

**Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, April 22**  
**Mason Clark, George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, and Karolina Hird**  
**April 22, 5:30pm ET**

**A briefing by the Russian Deputy Commander of the Central Military District on April 22 reiterated standing Russian objectives in eastern and southern Ukraine and did not announce any new operations.** Deputy Commander of the Central Military District Rustam Minnekaev gave a speech to the annual meeting of the Union of Defense Industries on April 22 that has been misinterpreted as the announcement of a new Russian campaign.<sup>1</sup> Minnekaev said Russian forces began a new phase of the war two days ago, an unsurprising confirmation of the new phase of the Russian offensive announced by both Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Ukrainian officials on April 19.<sup>2</sup> He stated the primary objective of Russian forces is to capture the entirety of the Donbas region and southern Ukraine to provide a land bridge to Crimea; as ISW has previously assessed, Russian forces seek to capture the entirety of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts and retain control of the Kherson region.

**Minnekaev stated that Russian control of southern Ukraine provides Russia a *future* capability to conduct an offensive toward Transnistria, rather than announcing an imminent Russian offensive toward Moldova.** Minnekaev said Russian control of southern Ukraine will provide “another way out to Transnistria,” the illegally Russian-occupied strip of territory in Moldova, where he falsely claimed “there are also facts of oppression of the Russian-speaking population.” We do not read this as a statement of intent to conduct a major offensive operation toward Moldova. An offensive toward Moldova would likely have been phrased around securing a “land corridor” [сухопутный коридор] to Moldova, much like the Russian land corridor to Crimea. Even if Russian forces did seek to resume major offensive operations toward Mykolaiv and on to Odesa, they are highly unlikely to have the capability to do so.

### **Key Takeaways**

- **A briefing by the Deputy Commander of the Central Military District restated the standing Russian objectives in the current phase of the war: capturing the entirety of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts and defending Russian positions in southern Ukraine against Ukrainian counterattacks.**
- **Ongoing purges of Russian general officers for failures in Ukraine will likely further degrade Russian command and control.**
- **Russian forces seek to starve out the remaining defenders and civilians in Mariupol’s Azovstal Steel Plant and are unlikely to allow trapped civilians to leave.**
- **Russian forces conducted localized attacks and reconnoitered Ukrainian positions south of Izyum and did not make any advances.**
- **Russian forces secured minor gains in continuing daily attacks on the line of contact in eastern Ukraine.**
- **The Kremlin is setting conditions to create proxy republics in Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts to cement Russian control over these regions and conscript Ukrainian manpower.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 22, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, 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.

**Ukrainian Military Intelligence reported on April 22 that several Russian officers have been fired or imprisoned for failures in Ukraine.**<sup>3</sup> The Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that Russian authorities arrested the Commander of the Black Sea Fleet Admiral Osipov and are investigating Black Sea Fleet Chief of Staff Vice Admiral S. Pinchuk, likely for the loss of the *Moskva*. The GUR additionally reported the commander of the 6th CAA, the commander and deputy commander of the 1st Guards Tank Army, and the commander of the 22nd Army Corps have all been removed from their posts for unsatisfactory performance. Purges of Russian officers are unlikely to improve Russian capabilities, as replacement commanders will likely be less experienced and under intense pressure to achieve likely unreasonable objectives set by the Kremlin.

