As war continues, Putin declares Easter truce – and then breaks it

British Defence Intelligence map of battlefield situation as of April 18, 2025.

After the talks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia between Russian, Ukrainian, and American officials on March 23-25, there was some reason to think there might soon be a ceasefire in the war in Ukraine. But President Putin immediately attached conditions to the terms of the proposed ceasefire – most notably, the removal of all sanctions and restrictions on Russian financial institutions – all of which were rejected, so the war continued as it had prior to the talks. Over the seven days last week from Sunday through Saturday, the Russian forces conducted a total of 925 attacks against the Ukrainian forces defending cities and towns in eastern Ukraine and holding a portion of Russia's Kursk region just north of Sumy. Over the seven days of the previous week, from April 6 through April 12, the Russian forces conducted a total of 1,051 attacks against the Ukrainian forces.

As in the previous weeks, the greatest number of Russian attacks last week – 308 over the seven days – were conducted against the Ukrainian forces defending Pokrovsk, a transit hub that, if taken, would open a pathway for the Russian forces northward toward Kostyantynivka, Kramatorsk, and Sloviansk, and indeed all of the western portion of Donetsk region that is still held by Ukraine. In the previous week, the Russian forces had conducted a total of 327 attacks against the Ukrainian forces defending Pokrovsk.

But Pokrovsk wasn't the only target of the Russian attacks last week. The Russian forces also conducted a substantial number of attacks against the Ukrainian forces defending Lyman, about 30 kilometers southeast of Izium (122 attacks); the forces defending Toretsk, 20 kilometers south of Chasiv Yar (119 attacks); and the forces still holding a small portion of Russia's Kursk region (130 attacks).

As the war continued last week, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Presidential Envoy Steve Witkoff met with President Emmanuel Macron and other European officials, including Ukrainian officials, in a series of meetings Thursday at the Elysée Palace in Paris. The meetings were prompted by the continued refusal of Russia to agree to a ceasefire in its war against Ukraine and the conditions for Russia's acceptance of a ceasefire that President Putin conveyed to Witkoff in their five-hour meeting at the Presidential Library in St. Petersburg on April 11. The most important conditions, of course, concern the eventual control of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson, all of which were formally annexed and incorporated into the Russian Federation in 2022 and portions of which are now controlled by Russian forces. The talks involving American, European, and Ukrainian officials will resume in London this week.

In the meantime, on Saturday afternoon, after meeting with Chief of the General Staff of Russia's Armed Forces and First Deputy Minister of Defence Valery Gerasimov, President Putin said, "Guided by humanitarian motives, the Russian side announces an Easter ceasefire from 6 pm today to 12 am Monday. I hereby order all military operations ceased for this period. We assume that the Ukrainian side will follow our example. At the same time, our troops should be prepared to repel possible ceasefire violations and provocations by the enemy, as well as any aggressive acts on their part. We are well aware of the fact the Kiev regime, as you reported to me, violated agreements on refraining from targeting energy infrastructure facilities more than a hundred times. Therefore, I ask you to be extremely attentive and focused to be ready to strike back in full. Our decision on the Easter truce will demonstrate whether the Kiev regime is sincere, ready, willing and able to comply with the agreements, to participate in peace negotiations aimed at addressing the root causes of the Ukrainian crisis. For our part, we have always been ready to move in this direction and strongly welcome the aspirations of the United States, President Trump, our Chinese friends, the President of the People's Republic of China, the BRICS countries and all supporters of a just and peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian crisis."

The 30-hour Easter ceasefire ended as scheduled at 12 a.m. today. But not surprisingly, the Russian forces didn't comply with the truce. Indeed, the Ukrainian General Staff reported today that yesterday, while the Easter truce was supposedly in effect for 24 hours, the Russian forces conducted 96 attacks against the Ukrainian forces in eastern Ukraine, with the largest number, 39, directed against the forces defending Pokrovsk. And today, after Putin's pseudo-truce ended at midnight, the war resumed with no end in sight.

David R. Cameron
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