

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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April 3, 3:30 pm ET

Ukraine has won the Battle of Kyiv. Russian forces are completing their withdrawal, but not in good order. Ukrainian forces are continuing to clear Kyiv Oblast of isolated Russian troops left behind in the retreat, which some Ukrainian officials describe as “lost orcs.” Russian forces had attempted to conduct an orderly retreat from their positions around Kyiv with designated covering forces supported by artillery and mines to allow the main body to withdraw. The main body of Russian troops has withdrawn from the west bank of the Dnipro and is completing its withdrawal from the east bank, but the retrograde has been sufficiently disorderly that some Russian troops were left behind.

The war is far from over and could still turn Russia’s way if the Russian military can launch a successful operation in eastern Ukraine. The current line of Russian occupation in southern and eastern Ukraine is still a significant gain in Russian-controlled territory since the start of the war. If a ceasefire or peace agreement freezes a line like the current front-line trace, Russia will be able to exert much greater pressure on Ukraine than it did before the invasion and may over time reassemble a more effective invasion force. Ukraine’s victory in the Battle of Kyiv is thus significant but not decisive.

The disorder of the Russian withdrawal suggests that at least some of the units now reconcentrating in Belarus and western Russia will remain combat ineffective for a protracted period. Russian troops attempting to refit after pulling back from around Kyiv will likely have to reconsolidate into their units, identify which soldiers are still present, sort out their equipment and assess its combat readiness, and generally reconstitute before they can even begin to receive replacements and new equipment and prepare for further combat operations.

Russian forces are likely abandoning the east bank of the Dnipro fully as well, withdrawing from around Chernihiv to the north and from Brovary to the east. Russian troops will likely seek to hold a salient around Konotop and Sumy long enough to allow their forces to complete their retrograde from near Kyiv but will then likely withdraw back to Russia from almost all their positions west of Kharkiv.

