuse Russia of using chemical weapons on Mariupol's defenders.

Key Takeaways

- **The Russian military continues offensive operations in Donbas and is not in a pure reconstitution phase. It has not undertaken an across-the-board operational pause while waiting for reinforcements to arrive. In part, as a result, it has made limited gains while continuing to sustain significant losses.**
- **Mariupol has not yet fallen.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 12, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, and Thomas Bergeron
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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.

The Russian military continues efforts to reconstitute forces damaged in the failed attack on Kyiv in the Belgorod and Voronezh areas but has not yet sent those forces back into Ukraine to resume fighting. Ukrainian reports suggest that morale and will to fight remain low in some Russian units and areas. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on April 12 that elements of the Russian 41st Combined Arms Army and the 90th Tank Division are relocating to Belgorod and Voronezh Oblasts.¹

The Ukrainian Defense Intelligence also claimed on April 12 that Russian troops continued to struggle with low morale and that promised financial incentives to participate in combat in Ukraine have not been delivered to some units as promised.² The report stated that servicemen of the 47th Guards Tank Division of the 1st Tank Army failed to receive promised additional payment for participating in operations in Ukraine and that military leadership ignored appeals for payments.³ The Ukrainian GUR claims that Russian troops are refusing to participate in fighting due to the number of bodies returning to Russia from Ukraine and that the Russian military is shipping bodies in smaller batches to avoid causing panic in local communities.

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.

ISW has updated its assessment of the four primary efforts Russian forces are engaged in at this time:

- Main effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate supporting efforts);
- Supporting effort 1—Kharkiv and Izyum;
- Supporting effort 2—Southern axis;
- Supporting effort 3—Sumy and northeastern Ukraine.

Main effort—Eastern Ukraine

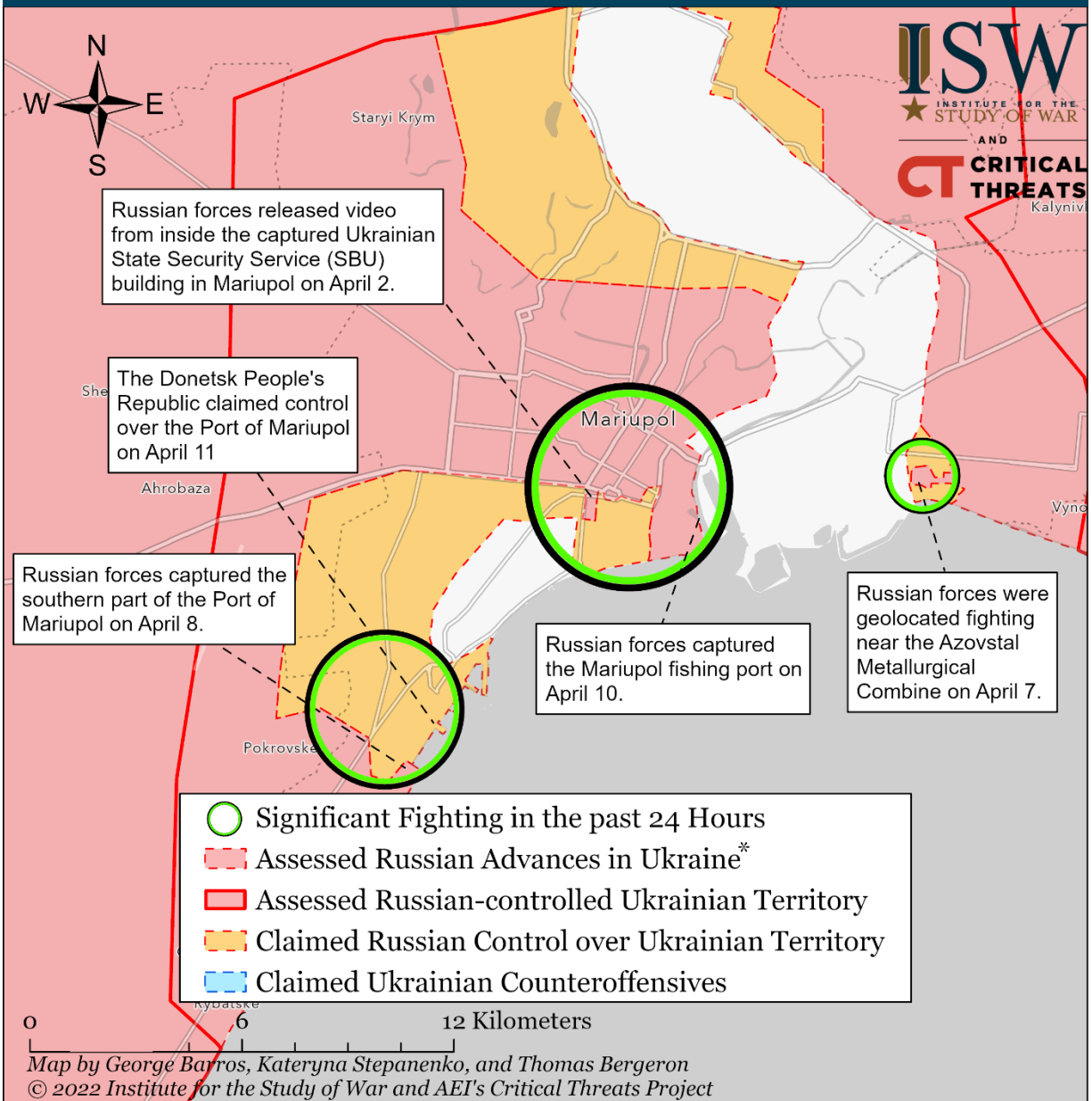
Subordinate main effort—Mariupol (Russian objective: Capture Mariupol and reduce the Ukrainian defenders)

