
Snapshot of the day:

General, humanitarian:

- On Orthodox Easter Ukraine has secured the return of 130 POWs, while Russia shelled 2 Ukrainian churches, wounding two civilians in one of them.
- The Russian forces shelled eight regions of Ukraine on April 15, killing and wounding civilians.
- Russia has started the illegal deportation of the Ukrainian children of illegally occupied Energodar into illegally occupied Crimea.
- For the first time in 336 years, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church held an Easter service in Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, one of the most sacred places for the Ukrainian Orthodox Christians.
- The Metropolitan of Kyiv cheered up Ukrainian warriors and ordinary people and criticized the "Russian world."
- President Zelensky greeted Ukrainians with the Resurrection of the Lord and motivated them for victory.

Military:

- The enemy has probably started preparations for a defensive operation in the Kupyansk direction;
- The units of the Russian Airborne Forces are in defensive combat formations to prevent a possible counteroffensive in the Bakhmut area;
- Analysis of enemy groupings composition in the Bakhmut and Avdiivka directions indicates that their numbers are insufficient for offensive operations and creating necessary force densities.
- The enemy's artillery grouping is using 152mm caliber weapons as their main artillery.
- The enemy's anti-tank defense in the Eastern operational zone is assessed as weak.
- **Possible operation situation developments:** the Ukrainian Defense Forces, in the short-term perspective, will adhere to their chosen strategy of inflicting maximum losses on the enemy in close combat on the directions where the main efforts are concentrated, partially explained by the lack of ammunition for artillery.
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International:

- Germany's nuclear power stations went offline on Saturday. The Merkel government's decision to get rid of nuclear energy paved the way for Putin to addict Germany to Russian energy supplies and secure leverage over the E.U.
- Germany's Deputy Chancellor has called on the EU to impose sanctions on Russia's nuclear energy sector. If supported by Hungary and France, this could be a massive blow to Russia's presence in the European energy market.

Humanitarian aspect:

Another 130 Ukrainian defenders returned from Russian captivity on the day of Orthodox Easter. All rescued warriors are privates and sergeants. Most of them defended Ukraine in the Bakhmut and Soledar directions and Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and Luhansk Oblasts.

Meanwhile, on a Holy day, Russia shelled two churches; at night in Zaporizhzhia Oblast and on April 16 in Nikopol, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, resulting in two wounded Ukrainian civilians.

Russian attacks

The army of the Russian Federation shelled eight regions of Ukraine on April 15, killing and wounding civilians.

Consequences of enemy shelling on the morning of April 16

- At night, the Russian occupiers shelled the Snigurivka community of **Mykolaiv Oblast**; according to preliminary data, with S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems. Two teenagers born in 2005 were killed. Residential buildings, an educational institution and a private enterprise were damaged. In Snigurivka itself, two educational institutions, a hospital, a cultural center and residential buildings were damaged. A kindergarten and a club were damaged in the Horikhivska community.
- In **Zaporizhzhia Oblast**, the Russian military shelled 19 towns and villages 101 times over the past day. They again attacked the front-line Hulyaipole and Orihiv. At night, the Russian army shelled Zaporizhzhia, hitting a park zone and an enterprise. A local church was damaged in Kamyshivka, Zaporizhzhia district. Fortunately, there was no service in it [on Orthodox Holy Saturday].
- At night, the Russians carried out an airstrike on the outskirts of the Svesa village of **Sumy Oblast**; two people were injured. A communal facility and two administrative premises were damaged.
- Over the past day, the enemy launched 70 attacks at **Kherson Oblast**, firing 419 shells from heavy artillery, UAVs and aircraft. The enemy shelled Kherson 5 times. Russian artillery hit the Tavriysky district of the city. The shells were aimed at the territory near the educational institution. A 48-year-old woman and her 28-year-old daughter were killed.
- Over the past day, the Russian occupiers continued to attack along the border areas of **Kharkiv Oblast**. Two private houses were damaged in Petropavlivka, and a car and a tractor were destroyed. No casualties were reported.
- On April 15, 5 residents of **Donetsk Oblast** were killed, and seven more were injured. Russian troops carried out airstrikes, shelled with "Uragan" and "Grad" anti-aircraft missiles, artillery, and mortars. 14 residential buildings were damaged, including 5 high-rise buildings, four shopping pavilions, a pharmacy, a garage, premises of the "Mercury" shopping center, a power line, and a building of sanitation station.