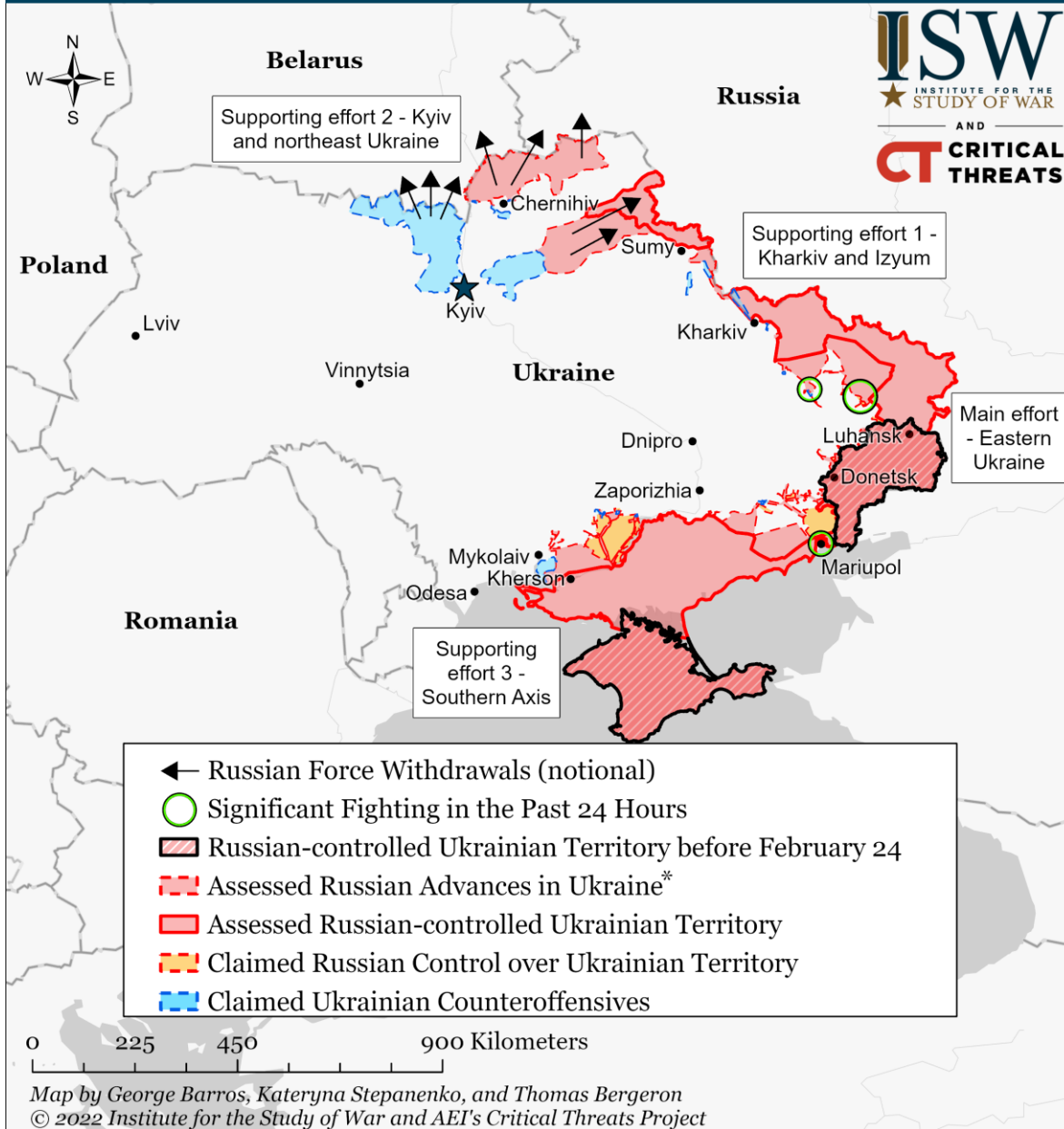
Moscow is attempting to concentrate reserves and some units pulled from the fight around Sumy to reinforce its offensive operations in the east but is encountering serious challenges in that effort. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on April 3 that Russian soldiers are resisting and in some cases refusing orders to enter or re-enter the war effort. The General Staff asserted that the two battalion tactical groups (BTGs) that moved from South Ossetia toward Donbas less than a week ago refused to fight and that plans to move them back to South Ossetia are in train.ⁱ The General Staff claimed that about 25 soldiers of the Russian 31st Separate Airborne Brigade refused orders to re-enter combat citing excessive losses.ⁱⁱ The General Staff also asserted that commanders at various echelons in the Russian 3rd Motorized Rifle Division have refused to participate in combat operations.ⁱⁱⁱ We have no independent verification of these reports, but they are credible in light of the losses Russian forces have suffered and of independent reports of Russian soldiers killing commanders and commanders committing suicide from earlier in the conflict.

Russian efforts to advance its offensive operations in eastern Ukraine made limited progress in the past 24 hours. Fighting continues in Mariupol and on the Izyum-Severodonetsk axis.

Key Takeaways

- **Ukraine has won the Battle of Kyiv, and Russian forces are completing their withdrawals from both the east and the west banks of the Dnipro in disorder.**
- **Russian forces retreating from around Kyiv will likely need considerable time before they can return to combat.**
- **Incidents of refusals of orders to engage in combat operations among Russian units continue and may lead to the redeployment of two BTGs that had arrived near Donbas within the last few days to their home stations in South Ossetia.**
- **The continued existence of an independent Ukrainian state with its capital in Kyiv is no longer in question at this time, although much fighting remains and the war could still turn Russia's way.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 03, 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.

Note: The disorderly withdrawal of Russian forces from around Kyiv makes precise mapping of the situation in Kyiv and Chernihiv Oblasts difficult. There are likely no organized Russian defensive positions in those oblasts, but Ukrainian forces are conducting operations to clear "lost orcs"--Russians left behind in the withdrawal. We will not attempt to map those clearing operations. Ukrainian forces may already have regained control of more of Chernihiv Oblast than we depict, but we do not yet have sufficient evidence to adjust our assessed areas of advance beyond those shown here. The situation will likely clarify over the next few days, and we will adjust the advance and / or control lines accordingly.