Ukrainian sources alleged that Russian troops used unspecified chemical weapons with suffocating effects on Ukrainian defenders and civilians in Mariupol on April 11.⁴ ISW has not been able to independently verify these specific allegations but has repeatedly warned that Russian troops might use chemical weapons.⁵ Mariupol is an optimal location in which Russian forces might use chemical weapons to demonstrate their willingness to escalate while reducing the risk that the international community could obtain incontrovertible proof of their violation of Russia's international legal commitments to abstain from using such weapons. Russia's encirclement of Mariupol allows Moscow to prevent outsiders from obtaining physical evidence or interviewing or examining survivors, and Russia's control of the information coming out of Mariupol makes it difficult for survivors to show clear evidence of their symptoms to the world.

The Ukrainian defense of Mariupol continued on April 12 despite reports of dwindling Ukrainian resources and Ukrainian troops surrendering.⁶ Due to the restricted information environment

surrounding Mariupol, ISW cannot confirm conflicting statements made by Ukrainian officials and Russian sources regarding the state of Russian control of the Port of Mariupol.⁷

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Mariupol as of April 12, 2022, 3:00 ET



Russian forces continue their grinding advance into Mariupol, which they have encircled and are bombarding. Fighting is proceeding block-by-block and slowly. Russian forces began penetrating Mariupol's city center on March 24. The Donetsk People's Republic claimed on April 7 that Ukrainian forces retreated from residential areas to the Azovstal Metallurgical Combine. Russian forces captured the Mariupol fishing port near Azovstal on April 10, bisecting the remaining Ukrainian-controlled areas of the city. Ukrainian forces in Mariupol began publicly discussing ammunition and food supply issues on April 12. We have not observed sufficient data to significantly change our Mariupol map between April 11 and 12 though, Russian forces have likely advanced.

