



**MALCONTENT NEWS
RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR
SITUATION REPORT**



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Malcontent News Russia-Ukraine War SITREP

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SUMMARY – DAY 54

Russian forces started a broader offensive in eastern Ukraine, but initial reports of a coordinated multiple axes assault are overstating the tactical situation.

In the Donbas, Ukrainian forces retreated from Kreminna, north of Severodonetsk. Russian troops occupied the settlement but made no further territorial gains. Intense artillery bombardment was reported in Rubhizne and Popsanya.

Further south around Donetsk, fighting continued around Avdiivka and Maryinka.

Fighting for control of Mariupol is now in its 48th day. Ukrainian forces are concentrated at the Azovstal Metallurgical Plant and in a couple of pockets west to the edge of the main port. Russian forces dropped bunker-buster bombs on the complex. Ukrainian troops continue to be capable of launching offensive attacks outside of the plant and to the north of the port. Continued fighting in Mariupol is forcing Russia to commit 12 Battalion Tactical Groups.

Attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure continued in Kharkiv, Lviv, and Mykolaiv. Five Kalibr cruise missiles struck Lviv, killing seven civilians – marking the first deaths in the western city since the start of the war.

Ukraine launched an offensive east of Kharkiv on April 16 that had driven 30 kilometers east from Chuhuiv. Simultaneously, Ukraine forces pushed north from Husarivka 10 kilometers north to Balakliya, recapturing the train station and securing the rail line.

The eastward advance from Kharkiv will put pressure on Kupyansk, a critical transit connection on the western side of the Oskil River and connection to Izyum. Continued advances northward from Balakliya could provide some relief to Kharkiv and improve supply lines into the city.

Russian forces advanced southwest from Izyum to Barvinkove but were repulsed by Ukrainian troops. On the eastern side of the Oskil River, Russian forces continue to drive south from Borova. Heavy fighting was reported in Lozove, 25 kilometers east of Izyum and 40 kilometers north of Slovyansk.

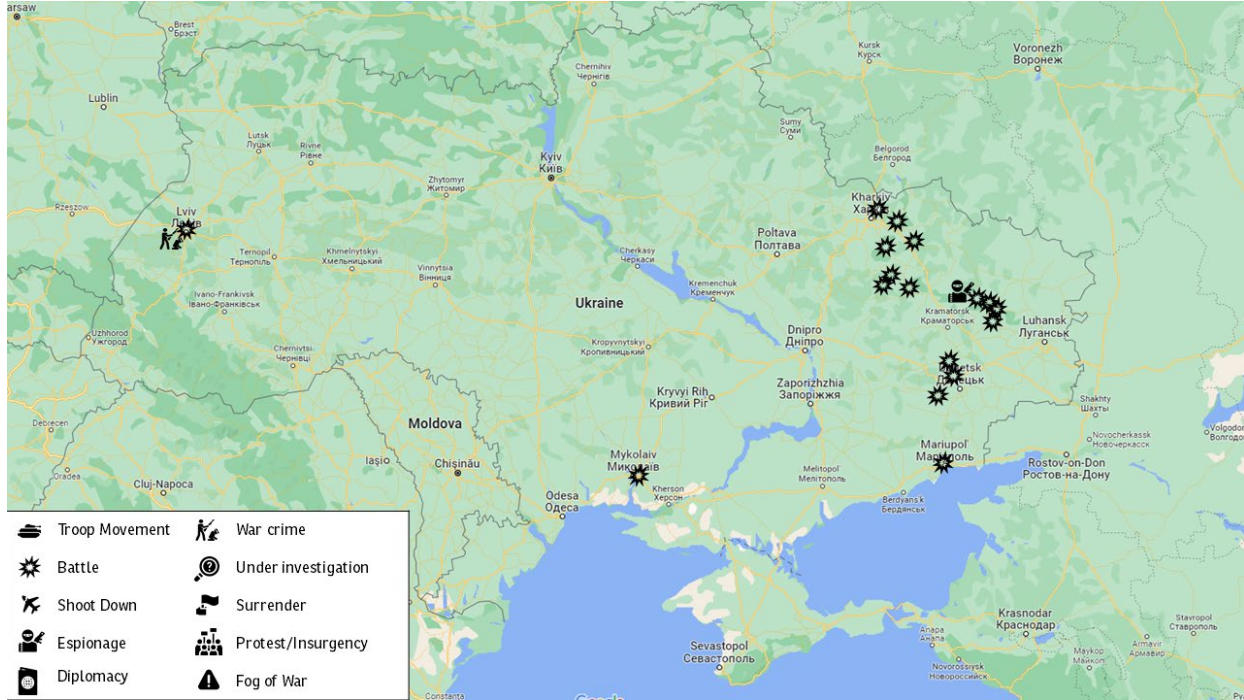
ASSESSMENT: Earlier reports of a widescale coordinated offensive by Russian forces across eastern Ukraine appear to be overstated. There has been a significant increase in operational tempo from Mykolaiv to Kharkiv, with small territorial gain for Russia in Luhansk, north of Severodonetsk.