We do not report in detail on the deliberate Russian targeting of civilian infrastructure and attacks on unarmed civilians, which are 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:

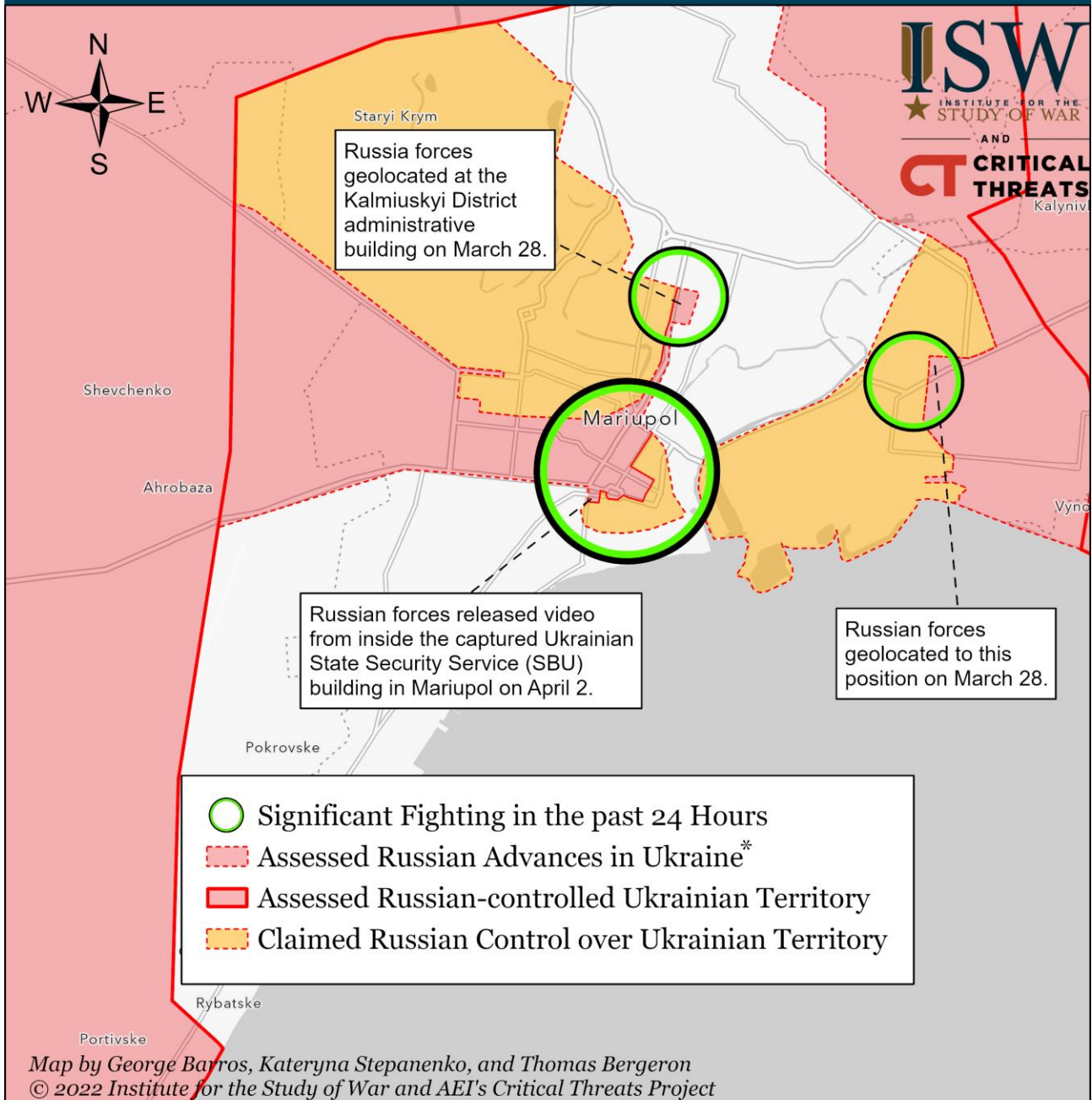
- Main effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate supporting efforts);
- Supporting effort 1—Kharkiv and Izyum;
- Supporting effort 2—Kyiv and northeastern Ukraine; and
- Supporting effort 3—Southern axis.

Main effort—Eastern Ukraine

Subordinate main effort—Mariupol (Russian objective: Capturing Mariupol and reducing Ukrainian defenders)

Little information about what is occurring in Mariupol is available likely due to the loss/interdiction of communications from the city. Russian media reported fighting in the city on April 2.^{iv} Russia will likely make much of its final capture of the city for propaganda purposes but has not yet done so, which suggests that it has not yet completed the seizure. The Ukrainian General Staff also noted on April 3 that Russian forces are still preparing efforts to complete their seizure of the city.^v

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Mariupol as of April 03, 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. ISW has not observed sufficient evidence to significantly change assessed advances in Mariupol between April 2 and April 3, though Russian forces likely have advanced.

