Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Mason Clark, Karolina Hird, and George Barros
April 30, 5:15pm ET

Further Russian reinforcements to the Izyum axis are unlikely to enable stalled Russian forces to achieve substantial advances. Elements of unspecified Eastern Military District units and several air-defense assets are reportedly deploying from Belgorod to the Izyum front to support likely degraded Russian units attempting to advance south of the city. These forces are unlikely to enable Russian forces to break the current deadlock, as Russian attacks remain confined to two major highways (toward Slovyansk and Barvinkove) and cannot leverage greater numbers. Several successful Ukrainian counterattacks out of Kharkiv city in the last 72 hours have additionally recaptured a ring of suburbs north and east of the city and may additionally force Russian forces to redeploy units intended for the Izyum axis to hold these positions. Russian forces appear increasingly unlikely to achieve any major advances in eastern Ukraine, and Ukrainian forces may be able to conduct wider counterattacks in the coming days.

Key Takeaways

- **A Ukrainian counteroffensive out of Kharkiv City will likely alleviate pressure on parts of the city that have suffered the most from Russian shelling and may force Russian troops from Izyum to re-deploy northward to support forces maintaining the partial encirclement of Kharkiv.**
- **Additional Russian forces are deploying to the Izyum front but are unlikely to enable any major advances.**
- **Russian troops did not make any confirmed advances to the southwest or southeast of Izyum or to the west of the Donetsk-Luhansk frontline.**
- **Russian forces in Kherson are pausing major offensive operations to improve their tactical positions and regroup to prepare for a renewed offensive to capture the administrative borders of Kherson.**
- **Russian occupation forces in Mariupol announced plans to consolidate their control over the city and intend to return Ukrainian citizens forcibly deported into Russia at some point in the future.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 30, 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.

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:

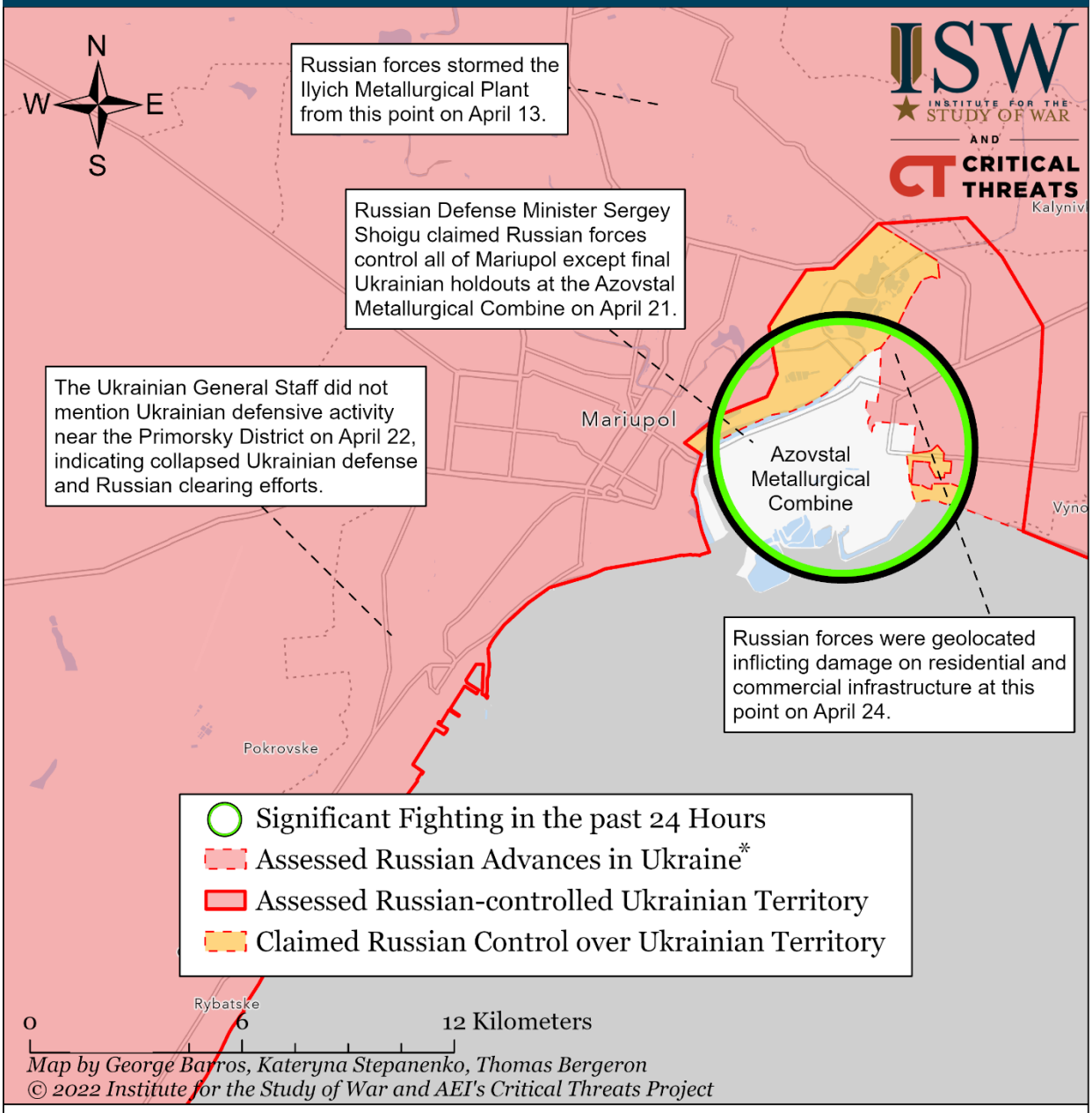
- Main effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate supporting efforts);
- Supporting effort 1—Kharkiv and Izyum;
- Supporting effort 2—Southern axis;
- Supporting effort 3—Sumy and northeastern Ukraine.