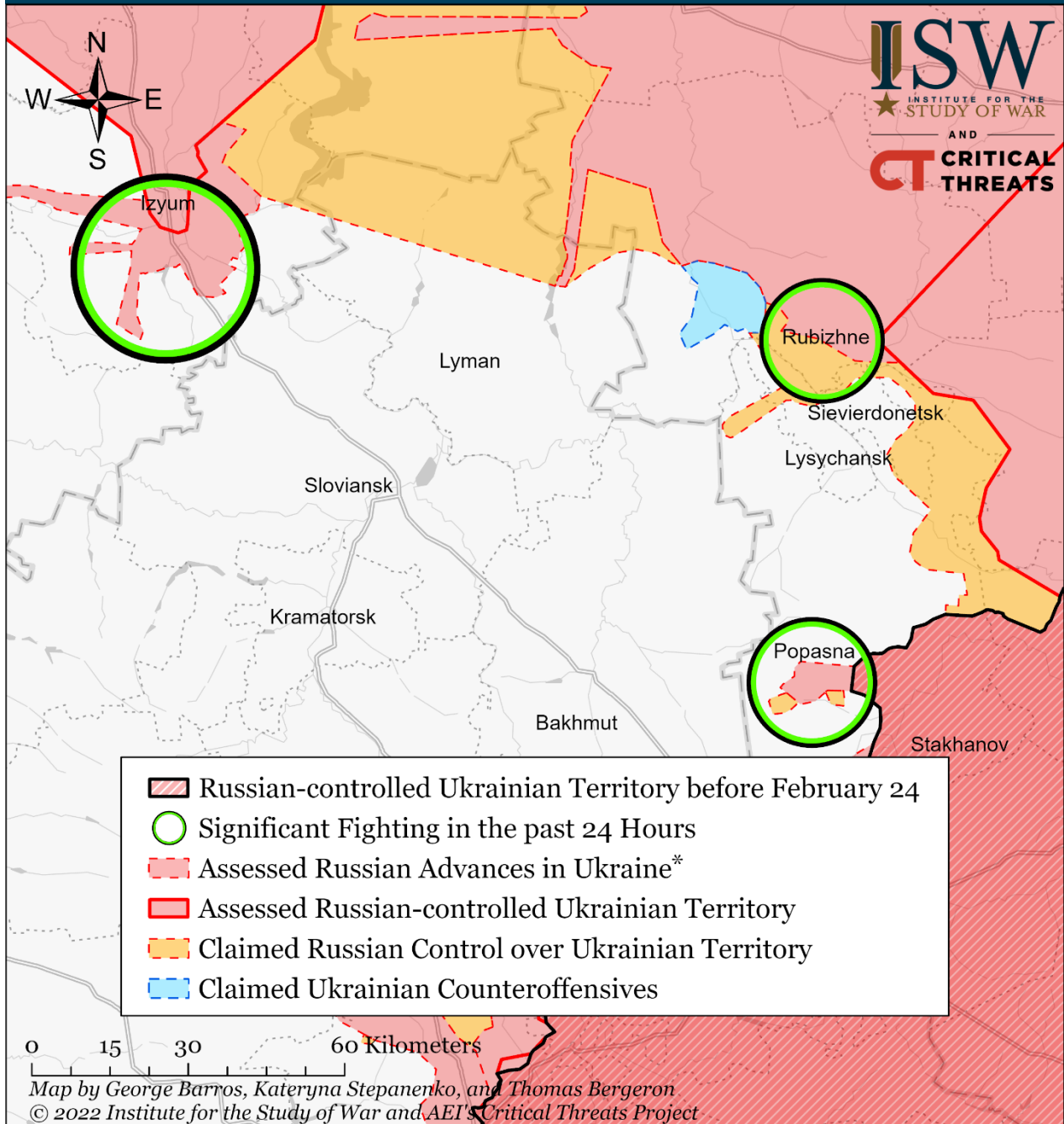
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Subordinate main effort—Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued unsuccessful offensive operations in Severodonetsk, Lysychansk, and Popasna, primarily relying on artillery attacks, although they engaged in urban combat in Rubizhne on April 12.⁸ The Ukrainian General Staff reported limited fighting in other parts of Donetsk on April 12.⁹ Social media users geolocated footage released by Chechen forces on April 11 to Rubizhne, confirming the presence of Chechen Rosgvardia units in the northeastern neighborhood of the settlement.¹⁰ The Chechen units are reportedly entrenching in the vicinity of Rubizhne, which suggests that they intend to go over to the defensive at least in some parts of the battlespace.¹¹ It is not yet clear why the Chechens would adopt a defensive posture at that place at this time.