On April 16, Orthodox Easter, the Russian invaders hit the temple in Nikopol, **Dnipropetrovsk Oblast**, with heavy artillery. Two victims were reported: a 57-year-old man and a 38-year-old woman. In addition to the temple, five residential buildings, two cars and several power lines were also damaged.

In **Sloviansk** (Donetsk Oblast), the State Emergency Service completed dismantling the rubble of a five-story building after a missile strike on April 14. The death toll from the shelling increased to 15 people, and 24 were injured. *As reported yesterday, on April 14, the Russian army shelled Sloviansk, presumably with S-300 missiles. One of the rockets hit a multi-storey residential building, significantly damaging the upper floors.*

The Russian invaders again shelled **Kherson** and **Beryslav** on Sunday, April 16.

Occupied territories

Russia's occupation authorities have started the deportation ("forced evacuation") of the Ukrainian children of Energodar, a satellite town near the Zaporizhzhia NPP, into illegally occupied Crimea. As reported by Ukrinform, this is being reported on the Energodar Telegram channel. The invaders "plan to take the children to the side of the temporarily occupied Crimea on station buses, thus allegedly legalizing the theft of the ZNPP transport, which the station personnel use to get to work. Currently, the "orcs" [the locals call Russian occupation authorities] have already begun to take furniture, mattresses and other things from the city's kindergartens," said the messages.

Operational situation

General conclusion:

- The enemy concentrates its main efforts on conducting offensive operations in the Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Maryinka areas;
- The enemy has probably started preparations for a defensive operation in the Kupyansk direction;
- The Russian Airborne Forces units are positioned in defensive combat formations in the Bakhmut area, with the objective of preventing a potential counteroffensive by the Ukrainian Defense Forces. Their role extends beyond providing support solely to the "Wagner" PMC units.
- The composition of enemy groupings in the Bakhmut and Avdiivka sectors indicates that their numbers are insufficient to conduct offensive operations due to the inability to achieve the required concentration of forces and assets; their current main tactic involves infantry attacks supported by artillery.
- The enemy's artillery grouping is using 152mm caliber weapons as their main artillery (155 of 152mm and 52 of 122mm);
- The enemy's anti-tank defense in the Eastern operational zone is assessed as weak (65 anti-tank means on 200 km of the front).

Change in the line of contact (LoC):

- Ukrainian Defense Forces units repelled over 60 enemy attacks in various directions. Bakhmut and Maryinka remain at the epicenter of hostilities.
- The enemy conducted unsuccessful offensive operations in the areas of Dibrova and Bilohorivka in Luhansk Oblast; Khromove, Avdiivka, Severne, and Maryinka in Donetsk Oblast. The battles for the city of Bakhmut continue.

- Russian forces made slight progress to the north of Zolotarivka towards Bilohorivka. The most active battles are taking place in the forests near Kreminna, on the Bilohorivka axis, but the frontline remains practically unchanged.
- The enemy forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Khromove, Stepove, Novokalynove, Pivnichne, and Pervomaiske; attempted to attack Pryvillya; launched an assault near Novomykhailivka, Pobyeda, in western Maryinka; tried to attack near Vuhledar; advanced near Mykilske.

Change in enemy disposition:

- On the Bakhmut and Avdiivka directions, the enemy's "East" and "South" groupings are active, consisting of 40-45% mobilization reserve formations and territorial troops. The estimated total strength of these groups, excluding reserves, is 83,000 personnel, with up to 45-50 reinforced battalions, including 17 tank battalions. The 3rd Army Corps of the Western Military District is held in reserve.
- Units of the 106th airborne division of the Russian Armed Forces hold the flank of the "Wagner" PMC near Yakovlivka. The Airborne Forces units defending on the southern and northern flanks of the Russian grouping in Bakhmut, covering both the large Russian salient from Dubovo-Vasylivka to Yakovlivka, and the Russian salient from the areas south of the T0504 highway to Kurdyumivka.
- In the Kupyansk direction, the enemy mined the terrain in the areas of four settlements.

Escalation indicators:

- Russian forces are using T-90 tanks in Bakhmut, which may indicate that these tanks have been transferred to the disposal of the Wagner PMC or are supporting its operations.