Main effort—Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces remaining in Mariupol, including elements of the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade, continued to block Ukrainian troops in the Azovstal Steel Plant and carried out airstrikes on April 30.[i] Occupying Russian forces are intensifying occupation measures through Mariupol. Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko stated that abandoned homes in the Staryi Krym region of Mariupol are being resettled under DNR-issued permits and that the Kremlin plans to return Mariupol residents who were previously forcibly deported to Russia once Russian forces consolidate control of the city.[ii] Head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Denis Pushilin announced the "Great Construction" of Mariupol on April 30.[iii] Pushilin claimed that DNR forces, with support from the Kremlin, will rebuild the infrastructure of Mariupol as soon as the Ukrainian positions in Azovstal are "resolved." Russian and DNR troops will likely advance reconstruction and resettlement operations to further consolidate administrative control of Mariupol and boost the Kremlin's claim to have fully captured the city.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Mariupol as of April 30, 2022, 3:00 ET



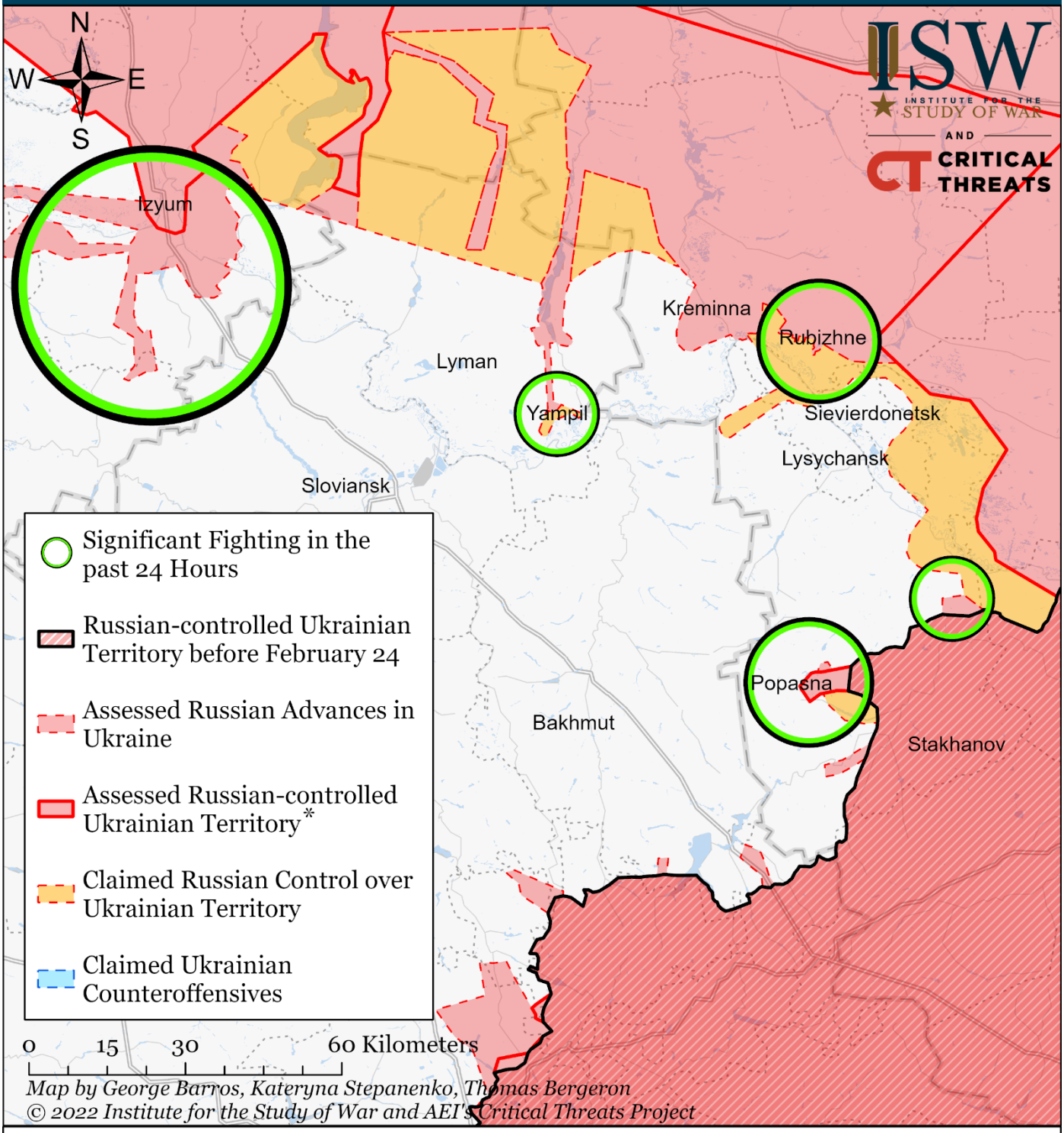
The Kremlin declared victory in Mariupol on April 21 after capturing the city besides Ukrainian holdouts in the encircled Azovstal Metallurgical Combine. Russian forces continued ground assaults on remaining Ukrainian defenders at Azovstal on April 27. Ukrainian forces engaged in small-scale street fights in the Left Bank District outside Azovstal on April 27. Russian war reporters filmed some Russian elements redeploying from Mariupol northward on April 24 and April 25. 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 unsuccessful attacks alongside artillery fire and airstrikes on the entire Donetsk-Luhansk frontline and did not make any confirmed advances on April 30.[iv] The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces aim to capture Rubizhne and Popasna and use these towns as springboards for further advances west toward Lyman and Slovyansk.[v] Russian forces around Izyum are attempting to capture these towns from the north to merge Russian advances in eastern Ukraine, but Ukrainian forces are successfully preventing Russian forces from making major gains on either axis.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of April 30, 2022, 3:00 ET