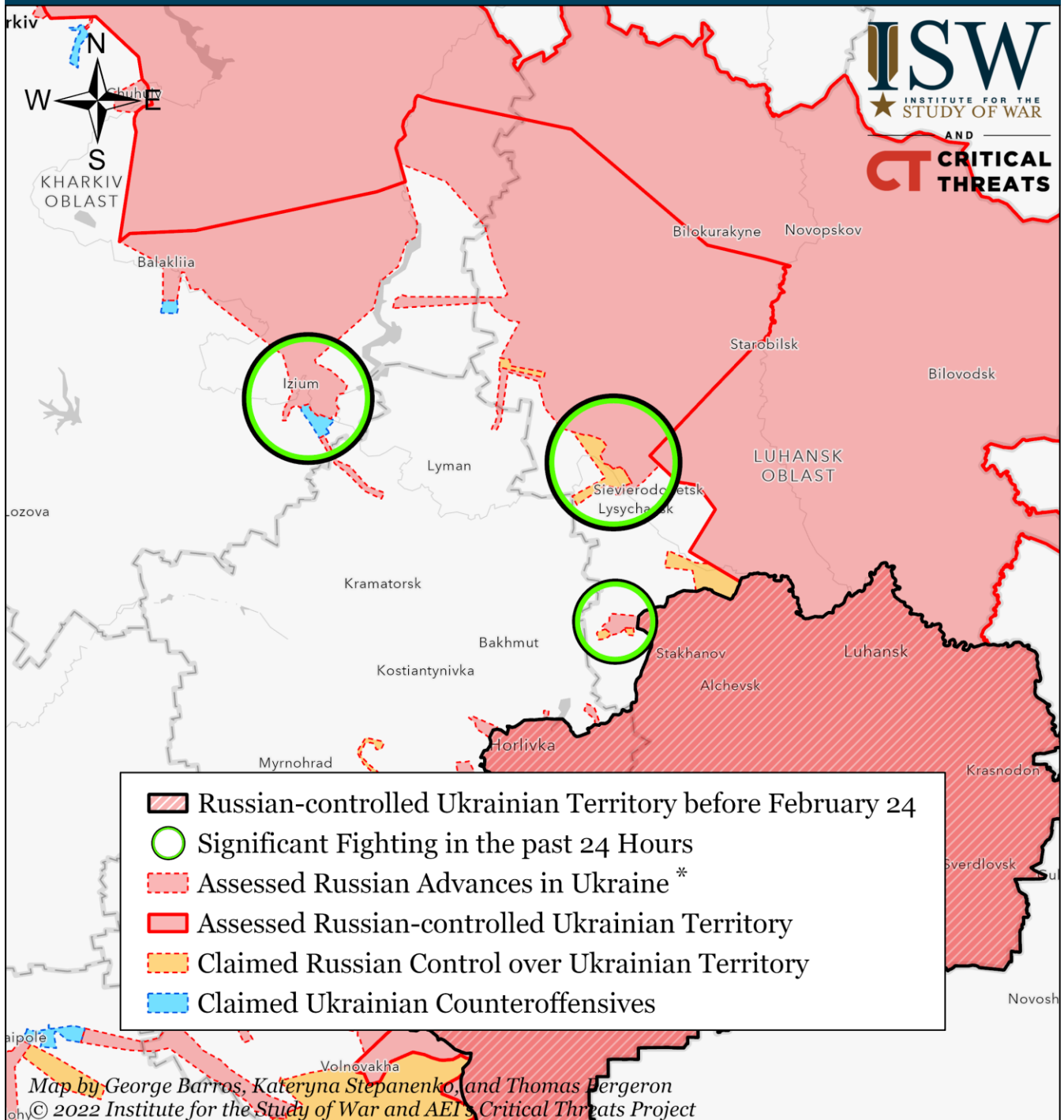
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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)