Possible operation situation developments:

- The Ukrainian Defense Forces, in the short-term perspective, will adhere to their chosen strategy of inflicting maximum losses on the enemy in close combat on the directions where the main efforts are concentrated, partially explained by the lack of ammunition for artillery.

Azov-Black Sea Maritime Operational Area:

- There are 11 enemy ships at sea (including four amphibious ships). They patrol the areas near the coast of Novorossiysk and Crimea. Among them, two *project 636.3* submarines, carriers of Kalibr missiles, are in the area of the firing position southeast of Sevastopol and near Novorossiysk. They can carry up to 8 Kalibr missiles. Five more Kalibr cruise missile carriers (in total, they can carry up to 36 missiles) are in Novorossiysk: frigate Admiral Makarov, corvettes Grayvoron, Ingushetia, and Vyshnyi Volochyok, and a *project 636.3* submarine.
- The enemy's aviation significantly intensified flights from the Crimean airfields of Belbek, Saki, Dzhankoy and Hvardiyske over the sea. Ten fighter aircraft were involved in monitoring the surface and air situation in the northwest part of the Black Sea waters: two Su-30SM, five Su-27/30, two Su-24M, and one MiG-29K (Belbek). Control of the air

situation and operational-tactical aviation management over the Azov Sea waters was carried out by the A-50U and Il-22 AEW&C aircraft.

- The military transport aviation performed four airlift flights to transfer personnel and military cargo to Belbek airfield, and one to Saki airfield.
- **The Russian Pacific Fleet:**
 - The assessment of military command and control entities and forces of the Pacific Fleet is ongoing (April 14-20, 2023). The official objective is to assess the capability of the Pacific Fleet to deter aggression from oceanic and maritime directions. Meanwhile, the actual purpose is to demonstrate to Japan and its allies in the region the sufficient presence of forces and assets to repel potential attacks aimed at liberating the occupied territories of the Kuril Islands. Approximately 4,500 military personnel are involved in the assessment.
 - The designated units and elements of the fleet are brought to higher levels of combat readiness, forming two squadrons of combat ships and support vessels:
 - 1st Squadron - consisting of the large anti-submarine ship "Admiral Panteleev", corvettes "Gromkiy", "Sovershenny", and "Hero of the Russian Federation Aldar Tsydenzhapov", submarine "Komsomolsk-na-Amure", minesweeper of *Project 12650*, and transport vessel "Boris Butoma" of the Primorsky Flotilla. They conducted exercises in designated areas of the Sea of Japan, including submarine search and detection, as well as the destruction of air targets. Combat missile firing with the probable use of anti-ship missile complex "Uran" was planned for April 16th.
 - 2nd Squadron - consisting of five surface ships and two submarines (including the nuclear-powered submarine of *Project 949A* "Omsk"). Conducting transition to the designated area of the Sea of Okhotsk to organize the defense of the Kuril Islands.
 - To simulate the opposing forces that may conduct a maritime landing, a landing force has been formed from the coastal defense forces of the Kamchatka Flotilla, which is deployed on Kunashir and Iturup islands. Planned activities include conducting live firing exercises with coastal missile complexes "Bal" and "Bastion".
 - It is noteworthy that these activities are taking place against the backdrop of deteriorating relations between Russia and Japan, due to Japan's clear position on the ownership of the islands in the southern part of the Kuril Ridge and their recognition as temporarily occupied by Russia (statement by Japan's Prime Minister F. Kishida). In addition, during the period of the exercises, meetings of the energy ministers (April 15-16) and foreign ministers (April 16-18) of the G7 countries are taking place in Japan. At the same time, the Minister of Defense of China, Li Shanfu, is visiting Russia (April 16-19).

Russian operational losses from 24.02.22 to 16.04.23

Personnel - almost 182,070 people (+520);

Tanks - 3,657 (+4);

Armored combat vehicles – 7,083 (+10);

Artillery systems – 2,795 (+10)
Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 538 (+3);
Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 284 (+1);
Vehicles and fuel tanks – 5,658 (+12);
Aircraft - 308 (+1);
Helicopters – 293 (0);
UAV operational and tactical level – 2,339 (0);
Intercepted cruise missiles - 911 (0);
Boats/ships – 18 (0).