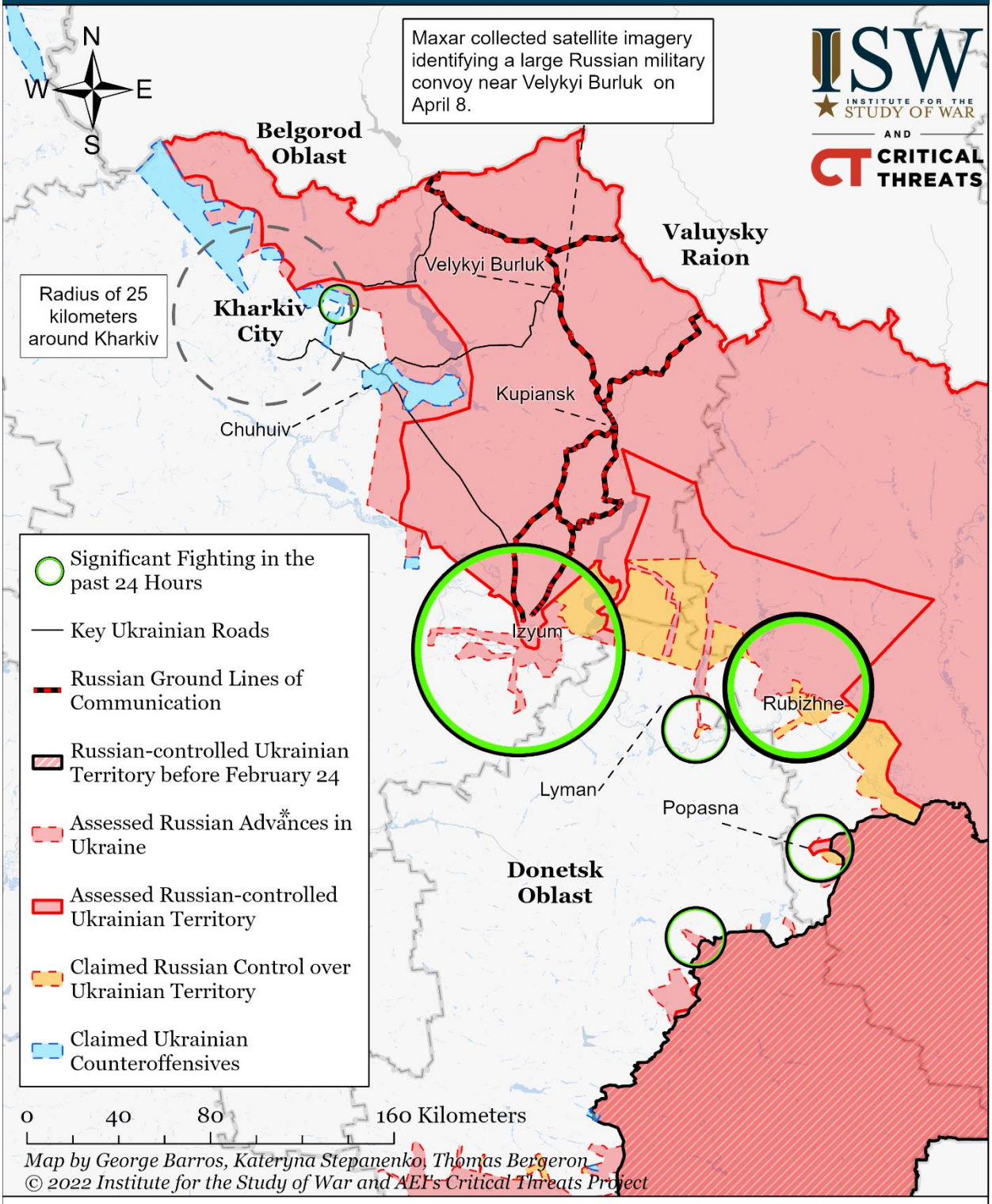
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<u>Supporting Effort #1—Kharkiv and Izyum:</u> (Russian objective: Advance southeast to support Russian operations in Luhansk Oblast; defend ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to the Izyum axis)