***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:**

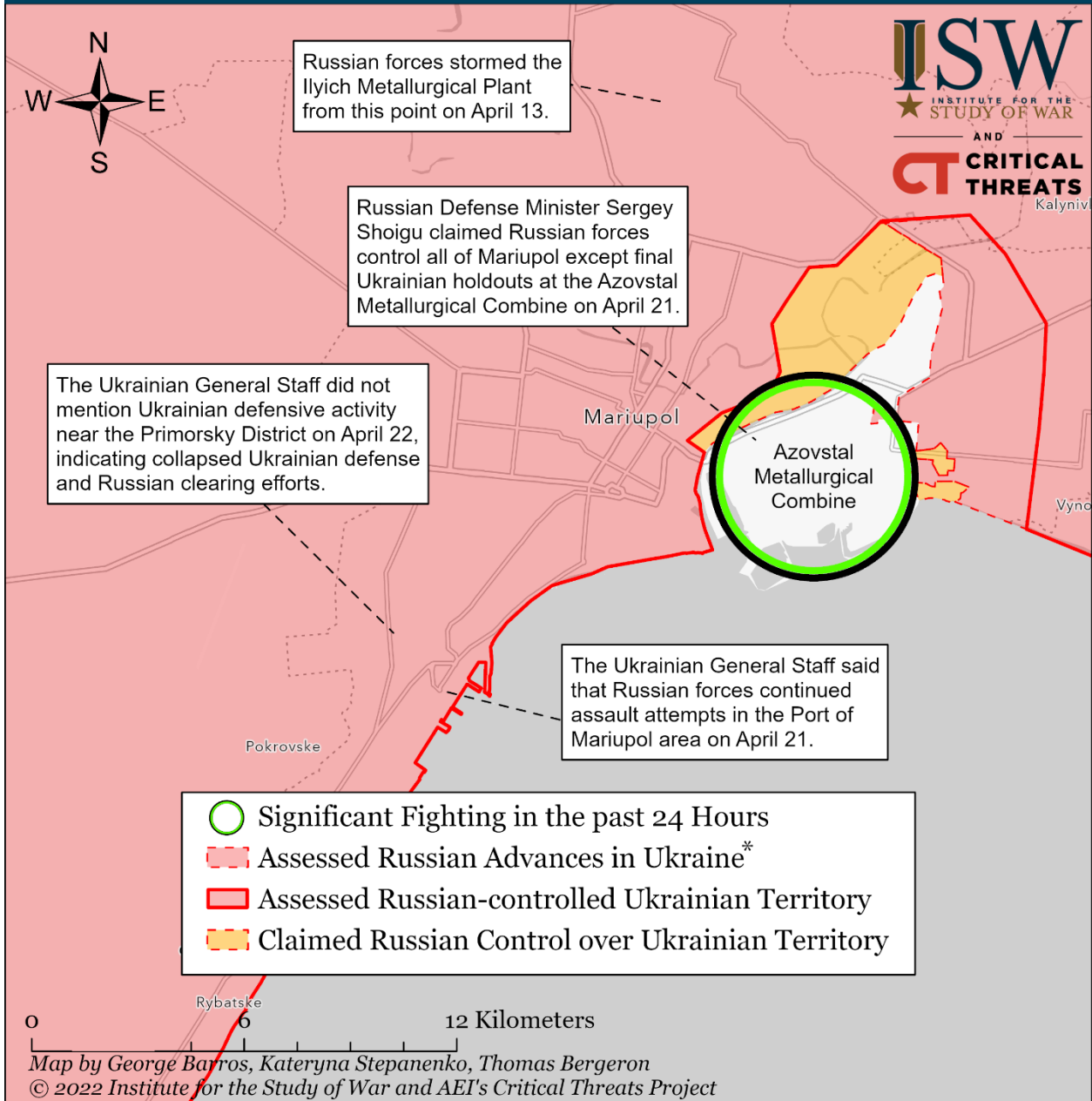
- Main effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate supporting efforts);
- Supporting effort 1—Kharkiv and Izyum;
- Supporting effort 2—Southern axis;
- Supporting effort 3—Sumy and northeastern Ukraine.

