

News; International

**U.S. and Europe Weigh Plans For Ukrainian Government in Exile; Sec. Blinken: U.S. & Allies Discuss Banning Russian Oil Imports. Aired 4:30-5a ET**

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[04:30:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ISA SOARES, CNN ANCHOR: Welcome back to CNN Newsroom. I'm Isa Soares. Hear the latest developments in Ukraine this hour. Russia's Ministry of Defense's said it is opening humanitarian corridors out of four Ukrainian cities. They are the capital Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy and Mariupol, as you can see there. Meantime, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine released images of the aftermath of shelling in Mykolaiv.

Its statements said the city was hit by multiple rocket launches on Monday morning. A Russian strike hit an evacuation crossing point near Kyiv, killing a family with two children and several other civilians on Sunday. The U.S. says credible reports of attacks on civilians are being documented for possible war crimes investigation.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SOARES: Resistance hasn't wavered a video published by the Ukrainian National Police shows a number of officers ambushing Russian tanks using rocket propelled grenades. NATO and the U.S. are resisting President Volodymyr Zelenskyy calls for no fly zone. But the U.S. is working with Poland on possibly providing fighter jets to Ukraine. The administration is also discussing banning Russian oil imports.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SOARES: Meanwhile, the U.S. and its European allies have been discussing how the West would support a potential Ukrainian government in exile should President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have to flee. CNN's Natasha Bertrand joins me now from - live from Brussels from Belgium.

[04:35:00]

And Natasha, President Zelenskyy has made it very clear he wants to stay in Kyiv saying I need ammunition not a lift so what kind of plans are being discussed here?

NATASHA BERTRAND, CNN WHITE HOUSE REPORTER: That's right, Isa. So a source is telling me and my colleague Kylie Atwood that the U.S. and European allies have been discussing setting up a potential government in exile for Zelenskyy and his advisors, should that become necessary and they potentially would move over to Lviv in western Ukraine, or if they had to flee the country entirely, they would potentially set up some kind of government structure in Poland.

Now, it's been kind of difficult for European and American officials to broach this with Zelenskyy because he is so reluctant to discuss anything that has to do with him leaving Ukraine. Of course, he has said that he wants to stay in Kyiv and fight and he has no plans as of now to evacuate. So part of the conversations for that reason have also included the possibility that some members of Zelenskyy government might go ahead of him and start kind of building infrastructure for a potential government in exile elsewhere.

Now all of these discussions come as Russia's onslaught against Ukraine has increased in its severity and this targeting of civilian infrastructure and civilians has also increased shifting away from military targets and towards population centers. They have begun to use heavier equipment they have begun a campaign according to one senior Western intelligence official to bombard cities into submission. And so the U.S. and the West are very concerned about the possibility that Zelenskyy might not be able to get out of Kyiv in time to sustain that government if it becomes necessary.

Now, the EU, the European Commission, President Ursula von der Leyen has said that they feel that the situation in Ukraine is existential not only for the Ukrainians, but also for the whole of Europe.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

URSULA VON DER LEYEN, EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT: This is not only a fight of between Ukraine against Russia, Russia that shows the war against Ukraine, but it's a bigger topic. It's also the democracies fighting the autocracies, and therefore it is for us existential really to support in every way possible, Ukraine and its brave leadership.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BERTRAND: Now, Von der Leyen also said that the EU would support an investigation into whether Russia has committed war crimes. That is something that Anthony Blinken, the Secretary of State of the US has also said the U.S. would support.

SOARES: Natasha Bertrand for us in Brussels thanks very much, Natasha. Hundreds of Indian students are still asking to be evacuated from Ukraine. What are they have been told by the Indian government, we'll go live to New Delhi, just ahead.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[04:40:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SOARES: The Israeli government is preparing for what could be mass immigration from Ukraine officials say more than 10,000 Israeli citizens have now left Ukraine and Israel is taking in Jewish refugees. Joining me now from Jerusalem is CNN's Hadas Gold and Hadas, Israel also has been preparing for this potential wave of refugees, give us a sense of what is being done to support them where you are.