Russian forces continue to deploy ad-hoc units to Donbas, with social media users observing the 2nd Cossack Battalion leaving Orenburg on April 7, but the Russian command has not yet committed new units or units previously withdrawn from other axes to the offensive.¹²

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of April 12, 2022, 3:00 ET



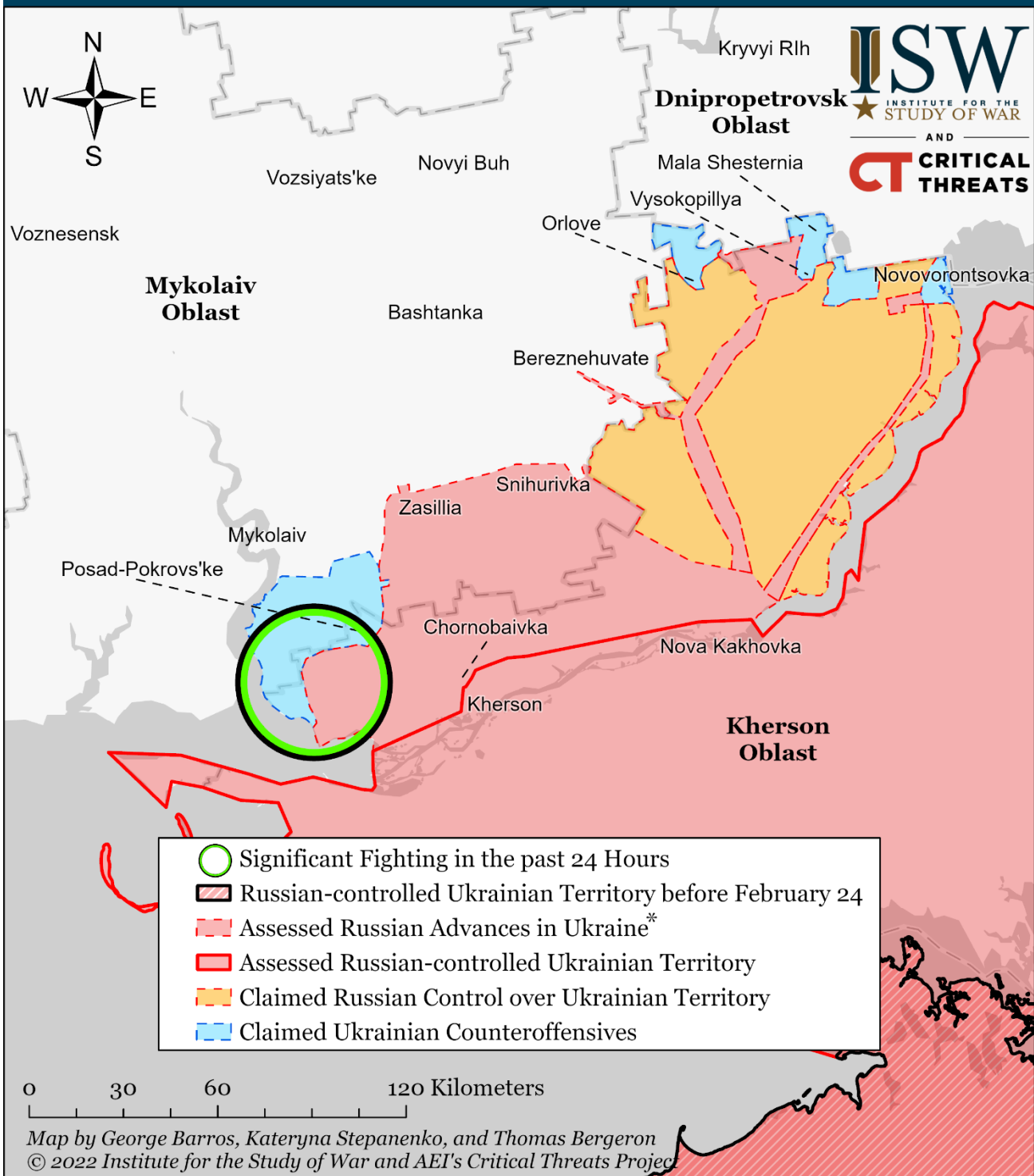
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: We revised Russian assessed advance near Rubizhne due to observing new geolocation data for Russian forces and reconciling it with an April 10 interview from Luhansk Oblast Governor Serhei Haidai in which he stated that Russian forces occupy half of Rubizhne and that street fighting in Rubizhne is ongoing. We recoded Russian-claimed control near Izyum, Rubizhne, and Sievierdonetsk due to Russian claims in a new map from Kremlin news outlet RIA Fan from April 12.