We maintain that Russia can overwhelm Ukrainian forces in the Donbas in a coordinated attack along all axes. The second phase of the war has started, but Ukrainian forces have held and are making gains east of Kharkiv.

Even if Russia were to secure the Donbas region, they lack the personnel or resource to hold territorial gains. The region's occupation would require up to 130,000 troops on regular rotation implementing authoritarian rule, further fueling an insurgency.

It is more likely that Russia has entered into an extended war of attrition designed to grind Ukrainian forces down.

KEY EVENTS MAP



DONBAS REGION

Russian forces have started the second phase of the Russia-Ukraine War with artillery barrages along multiple axes through the Donbas.

Ukrainian forces reportedly withdrew from Kreminna at the start of the offensive, with Russian forces capturing the town.¹ Russian troops are reported to be advancing west toward Zarichne, with reports of heavy fighting.

Intense fighting was reported in Rubizhne^{2 3} and Popasnya, with Ukrainian forces defending the town as of publication.⁴

In Donetsk, fighting continues in the settlements of Avdiivka and Maryinka, with no changes in territorial control at the time of publication.

Ukrainian forces destroyed the rail bridge over the Siverskyi Donets River west of Drovivka.^{5 6}

¹ https://t.me/tvoy_region13/5825

² <https://twitter.com/RedIntelPanda/status/1516212997080895496>

³ <https://twitter.com/Osinttechnical/status/1516208857672044552>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/297662705880148>;

⁵ <https://goo.gl/maps/jFMJKUBgUNBVyq5e6>

⁶ <https://twitter.com/NoWayLeftButUp/status/1516173598662303751> [Russian State Media – Rating: Valid]

ASSESSMENT: It is challenging to verify reports in real-time due to fighting along multiple axes. Mainstream media reports exaggerated the scope of fighting in the Donbas. The operational tempo increased significantly with heavy use of artillery, but action appears to be at strategic points versus an all-out advance attempting to break through weak points.

In our best estimation, Ukrainian forces withdrew from Kreminna to hold Rubhizne and the Severodoentsk salient. Further south in the Donetsk Oblast, Ukrainian troops have kept the settlement of Lebyazhe and held the line of contact that extends from Horlivka to Maryinka, west of Donetsk.

Russian military doctrine starts large-scale offensives with heavy artillery fire to clear areas for mechanized infantry to advance into new territory. The wide use of artillery at this scale indicates a significant offensive in eastern Ukraine has begun.

Weather conditions are poor for mid-April, with rain and snow falling over large areas of Ukraine. The reliance on wheeled vehicles will create challenges for mechanized

infantry advances, and Russian forces have continued to show poor tactics, with minimal support from ground troops during advances.

The Ukrainian military data on Russian losses are exaggerated, except for tanks, artillery, and specialty vehicles. The high loss rate for Russian armor is due to poor tactics, a high abandonment rate, and insufficient air support. Nothing indicates that the Russian leadership has adjusted to address these shortcomings.

It is estimated that Russia has assembled 11,000 additional troops through the Donbas, the equivalent of 11 to 13 Battalion Tactical Groups (BTG), depending on the configuration. The total number of BTGs is higher because they are distributed across units that have suffered 30% to 50% losses.

Ukrainian forces are heavily dug in, have experienced troops in place against a belligerent with low morale, and some units entering battle in a combat ineffective state.

In our assessment, this offensive started before Russian, Chechen, and Russia-backed DNR and LNR militias were adequately resupplied and reconstituted. We believe that

Russian forces are more likely to grind down Ukrainian defenders and have breakthroughs along the line of conflict but are incapable of holding territorial gains in the long term.