HADAS GOLD, CNN CORRESPONDENT: So Isa, Israel has something called the Law of Return, which states that anybody who is Jewish or has at least one Jewish grandparent is eligible for Israeli citizenship and Ukraine has a large Jewish population, which means that hundreds of 1000s of Ukrainians could be eligible and as we're seeing more than a million and a half, Ukrainians leave their country, Israel's preparing for a massive wave of immigration that they potentially have not seen since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Israeli authorities have set up special processing centers along Ukraine's borders to try and help refugees get them their visas to come into the country. Yesterday, three planes full of Ukrainian immigrants landed in Tel Aviv, including one with 90 orphans. We spoke to some of these families, many of them were women traveling with their children without their husbands because men of fighting age are not allowed to leave Ukraine, many say that they had been thinking about at some point moving to Israel, but the war caused them to make a snap decision. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LENA, UKRAINIAN REFUGEE: I really hope he can come to us. But he's helping right now. And I hope it will stop soon and we can be together.

GOLD: How does it feel to come here having been through what you've been through for so many days?

TOABIA, UKRAINIAN REFUGEE: I think I'm still shaking because I've seen war and in front of our house, the Russian plane, it was kids, so it was really dangerous.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GOLD: Israeli authorities think that by the end of the month, they will have welcomed in at least 15,000 refugees to give you a sense of the numbers. On the diplomatic front, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett spoke once again with Vladimir Putin yesterday. This is just about a day after he made that surprise visit to Moscow where he met with Putin for three hours at the Kremlin.

And later today, the Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid is expected to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Latvia, Isa.

SOARES: Thanks very much. Hadas Gold there in Jerusalem, appreciate it, Hadas. Well, at least 700 students from India are asking to be rescued after getting stranded in Ukraine. They're trapped in the city of Sumy about 30 miles or some 50 kilometers from the Russian border. On Sunday, the Indian government advised its students to be ready to leave on short notice saying a team is ready nearby to coordinate efforts.

Vedika Sud is joining us now from New Delhi with more and Vedika, I'll interrupt, apology so to warn you, we're waiting for a press conference from U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. So I might have to interrupt you once it gets started. But first give me a sense - us a sense of what the Indian - Indian Embassy is saying here, what are the chances of them being evacuated today?

VEDIKA SUD, CNN REPORTER: The situation is developing very quickly, Isa is what we know. On Sunday, the Indian Embassy came out and told the 700 students plus in Sumy which is in the northeastern area of Ukraine to stand by, they could be evacuated sometime very soon. So those directions and directives were really given to the students there. We've been speaking to students, they're hoping that they can be evacuated in a day or two.

They've heard from the Indian Embassy. But all of this Isa hinges on the Russian forces holding off on firing in the area which has been a very volatile area really in the outskirts of Sumy because of which the students have not been able to walk on foot to nearby areas as well. What we do know from our conversations, the latest ones with these students is that there is some movement happening there. They're not telling us much right now, of course, but there could be a possibility that they can be evacuated today or tomorrow.

This is as per what the students have told us. Now what we do know is that there are officials from the Indian Embassy who are stationed at the Poltava city, which is about 150 kilometers drivable distance from Sumy city and they're waiting there. They're on standby. They're hoping for local ceasefire to happen. And that's what even the Ministry of External Affairs officials told the media on Saturday when they had a press conferencing saying we've spoken to both sides Russia and Ukraine were hoping for that local ceasefire to take place to get our people out of there.

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As of now, over 20,000 Indian nationals have left Ukraine and have been evacuated. And they are now on their way back to India, but this situation is still developing at the moment, Isa.