Russian forces continued to attack southeast and southwest from Izyum but did not secure any confirmed advances in these directions on April 30.[vi] The Ukrainian General Staff stated that elements of the 1st Guards Tank Army, 20th Combined Arms Army, 35th Combined Arms Army, 68th Army Corps, and likely 2 battalion tactical groups (BTGs) of the 76th Airborne Division are trying to advance southwest to Barvinkove and southeast to Slovyansk.[vii] The Ukrainian General Staff additionally reported that Russian forces are deploying unspecified elements of the Eastern Military District to the Izyum area to support these advances.[viii] The Ukrainian General Staff additionally indicated that additional Russian air-defense forces are deploying to cover Russian troops in the Izyum area.[ix] A Pro-Russian military source claimed that Russian troops encircled approximately 600 Ukrainian troops in Yaremivka, about 25 kilometers southeast of Izyum on the road to Slovyansk, although ISW cannot independently confirm this report.[x] Ukrainian sources claimed an artillery strike on a Russian command post near Izyum killed Russian Major General Alexei Simonov on April 30, although ISW cannot confirm preliminary reporting at this time.[xi]

Ukrainian forces continued counterattacks against several positions along an arc spanning from the north to the east of Kharkiv City and recaptured Verkhnya Rohanka, Ruska Lozova, Slobidske, and Prelesne.[xii] Ukrainian troops have recaptured a ring of suburbs around the east of Kharkiv City in the past 72 hours that may allow them to alleviate pressure on residential areas of the city, such as Saltivka, that have been targeted by intensive Russian shelling.[xiii] Ukrainian counterattacks may additionally force Russian forces to redeploy units intended to support the Izyum axis. Russian forces continued to bombard Kharkiv City with air and artillery strikes throughout April 30.[xiv]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of April 30, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