**Main effort—Eastern Ukraine**

**Subordinate Main Effort—Mariupol (Russian objective: Capture Mariupol and reduce the Ukrainian defenders)**

Russian forces continued to bombard the Azovstal Steel Plant and besiege the remaining Ukrainian defenders.<sup>4</sup> Several Ukrainian government sources reported on April 22 that Russian forces have abandoned direct attacks on Azovstal but continue to shell the facility and have repeatedly refused Ukrainian requests to open humanitarian corridors to evacuate civilians.<sup>5</sup> Russian and DNR forces continued to consolidate their control of key buildings in Mariupol and are likely setting conditions to set up an occupation government.<sup>6</sup> Several videos circulated on social media of unspecified Russian forces departing Mariupol, but ISW cannot confirm at this time which Russian forces have departed the city or their likely destination.<sup>7</sup> Russian forces seek to starve out the remaining defenders and civilians in Azovstal and are unlikely to allow trapped civilians to leave. The Russian Ministry of Defense stated on April 22 that it will only begin a humanitarian pause in Mariupol when Ukrainian forces “raise white flags” and surrender and claimed that they will run out of food and supplies within two weeks.<sup>8</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Mariupol as of April 22, 2022, 3:00 ET



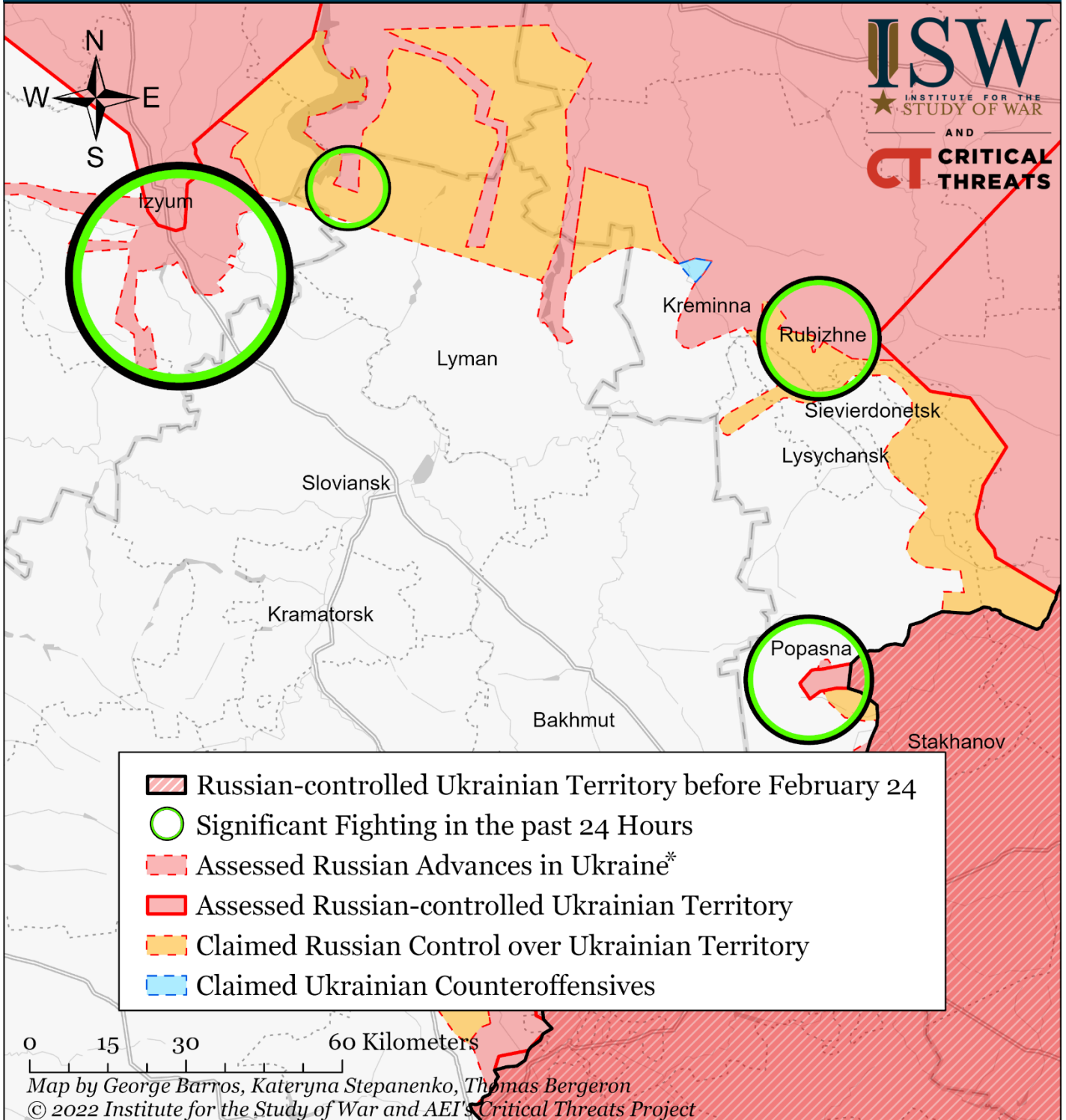
The Kremlin declared victory in Mariupol on April 21 after capturing the city besides Ukrainian holdouts in the encircled Azovstal Metallurgical Combine. Russian forces will attempt to starve out remaining Ukrainian defenders in the Azovstal Metallurgical Combine rather than clear it through likely costly assaults. Russian war reporters filmed some Russian elements redeploying from Mariupol northward on April 22. The Ukrainian General Staff notably did not mention Ukrainian defensive activity near the port of Mariupol or Primorsky District on April 22, indicating Russian clearing efforts. The Kremlin will spin the (still incomplete) capture of Mariupol into a major victory in Ukraine to compensate for stalled or failed Russian offensives elsewhere.