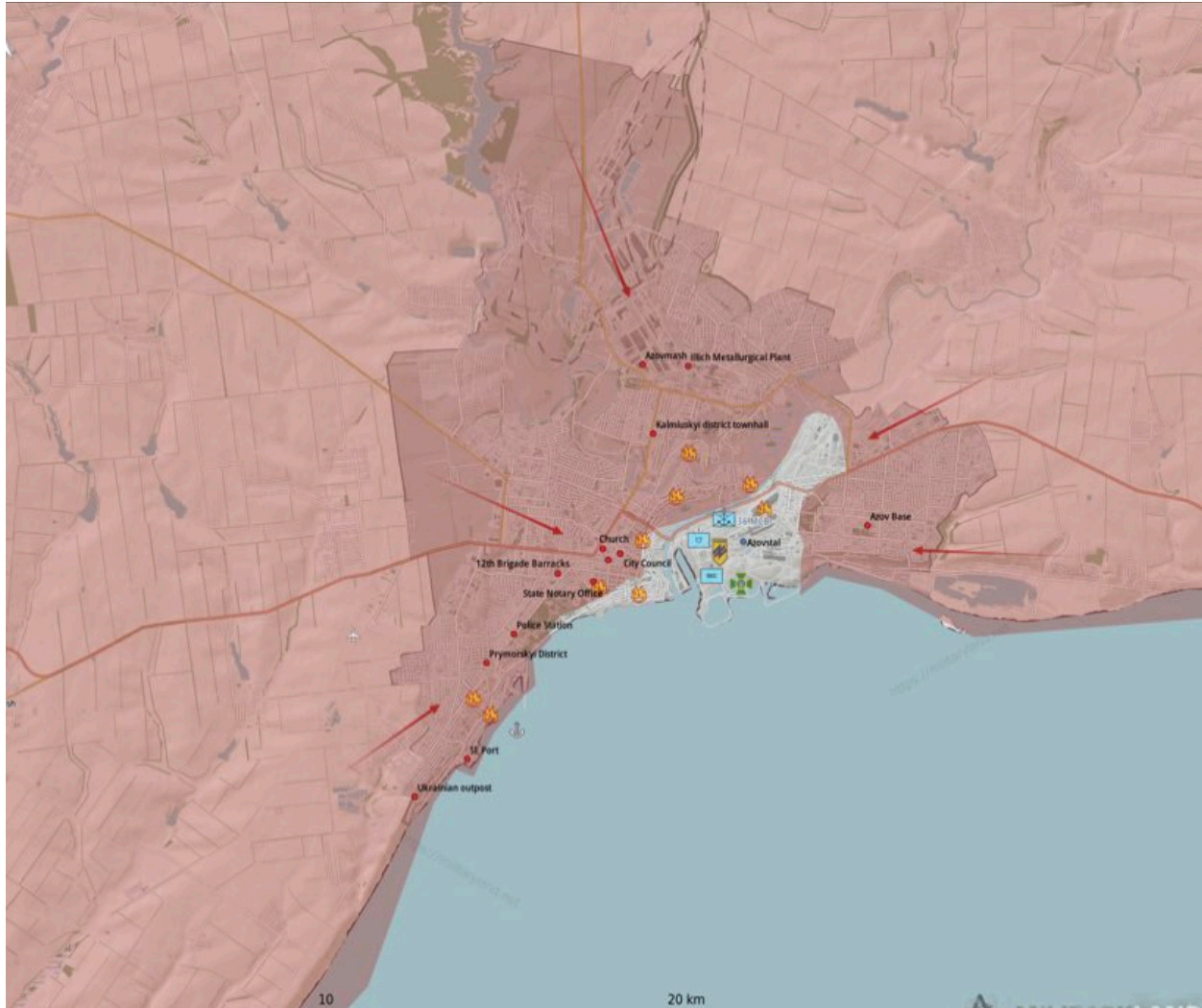
Additionally, Russian forces will remain bogged down in Mariupol, where up to 12 BTGs continue to fight a group of 2,500 to 3,000 defenders.

In Mariupol, Russian forces bombed the Azovstal Metallurgical Plant with bunker-buster bombs from Tu-22M3 strategic bombers and other aircraft. Russian forces also shelled the facility with artillery.⁷

Ukrainian forces continue to fight in two additional pockets based on available information. Fighting continued north of the main port, almost entirely under Russian control and in small areas in the city center. [This map](#) best aligns with our assessment of the ground situation in Mariupol.⁸

⁷ <https://twitter.com/IAPonomarenko/status/1516114648009003012>

⁸ <https://twitter.com/HoansSolo/status/1516098226121846792/photo/1>



Map Credit to <https://www.militaryland.net>

Videos showed continued pockets of fighting outside the plant, where small groups of Ukrainian resistance are still maneuvering.⁹ (viewer discretion advised)¹⁰

⁹ <https://twitter.com/Militarylandnet/status/1516024931594686465>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/Osinttechnical/status/1515886675074985985>

We have maintained through April 17 that Russian forces were not entirely in control of the entire main port of Mariupol. Fighting was continuing just on the edge of the port on April 18.¹¹

There were unconfirmed reports on April 17 that Russia would attempt an amphibious landing in or near Mariupol. We cannot confirm the veracity of these reports but have lower confidence that they are accurate.

There is a video of up to 1,000 civilians, including women, children, and the elderly, hiding in the bunkers at the Azovstal Metallurgical Plant.¹²

ASSESSMENT: The Ukrainian marines and Azov Battalion at Azovstal are more likely to run out of food, water, and ammunition than to be destroyed in combat. Artillery and airstrikes will have a larger psychological impact than creating military casualties.