Ukraine, general news

For the first time in 336 years, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church held an Easter service in Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, one of the most sacred places for Ukrainian Orthodox Christians. The Monastery, built in 1051, has played a crucial role in Christianity in medieval Rus and beyond. In 1592-1688, the Monastery was directly subordinated to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople, with 115 out of 125 Monastery's saints being clerics of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. However, after the Russian Empire absorbed Ukraine, the Monastery was subjugated to the Moscow Patriarchate in 1688. Since Ukraine regained its independence in 1991, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate had a monopoly over the occupation of the Monastery, which [the premises] is officially Ukraine's government property. In 2019, Bartholomew I of Constantinople, Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, restored the Autocephaly (self-governorship) of the "Most Holy Church of Ukraine" with its See in the historic city of Kyiv. In 2023, the Ukrainian government decided not to extend the lease [of the premises of Monastery as the historic and cultural landmark] to the branch of the Moscow Church in Ukraine, allowing the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, a canonically recognized Church, to hold religious services in the Monastery.

During the Easter service, the Metropolitan of Kyiv spoke about the sacrificial love and bravery of Ukrainian warriors who fight for Ukraine and give their lives for the country, "They suffer, and they die on the battlefield not for themselves, but for the sake of Ukraine... Therefore, their act of sacrificial love compares them to the act of Calvary. And thanks to this feat, Ukraine has already morally won. She will win on the battlefield. Because the Truth and God's help are with us." He argued against the so-called "Russian world," which promotes Russian neo-imperialism and replaces the Kingdom of God with the Kingdom of the Kremlin. The Metropolitan argued that this war is a product of the ideology of the "Russian world" and must be condemned from a religious point of view. "Weapons do not shoot by themselves - they are directed by human will and human hand. Ideas are killing us. Perverted ideas of Russian neo-imperialism. This war is a product of the ideology of the "Russian world."

In his Easter address, Ukraine's President spoke about the symbolism of Easter as a celebration of victory - the victory of good, truth, and life. He expressed faith in the irreversibility of these victories. "On this day a year ago, we all prayed that Ukraine would endure. Today - for Ukraine to win... Heaven sees our faith and steadfastness. The world sees our courage and indomitability.

The enemy sees our strength and determination. And therefore, Ukraine will see the light of victory," Volodymyr Zelensky said.

International diplomatic aspect

The remaining three of Germany's nuclear power stations went offline on Saturday. While the environmentalists are happy, the economy will feel additional pressure, given Germany's decision to stop buying Russian gas. Initially, the decision to shut down nuclear power plants paved the way for Putin to addict Germany to cheap Russian gas, hence increasing political leverage over Germany's policies and via this country – over the E.U. Markus Söder, Premier of Bavaria, accused the coalition government's decision of being "purely ideological" and a "serious mistake to exit nuclear energy at this point in time." Two-thirds of Germans favor extending the lifespan of nuclear reactors or connecting old plants back to the grid, with only a third (28%) backing the phase-out, a survey by the Forsa Institute showed.

"We have seen that Russia is deliberately using energy dependence to exert pressure. Therefore, the federal government has called on the European Commission to impose sanctions on the civil nuclear sector as well. This should be part of the next sanctions package," German Deputy Chancellor Robert Habeck said. It is going to be a tough discussion within the E.U., for some members are dependent on Russia's technologies or want to cooperate with them. Last week, Hungary's Foreign Minister flew to Moscow to secure contracts for additional gas supplies and the continuation of two new energy-generating units at the Paks-II nuclear power stations (worth €12 billion).

Ukraine used to be totally dependent on the Russian nuclear fuel supply until it carried out the Ukraine nuclear fuel qualification project with the Westinghouse Electric Company, which enabled Ukraine with alternative suppliers. This year Hungary has also been in talks with France on its possible increased role in the nuclear energy sector, though no contract has been signed yet. In its turn, French firm Framatome, a subcontractor to Rosatom in Hungary, is considering a joint nuclear fuel venture with Russia's Rosatom at a facility in western Germany. "We view the influence of Rosatom in Europe with particular concern. Rosatom is an arm of the (Russian) state, which is involved in the military nuclear administration and the production of nuclear weapons. Naturally, we want to push back against that influence," Gerrit Niehaus, a chair of the nuclear safety department at Germany's Environment Ministry, said.

So, Hungary and France have blocked several efforts by other E.U. member states to directly sanction "Rosatom," and highly likely will do so again. On the other hand, if Hungary withdraws support, it would mean the loss of Kremlin's leverage over remaining European countries, as the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Finland have already stopped joint projects with Russia.

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