\* 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 local attacks along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine (continuing to focus on Rubizhne, Popasna, and Marinka) on April 22 and made minor gains around Slovyansk, capturing the town of Lozova.<sup>9</sup> Russian forces additionally consolidated their recently captured positions to prepare for further assaults.<sup>10</sup> The military situation did not substantially change in the last 24 hours, and Russian forces are continuing to conduct localized attacks while feeding in additional reinforcements instead of pausing to prepare for a wider offensive. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that additional unspecified elements of the 41st Combined Arms Army (CAA) (previously withdrawn from the Chernihiv axis) deployed to eastern Ukraine on April 22.<sup>11</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of April 22, 2022, 3:00 ET



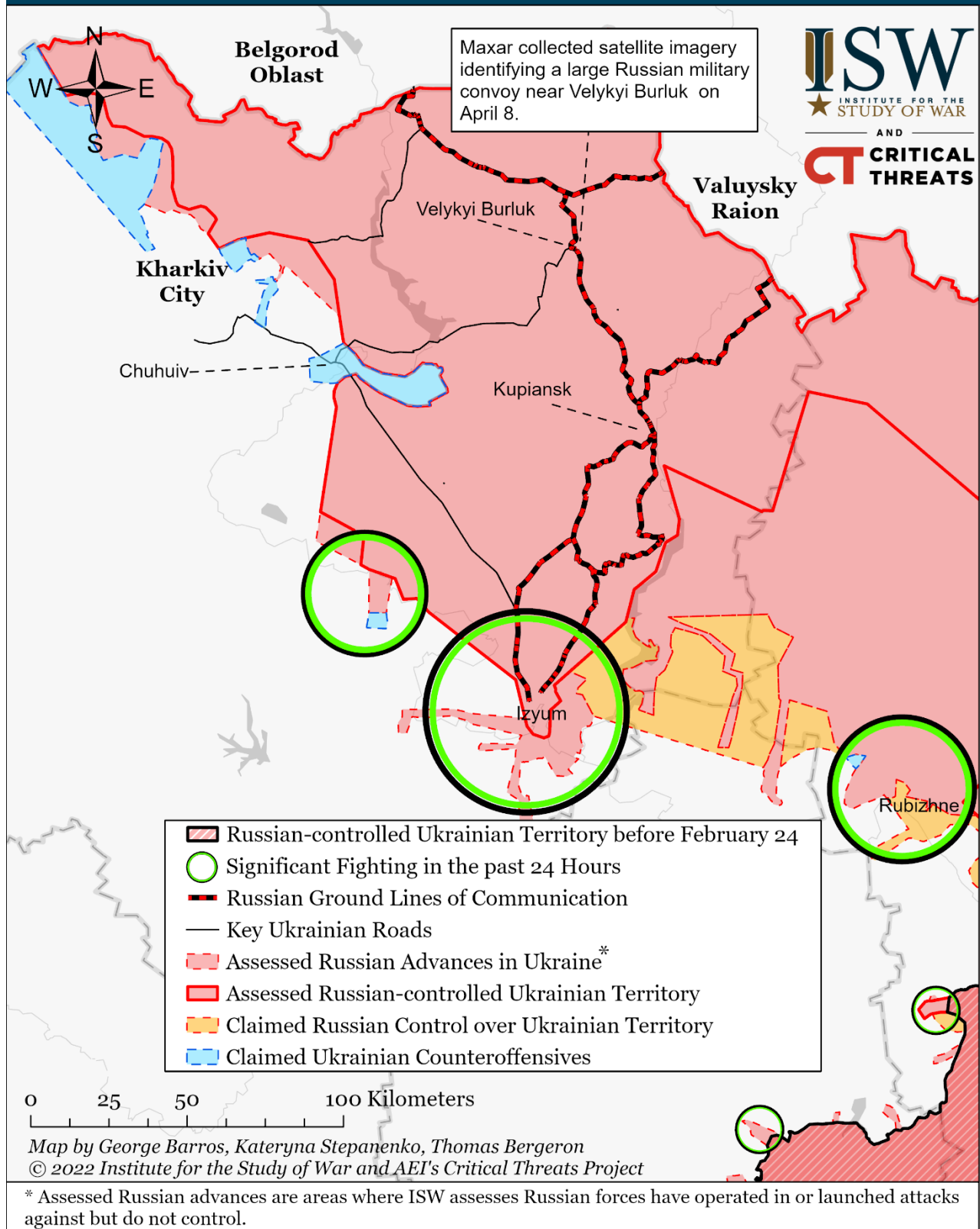
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

**Supporting Effort #1—Kharkiv and Izyum: (Russian objective: Advance southeast to support Russian operations in Luhansk Oblast; defend ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to the Izyum axis)**

Russian units from the 6th CAA and Baltic and Northern Fleets (the Ukrainian General Staff reported up to seven battalion tactical groups (BTGs), though we cannot independently confirm this number, and these units are likely heavily degraded) continued to partially block Kharkiv and shell the city.<sup>12</sup> A pro-Russian telegram channel reported that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian counterattack on Kozacha Lopan, north of Kharkiv and just 5km from the Russian border.<sup>13</sup> ISW cannot independently confirm this report, but, if confirmed, it likely indicates Ukrainian efforts to conduct counterattacks north of Kharkiv to the Russian border, possibly threatening Belgorod.<sup>14</sup>

Russian forces conducted localized attacks and reconnoitered Ukrainian positions south of Izyum on April 22 and did not make any advances.<sup>15</sup> Ukraine's Special Operations Command claimed it destroyed a bridge being used by Russian forces at an unspecified location near Izyum on April 22.<sup>16</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported elements of the 1st Tank Army, the 20th and 35th CAAs, the 68th Army Corps, and unspecified airborne troops (many of whom remain highly damaged from fighting around Kyiv and in northeastern Ukraine) are concentrated on the Izyum axis.<sup>17</sup> Social media imagery depicted additional Russian forces concentrating in Belgorod Oblast in Russia on April 20.<sup>18</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of April 22, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