The Ukrainian governor of Luhansk Oblast claimed on April 3 that mayors of the towns of Rubizhne, Milove, Stanytsia Luhanska, and Markivka are working with the LNR.^{vi} LNR officials separately claimed to be clearing Rubizhne and evacuating civilians, while blaming Ukrainian forces for damaging the city (presumably by defending it).^{vii} We have no independent verification of the LNR claims. It is unclear if the LNR claims are based on actual Russian military control over the towns or on the claimed collaboration of the towns’ mayors. The Ukrainian General Staff report of 2400 April 2 suggested that Russian forces had not yet secured Rubizhne, in any event.^{viii}

Russian units reportedly attacked Ukrainian positions at various locations throughout Donetsk Oblast but made few gains, according to the Ukrainian General Staff.^{ix} Social media reports confirm heavy fighting over the past few days.^x

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of April 03, 2022, 3:00 ET



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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 appear to be continuing efforts to concentrate forces to resume the offensive from Izyum toward the southeast but did not launch any large-scale operation in the past 24 hours. The Russians continue to bombard Kharkiv, but the Ukrainian General Staff reported on April 2 that the intensity of the bombardment had somewhat decreased.^{xi} The Ukrainian General Staff claimed on April 3 that Ukrainian forces had inflicted 80% losses on the Russian 59th Tank Regiment near Kharkiv over an unspecified period.^{xii}

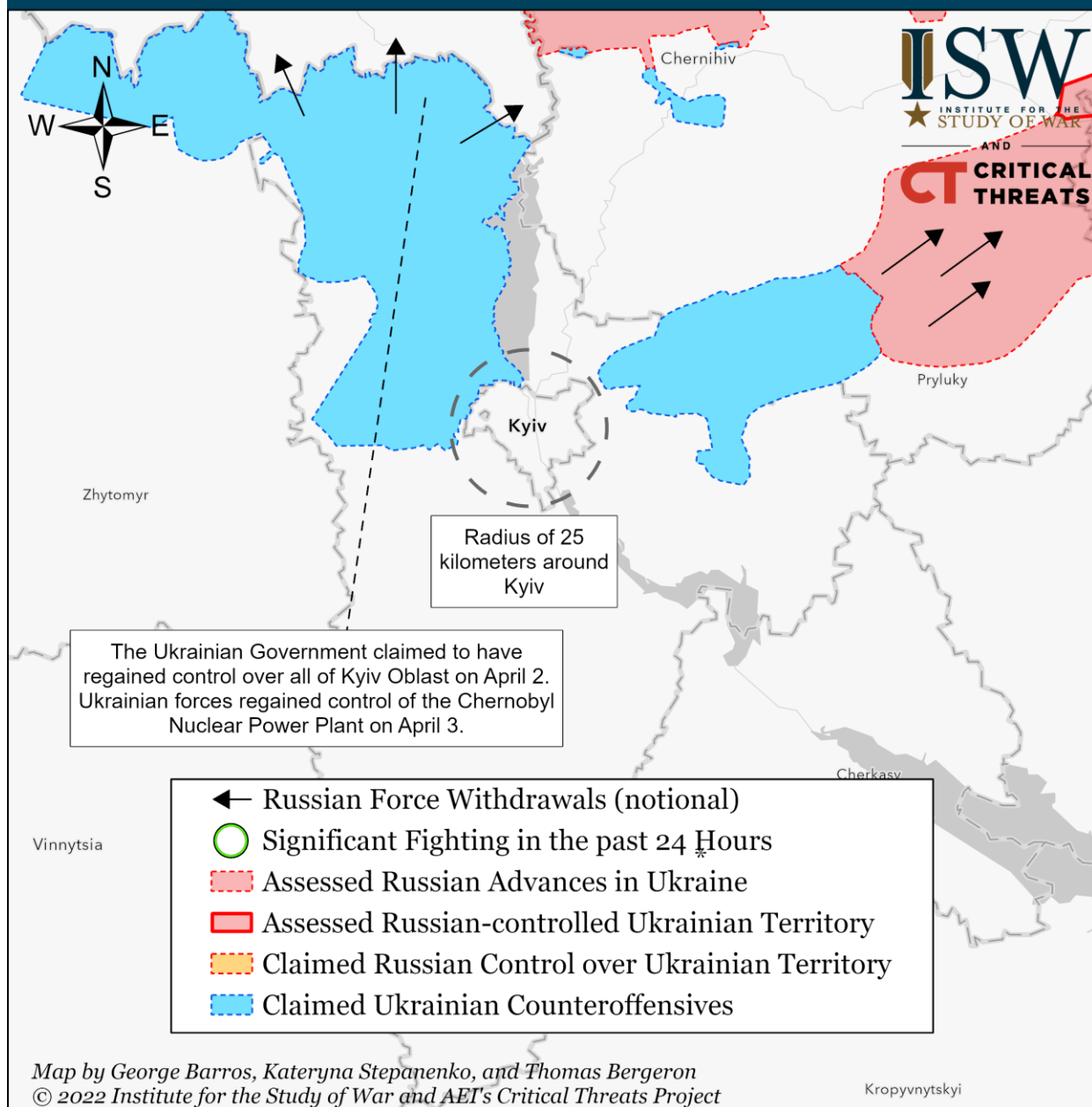
Russian forces west of Kharkiv and around Sumy appeared to focus on covering the withdrawal of Russian troops from eastern Kyiv.^{xiii} The Ukrainian General Staff reported on April 2 that one battalion tactical group (BTG) of the 1st Guards Tank Army was covering the retrograde of the elements of the 2nd Combined Arms Army from Brovary through Sumy.^{xiv} Local Ukrainian reports indicate that Russian forces still operate from Bilopilya to Konotop on April 2.^{xv} We assess that these reports are likely accurate despite claims by a Ukrainian member of parliament on April 3 that Ukrainian forces had liberated Konotop.^{xvi} Russian forces likely will eventually abandon Konotop and most or all of their positions west of Kharkiv once their withdrawal from the Brovary axis is complete.