Supporting Effort #1—Kharkiv and Izyum: (Russian objective: Advance southeast to support Russian operations in Luhansk Oblast, and fix Ukrainian forces around Kharkiv in place)

Russian forces continued to regroup in Kharkiv and reinforce their offensive operations on the Izyum axis on April 12. Unspecified units of the 1st Tank Army and the 20th Combined Arms Army deployed to the vicinity of Izyum to conduct offensive operations.¹³ Russian forces continued efforts to fix Ukrainian forces in place around Kharkiv City.¹⁴

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 12, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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Supporting Effort #2—Southern axis: (Objective: Defend Kherson against Ukrainian counterattacks)

Russian forces did not make any significant territorial advances in Kherson Oblast but focused on improving defensive positions and conducting aerial reconnaissance on April 12.¹⁵ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces showed signs of improving air defense in Melitopol on April 12.¹⁶

Supporting Effort #3—Sumy and Northeastern Ukraine: (Russian objective: Withdraw combat power in good order for redeployment to eastern Ukraine)

There has been no significant activity reported on this axis in the last 24 hours.

Immediate items to watch

- Russian forces will likely continue ongoing offensive operations in the Donbas region, feeding reinforcements into the fight as they become available rather than gathering reinforcements and replacements for a more coordinated and coherent offensive.
- Ukrainian defenders of Mariupol will not be able to hold out indefinitely, but it remains unclear how quickly Russia will be able to secure the city.



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¹ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293032059676546>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293401042972981>

² <https://www.facebook.com/DefenceIntelligenceofUkraine/posts/290277019950392>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/DefenceIntelligenceofUkraine/posts/290277019950392>

⁴ <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-chemical-weapons-russia-accusations/31798775.html>; <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/possible-chemical-weapons-attack-in-mariupol-roundup.html>; <https://apostrophe.ua/news/265680>; <https://t.me/BiletskyAndriy/4338>; <https://t.me/mariupolrada/9188>; <https://twitter.com/Danspiun/status/1513813558206816260>; https://twitter.com/Polk_Azov/status/1513795751536517120

⁵ <https://understandingwar.org/background/warning-update-russia-may-conduct-chemical-or-radiological-false-flag-attack-pretext>

⁶ <https://twitter.com/cossackgundi/status/1513768135375077379>;
<https://twitter.com/HromadskeUA/status/1513761548971425799>;
<https://twitter.com/Militarylandnet/status/1513779174145761287>;
<https://twitter.com/MaksimNevchas/status/1513784585280266240>;
<https://twitter.com/MaksimNevchas/status/1513809572800172033>

⁷ <https://t.me/andriyshTime/236>; <https://t.me/andriyshTime/223>

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293401042972981>; <https://interfax dot com.ua/news/general/823469.html>; https://twitter.com/Freedom_Slips/status/1510652844340244483; <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/nastuplenie-ottyagivaetsya-na-paru-dney-no-ot-planov-nikto-ne-otkazivaetsya-glava-luganskoy-oblasti-o-nastuplenii-rossii-i-i-evakuatsii/31795957.html>

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293032059676546>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/Hetreeli/status/1512838375576907776>; <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1513532501867827201>

¹¹ <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-19>;
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-24>;

https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1513784272930447362; <https://t dot me/milchronicles/222>

¹² https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1513806050725670914; <https://www.ural56 dot ru/news/676901/>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293032059676546>

¹³ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293401042972981>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293032059676546>

¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293032059676546>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293401042972981>;

<https://twitter.com/Liveuamap/status/1513585769214103554>

¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293032059676546>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293401042972981>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293032059676546>; <https://youtu.be/R5vvrB1YsqU>;

<https://www.facebook.com/OleksandrVilkul/videos/264876622512058/>

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/293032059676546>