We continue to believe that most fighting will end within the next eight days. Russian occupying forces are likely to

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/LewkHughes/status/1516212828025364485>

¹² https://twitter.com/olex_scherba/status/1516152458627670023

face an aggressive and violent insurgency to hold a city with almost no viable infrastructure remaining.

KHARKIV REGION

Shelling of civilians and civilian infrastructure continued in Kharkiv.¹³

The Ukrainian counteroffensive that started on April 16 east of Kharkiv made significant gains in the last 24 hours. A video shows Ukrainian troops being greeted by the residents of Bazaliivka, confirming the settlement was liberated on April 17.¹⁴

The settlement of Bairak was liberated on April 18, an advance of 10 kilometers from Husarivka.¹⁵

ASSESSMENT: Ukrainian forces still need to advance 45 kilometers from Bazaliivka to reach Kupyansk, a critical transportation hub that connects Izyum to Russia along the west bank of the Oskil River.

¹³ <https://twitter.com/visegrad24/status/1515822144898441219>

¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/THATV19/status/1516136892756070406>

¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/HoansSolo/status/1516082092215615490>

Troops moving north from Bairak need to advance 40 kilometers to connect with the Kharkiv element at Lebyazhe or Bazaliivka.

If Russian forces don't divert BTGs from the Izyum salient to protect these lines, Ukraine could erode supply lines along the western side of the Oskil River. A successful connection from Bairak to Lebyazhe would provide some relief to the civilian population of Kharkiv.

Fighting has continued along the eastern side of the Oskil River, with Ukrainian forces holding the Russian advance at Lozove.

Russian forces made another attempt to capture the settlement of Barvinkove southwest of Izyum but were repulsed by Ukrainian troops.¹⁶ Ukrainian officials ordered civilians to evacuate the town, where 4,000 residents remain.¹⁷

¹⁶ https://twitter.com/TCG_CrisisRisks/status/1516151333216153600

¹⁷ <https://suspilne.media/230138-okupanti-poskodili-abo-zrujnuvali-88-obektiv-kulturi-ta-arhitekturi-harkivsini/>

ASSESSMENT: Russia is trying to create a second line of communication and supply along the eastern shore of the Oskil River.

Although Russia has assembled up to 22 Battalion Tactical Groups in the Izyum region, many are not fully manned or equipped and suffer from low morale.

DNIPRO, KHERSON & MYKOLAIV REGION

As part of the broader offensive that started on April 18, Russian forces were firing MLRS in the direction of Mykolaiv from the Kherson Oblast.¹⁸

The governor of the Mykolaiv Oblast reported that Russian forces and Russia-backed militias were involved in a friendly fire incident in Nova Kakhovka on April 16.¹⁹ We cannot confirm the report's veracity but believe it has weight.

¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/Archer83Able/status/1516149357682343938>

¹⁹ https://twitter.com/vitalij_kim/status/1515618864935186437

OPINION: We are surprised at how few friendly fire incidents have been reported among belligerents since hostilities started on February 24.

CHERNIHIV & SUMY REGION

There wasn't any significant military action in the region.

KYIV REGION

There wasn't any significant military action in the region.

BLACK SEA & ODESA REGION

There wasn't any significant military action in the region.

ASSESSMENT: We believe the threat of an amphibious assault on Odesa is negligible.

WEST REGION

Lviv was hit by up to five Russian Kalibr cruise missiles, causing seven deaths.²⁰ These were the first civilian casualties in the western city near the Polish border since the start of the war.²¹

At least one cruise missile hit an automobile repair center.²²

ASSESSMENT: We believe there is no longer a threat of a Belarusian invasion into Western Ukraine.

THEATERWIDE & EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS

There weren't any significant developments today.

WAR CRIMES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

There weren't any significant reports today.

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/Archer83Able/status/1516082251041230850>

²¹ <https://twitter.com/Osinttechnical/status/1516154763733258249>

²² <https://twitter.com/Osinttechnical/status/1516208037178056706>

GEOPOLITICAL

There weren't any significant events today.

ECONOMIC

The rouble improved slightly today, advancing to 81 for one US dollar.

Oil prices increased again, with WTI climbing to \$109 a barrel and Brent crude advancing to \$114. Gasoline dropped slightly to \$3.38 a gallon.

DISINFORMATION EVALUATION

A video circulating on social media claims it was filmed in the Donbas, Zaporizhzhya, Mykolaiv, and Kharkiv on April 18.²³ The video is from a training exercise in Saudi Arabia and has added Ukrainian voices and combat sound effects. This video is not from Ukraine and does not show actual combat.



²³ <https://twitter.com/IntelArrow/status/1516168617565593610>