Supporting Effort #2—Kyiv and Northeastern Ukraine: (Russian objective: Withdraw combat power in good order for redeployment to eastern Ukraine)

The withdrawal of the main body of Russian forces along both banks of the Dnipro River is likely complete. The disorderly nature of the withdrawal, which apparently left numerous individual Russian soldiers and possibly small pockets of Russian troops behind, makes precise assessments of the situation throughout Kyiv and Chernihiv Oblasts impossible at this time. Ukrainian officials describe their clearing operations as looking for “lost orcs.”^{xvii} We will update our assessments in the coming days as the situation clarifies but anticipate that Ukrainian forces will finish clearing the last remnants of Russian troops from the Kyiv axis within the next few days. There is no evidence that the isolated Russian troops Ukrainian forces are encountering stayed behind deliberately, and the Russian pockets do not appear to be offering coherent or coordinated resistance to Ukrainian clearing operations.

Sourcing for this assessment is available here.^{xviii}

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kyiv as of April 03, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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Supporting Effort #3—Southern axis: (Objective: Defend Kherson against Ukrainian counterattacks)

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations in the southern axis. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on April 3 that Russian troops were fighting to retake Oleksandirvka in northern Kherson Oblast after Ukrainian forces regained control of the town in mid-March.^{xix}

Immediate items to watch

- Russian forces will likely complete their withdrawal from Kyiv along the Sumy axis in the coming days and will probably abandon their remaining positions around Konotop and Sumy thereafter.
- Russian troops around Kharkiv will likely continue to focus on supporting the shift of the main effort via Izyum toward the southeast and may pull back from the immediate environs of the city.
- Russian and proxy forces will attempt to increase the scope and scale of offensive operations to complete the linkup between the Kharkiv-Izyum axis and occupied Luhansk.
- Russian forces will likely secure Mariupol in coming days, and may attempt to launch renewed offensive operations northwest from the city in an effort to seize Donetsk Oblast.



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ⁱ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/286674743645611>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/287074630272289>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/286674743645611>

^{iv} <https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1510150685404319748>; <https://t.me/msgazdiev/846>

^v <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/286533730326379>

^{vi} <https://www.facebook.com/sergey.gaidai.loga/videos/530507801751384/>

^{vii} <https://t.me/millnr/7962>; https://t.me/nm_dnr/7383; <https://t.me/millnr/7963>; <https://t.me/millnr/7964>

^{viii} <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/286533730326379>

^{ix} <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/286450870334665>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/286845780295174>;

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/286533730326379>; <https://t.me/stranaua/34547>

^x <https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1510504344722063362>; <https://t.me/faceofwar/17976>;

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^{xi} <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/286533730326379>;

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^{xii} <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/287074630272289>

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