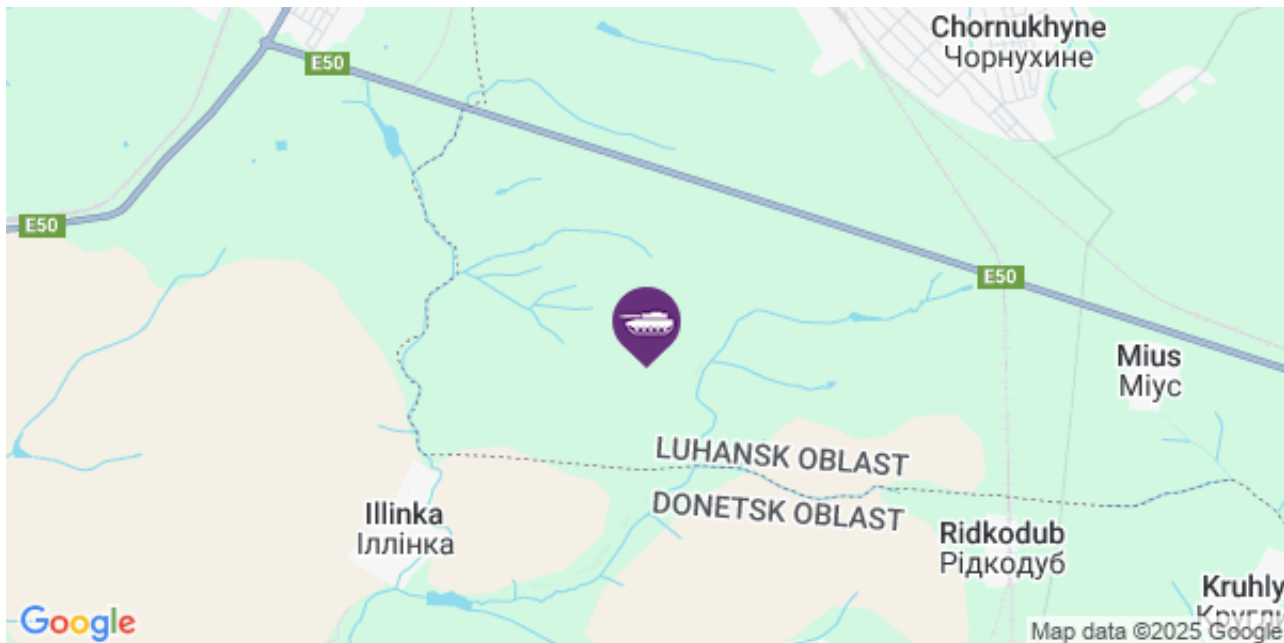


Armed Conflict

**20**APR
9:16 UTC

Russia & Ukraine Alert: Moscow declares unilateral Easter ceasefire, in effect through 23:59 (local time) on April 20; potential for airstrikes high due to expected violations

Current Situation

- On April 19, Russian President Vladimir Putin unilaterally announced a temporary ceasefire with Ukraine. According to the Kremlin's announcement, the ceasefire began at 18:00 (local time) on April 19 and will remain in effect until 23:59 on April 20, with "all military actions" from the Russian side to cease during this period. Putin cited "humanitarian considerations" as a reason for the ceasefire, which coincides with Easter celebrations.
- In his statement, Putin said that Russia expected Ukraine to also observe the temporary ceasefire, while noting that Russian forces would remain prepared to respond to any violations or potential provocations.
- The ceasefire was announced amid an exchange of prisoners of war (POWs) between Russia and Ukraine on April 19 – the largest prisoner swap since the beginning of the war, with 246 captured Russian service members returned in exchange for 277 Ukrainian personnel.
- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky initially accepted the ceasefire proposal. However, he later asserted that Russia breached the ceasefire on April 19 and in the morning hours of April 20, stating that shelling and combat clashes persisted along Ukrainian front lines, and in the Russian Kursk and Belgorod regions. He accused Moscow of attempting to create the "impression" of a ceasefire while continuing offensive operations. Zelensky reiterated his call for both sides to return

to earlier proposals for a 30-day truce—plans that were previously rejected by the Kremlin.