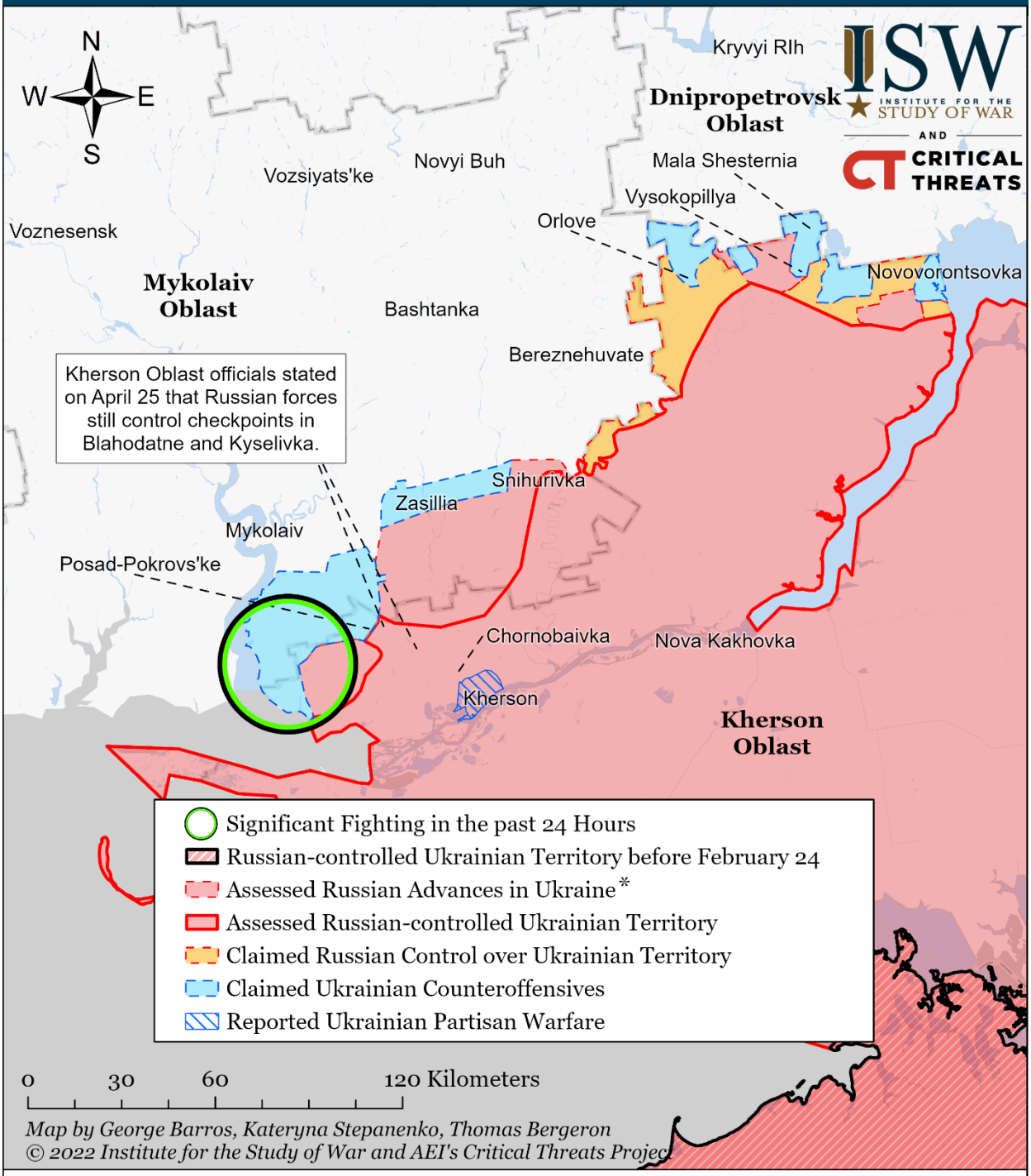


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<u>Supporting Effort #2—Southern Axis</u> (Objective: Defend Kherson against Ukrainian counterattacks)

Russian forces continued to prioritize improving their tactical positions and shelling Ukrainian positions on the Southern Axis but did not make any confirmed advances on April 30.[xv] The Ukrainian General Staff notably stated that elements of the 8th and 49th Combined Arms Army, 22nd Army Corps, Black Sea Fleet, and Airborne forces are engaging in combat operations to improve their tactical positions (indicating local attacks to capture key terrain, rather than major offensive operations) and are regrouping and replenishing supplies in preparation for a renewed push to reach the administrative borders of Kherson Oblast.[xvi] Russian forces shelled several points in Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and Mykolaiv Oblasts.[xvii] The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces continue to disseminate disinformation about the threat of Ukrainian troops to the population of Transnistria.[xviii]