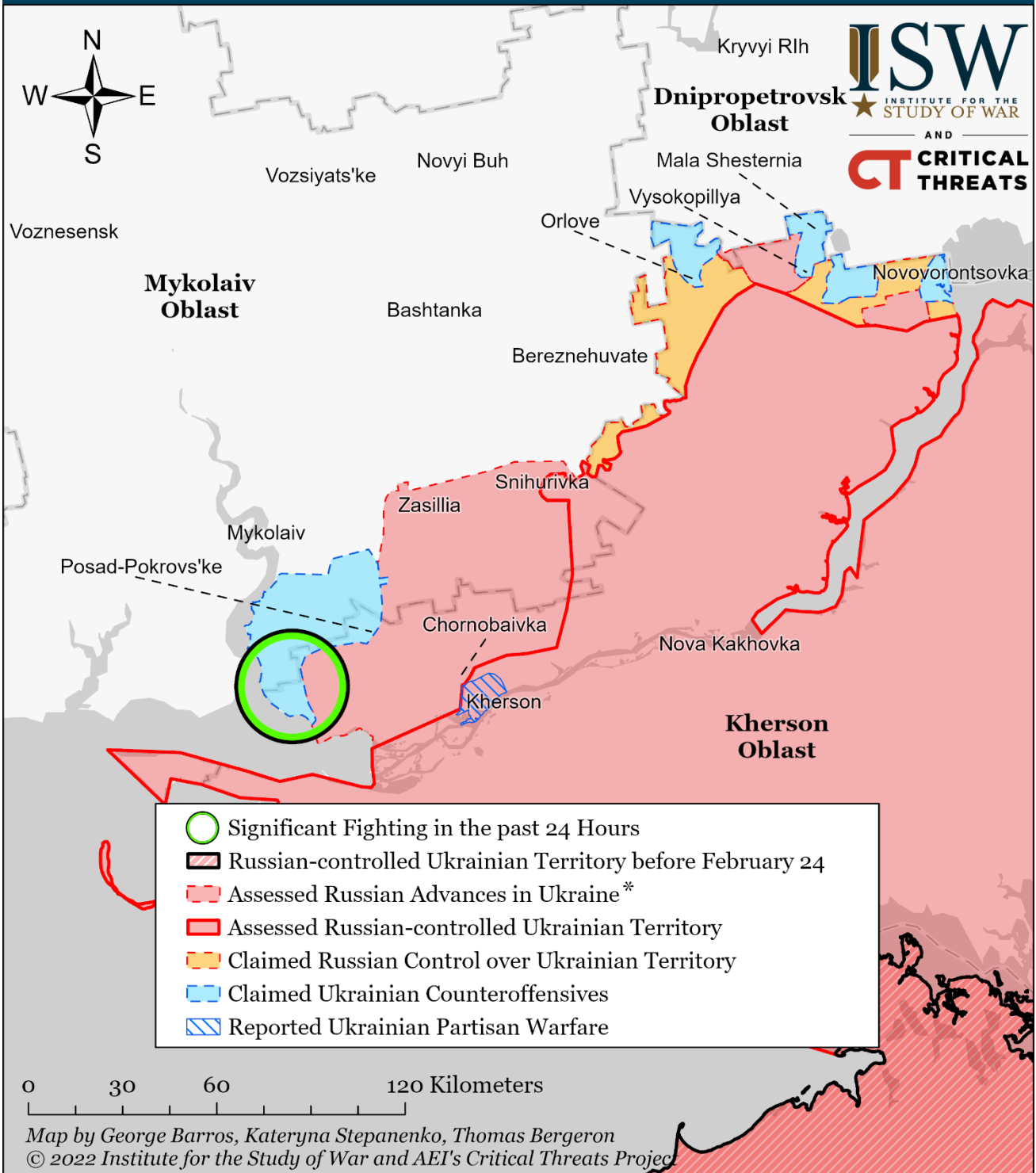


**Supporting Effort #2—Southern Axis: (Objective: Defend Kherson against Ukrainian counterattacks)**

Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks on Ukrainian positions west of Kherson and towards Zaporizhia in the last 24 hours.<sup>19</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported elements of Russia's 19th Motor Rifle Division (of the 58th CAA) deployed to the Zaporizhia front, likely to support offensive operations to the north intended to encircle Ukrainian forces in eastern Ukraine, though Russian forces remain highly unlikely to make significant headway in these offensive operations.<sup>20</sup>