Source: [CNN](#)

Assessments & Forecast

1. Putin's unilateral announcement—delivered without warning or coordination with Ukraine — raises doubts regarding the credibility of any such ceasefire. This is particularly so, given that the ceasefire was announced amid active hostilities, with multiple front-line positions engaging in active fighting in several regions at this time. Indeed, the abruptness of the ceasefire offered little to no time for de-escalation, as any effective pause in active hostilities would require advance notice, logistical coordination, and effective preparation for troops on both sides to safely withdraw.
2. As such, with active fighting likely taking hours or even days to subside, this leaves an opening for allegations of ceasefire violations from Russia and Ukraine. Indeed, Vladimir Saldo, acting governor of Russian-occupied parts of the Kherson region, accused Ukrainian forces of targeting the region with airstrikes after the ceasefire's start time on April 19. Given Putin's statements, the Kremlin is likely to use such accusations as justification to respond militarily to any perceived Ukrainian violation, including in the form of airstrikes targeting both front lines and civilian infrastructure.
3. **FORECAST:** As such, despite the announced ceasefire, the potential for Russian airstrikes targeting Ukrainian front lines or cities, including Kyiv city, on April 20 remains high. This is particularly so given that the date falls on Easter Sunday, with Moscow previously timing large-scale barrages to coincide with prominent holidays and religious occasions in order to diminish public morale. The risk of attacks is also supported by the April 16 warning by the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry, forecasting renewed and "harsher" Russian attacks targeting Ukraine during Easter celebrations.
4. With the Kremlin likely to frame any Russian strike as a response to a Ukrainian provocation, the ceasefire appears to be a strategic move to paint Ukraine as responsible for delaying ceasefire negotiations. With this, Moscow is likely attempting to portray itself as a good-faith partner in peace talks, particularly from the viewpoint of the USA. This is particularly so as this move follows a series of statements by the Trump administration expressing frustration over Moscow and Kyiv's perceived lack of cooperation, with US President Trump even threatening to pull out of negotiations if both sides fail to demonstrate a sincere commitment to de-escalation. Moreover, in light of recent USA statements suggesting a willingness to recognize Crimea as Russian, the timing of the ceasefire appears aimed at maximizing what the Kremlin perceives as favorable gains from potential peace talks.
5. **FORECAST:** With that, Ukraine is expected to maintain its messaging, pointing to the ceasefire as evidence that Moscow is seeking to delay progress on long-term peace talks rather than engage in peace negotiations in good faith. Indeed, this is evidenced by Russia's rejection of earlier proposals of a 30-day ceasefire, with President Zelensky stating that the ongoing 30-hour ceasefire is insufficient for "confidence-building" measures. These claims are further supported by reports that Moscow is preparing a renewed spring offensive, potentially expanding advances across multiple fronts. This suggests that, despite US pressure, an effective long-term ceasefire agreement is unlikely in the near-to-medium term.

Recommendations

Ukraine

1. Those operating in the East, South, and Center of Ukraine are advised to minimize outdoor travel and avoid inter-city travel due to the increase in artillery fire and airstrikes.

2. Avoid all travel to Crimea due to the ongoing conflict and the potential for sporadic attacks on civilian and critical infrastructure facilities.
3. Those continuing to operate in the North and West of Ukraine are advised to adhere to air raid sirens over the coming days due to the heightened threat of missile and UAV attacks by Russian forces.
4. Identify the nearest shelter, which may be a Metro station, and proceed towards it when air sirens are sounded. Prepare emergency kits of food, water, medicine, and clothing in case needed.
5. Considering the heightened risk of unpredictable power outages, take mitigatory measures, such as confirming that business locations have working generators, sufficient access to fuel for longer periods, and access to several flashlights. Keep necessary electronics constantly charged.
6. For more information on the security situation and assistance, please contact intel@max-security.com

Russia

1. Avoid nonessential travel to Russia due to potential instability in the coming days, the underlying threat of military mobilization, arbitrary detention, and increased risk of spillover violence in regions bordering Ukraine.
2. Remain cognizant of authorities' updates regarding travel prohibitions on individuals deemed eligible for military conscription.
3. Foreign companies operating in Russia are advised to remain cognizant of government regulations and decrees that pose risks to business continuity and operations.
4. It is recommended to have emergency plans in place in case of further deterioration in the security landscape.
5. Foreign citizens in Moscow and other areas in western Russia are advised to review evacuation plans in case of emergencies.
6. Avoid all travel in the vicinity of government and military facilities, as well as possible political gatherings or lone picket protests.
7. Remain cognizant of restrictions enacted at a regional and local level.
8. Avoid discussions concerning the political, economic, and military situation, even with friends and family.
9. Avoid meeting strangers, discussing the political situation, or using any anti-Russia rhetoric in public.
10. Those intending to travel between Russia and its neighboring European countries are advised to remain cognizant of authorities' updates regarding land border restrictions. Review options for departing Russia, including air, rail, and land routes, with the understanding that certain options may become unavailable on short notice.