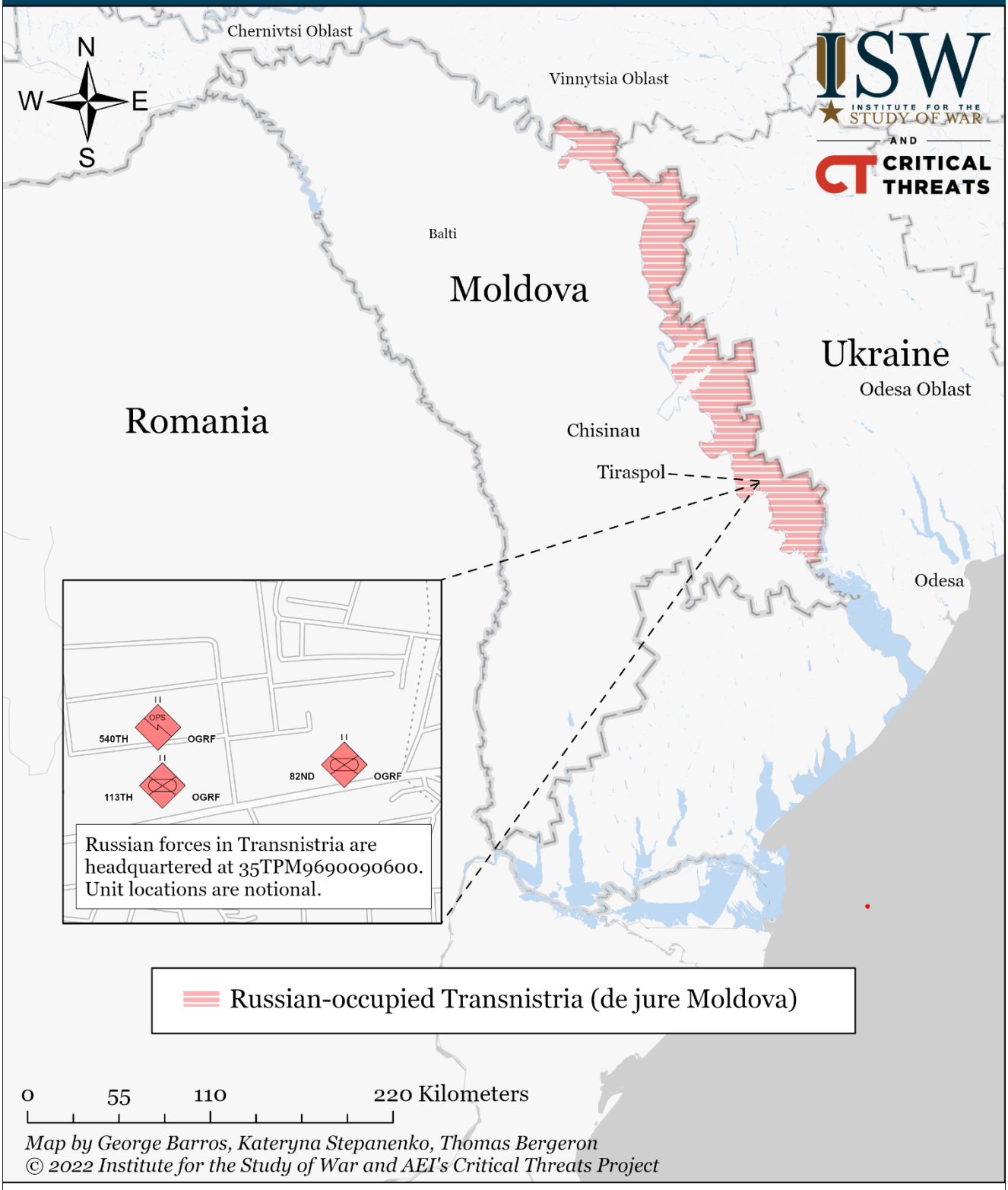
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of April 30, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

Note: We recoded assessed Russian advance west of Snihurivka from Chervone and Novopetrivka to Ukrainian counteroffensives given this territory likely had to be liberated to support the April 27 counteroffensive on Shyroke, Novopetrivka, and Lyubin. ISW will update our maps once we can verify more data.

Moldova Situational Map as of April 30, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Note: Russia maintains two motorized rifle battalions (subordinate to the Russian Western Military District) and a command battalion in Transnistria in Tiraspol. It is unclear where these battalions are arrayed as of April 27, 2022.

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

There were no significant activities on this axis in the past 24 hours.

Immediate items to watch

- Russian forces attacking southeast from Izyum, west from Kreminna and Popasna, and north from Donetsk City will likely make steady but tactical gains against Ukrainian defenders.
- Russian forces will likely attempt to starve out the remaining defenders of the Azovstal Steel Plant in Mariupol and will not allow trapped civilians to evacuate but may conduct costly assaults on remaining Ukrainian defenders to claim a propaganda victory.
- Russian forces are likely preparing to conduct renewed offensive operations to capture the entirety of Kherson Oblast in the coming days.
- Russia may continue false-flag attacks in and around Transnistria or might move to generate a more serious crisis in Transnistria and Moldova more generally.

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[i] https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/306191908360561; https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1520390620161921025; https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1520389814868193286; https://t.me/milinfolive/82328; https://t dot me/nm_dnr/7784; https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1520390620161921025; https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1520389814868193286; https://t.me/milinfolive/82328; https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/306191908360561

[ii] https://t dot me/andriyshTime/577

[iii] https://t dot me/andriyshTime/574; https://www.donetsk.kp dot ru/daily/27387/4580930/?from=tg

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[v] https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/306191908360561; https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1520046249944170496; https://t.me/vorposte/20372; https://t dot me/millnr/8291; https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/305803498399402

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[xviii] https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/306191908360561