The Kremlin is additionally setting conditions to create proxy republics in Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts to cement Russian control over these regions and conscript Ukrainian manpower. Ukrainian Ministry of Defense spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Motuzyanyk reported on April 22 that Russian forces are preventing Ukrainian citizens from leaving these regions and are preparing to conscript military-age men.<sup>21</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 22, 2022, 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.

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

There was no significant change in this area in the past 24 hours.

### **Immediate items to watch**

- Russian forces will likely continue attacking southeast from Izyum, west from Kreminna and Popasna, and north from Donetsk City via Avdiivka.
- Russian forces will attempt to starve out the remaining defenders of the Azovstal Steel Plant in Mariupol and will not allow trapped civilians to evacuate.
- Russian forces will likely increase the scale of ground offensive operations in the coming days, but it is too soon to tell how fast they will do so or how large those offensives will be. It is also too soon to assess how the Russians will weight their efforts in the arc from Izyum to Donetsk City.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.interfax.ru/world/837353>; <https://www.rosbalt.ru/world/2022/04/22/1954818.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-19>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/DefenceIntelligenceofUkraine/posts/296873329290761>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300490638930688>; <https://iz.ru/1324677/2022-04-22/peskov-oproverg-zaiavleniia-gosdipa-ssha-o-tom-chto-vs-u-prodolzhaiut-uderzhivat-mariupol>.

<sup>5</sup> [https://t.me/tv\\_rada/6118](https://t.me/tv_rada/6118); <https://t.me/andriyshTime/394>; <https://t.me/andriyshTime/386>;

<sup>6</sup> [https://t.me/nm\\_dnr/7711](https://t.me/nm_dnr/7711); [https://t.me/nm\\_dnr/7714](https://t.me/nm_dnr/7714); <https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1517444966108311552>;  
<https://t.me/ChDambiev/15759>;

<sup>7</sup> <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1517239456209768450>;

<https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1517238842008481795>

<sup>8</sup> <https://iz.ru/1324736/2022-04-22/minoborony-rf-soobshchilo-o-gotovnosti-vvesti-rezhim-tishiny-na-azovstali>; <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/14448309>; [https://militarypravda.ru/news/1701455-azovstal\\_mariupol/](https://militarypravda.ru/news/1701455-azovstal-mariupol/).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300490638930688>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300150852298000>;

<https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1517240965521723392>; <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=698058888072526>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300490638930688>.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300490638930688>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300150852298000>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300490638930688>; <https://t.me/synegubov/2956>; <https://t.me/synegubov/2952>

<sup>13</sup> <https://t.me/istorijaoruzija/57389>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://t.me/istorijaoruzija/57389>.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300490638930688>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300150852298000>; <https://t.me/uniannet/48984>;

[https://t.me/dvish\\_alive/12792](https://t.me/dvish_alive/12792)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/usofcom/posts/394247465852861>.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300150852298000>.

<sup>18</sup> <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1517241624702685185>;

<https://twitter.com/markito0171/status/1517060107850461185>.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300150852298000>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300490638930688>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300490638930688>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/300150852298000>.

<sup>21</sup> <https://armyinform dot com.ua/2022/04/22/na-hersonshhyni-ta-zaporizhzi-okupanty-gotuyut-referendum-ta-planuyut-mobilizacziyu/>.