SOARES: OK, Vedika, do we - do you know, give me a sense, though? I mean, how are they? Obviously, we don't know how long they'll be there. But if we're waiting for the ceasefire, Russia and both sides really don't seem to have agreed on this this ceasefire or at least broken it in over the weekend, twice now. What are the chances that they have to be there for much longer? What is the embassy telling you?

SUD: Well, the chances of them really surviving through this is just getting bleaker by the moment, they're running out of food, they're running out on water. There's a huge electricity crisis as well. And the ATMs around the area, according to the students are just not working. So we've been speaking to these students, Isa, they've been talking about how they're running out of all the things I've just spoken to you about. Water crisis is a huge crisis there.

It's a seven or eight storey hostel, they're living in. They rush to the bunkers, when the sirens go off. And that's what the life really looks like for them right now. Also, let me just tell you, we'd spoken to a student earlier. And this is what he had to say to CNN about their situation currently, if we can just listen to that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MEHTAB RAZA, INDIAN STUDENT STRANDED IN SUMY (through translator): Some students had made a video yesterday about leaving, but we convince them to stay for the time being we cannot stop them much longer, though we cannot control them. Our suffering is increasing day by day and our problems are only increasing.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SUD: The window only seems to open for these students to be evacuated once that local ceasefire is in place that Isa, like you rightly pointed out, Russia's word cannot be taken as of now because it's not the first time they said this and gone back on their word. So it's all depending really on the situation on ground as we speak, Isa.

SOARES: Keep us posted, Vedika on what you hear from the students, appreciate it. Vedika Sud for us there in New Delhi. Well, U.S. gas prices are surging ever closer to record highs and there are discussions in

Washington DC about a possible ban on Russian oil. How that could affect prices at the pump after this short break.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[04:50:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ANTONY BLINKEN, U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE: We are now talking to our European partners and allies to look in a coordinated way at the prospect of banning the import of Russian oil while making sure that there is still an appropriate supply of oil on world markets.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SOARES: Well, as world leaders debate whether to cut back on Russian energy and find other sources, global oil prices are surging to their highest level in 13 years and that is having a tremendous effect at the pump. The national average in the US now tops \$4 a gallon. That is the highest Americans have paid since 2008.

And European markets have dropped sharply as oil prices surged. As you can see that Xetra DAX down 4 percent and a very similar picture across Paris, as well as Europe. In the U.S., Futures trading also looking pretty grim. Not a great start to Monday. You can see there, NASDAQ down almost 2 percent expected to open down almost 2 percent similar picture with S&P and Apple stocks, we're keeping an eye on those, down, expected to up and down more, roughly 2 percent, I should say.

Well, more companies are severing ties with Russia over its invasion in Ukraine. Streaming giant Netflix is joining entertainment companies pausing operations in Russia. It will stop selling as well as providing its video service there. American Express is the latest credit card company to end operations. Its globally used cards will no longer work in Russia and social media giant Tik Tok will also suspend videos in Russia.

But two global giants aren't abandoning Russia. Soda maker Coca Cola along with fast food giant, McDonald's are continuing to operate there and that has Ukraine's Foreign Minister seeing red.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DMYTRO KULEBA, UKRAINE FOREIGN MINISTER: We were upset to hear that companies like Coca Cola and McDonald's remain in Russia and continue providing - providing their products. It's - it's simply against basic principles of morale to continue working in Russia and making money there, this money has soaked with Ukrainian blood.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SOARES: And the list of companies is growing they range from retailers to entertainment to car manufacturers as you can see there on your screen, some of the biggest names in the industry closing up shop in Russia. There's a lot of mystery surrounding the arrest in Russia of WNBA star and two time Olympic gold medalist, Brittney Griner. Customs officials at an airport near Moscow reportedly found cannabis oil in her luggage last month but news of the arrest just went public over the weekend.

CNN World Sport Don Riddell has the latest for you.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DON RIDDELL, CNN CORRESPONDENT: One day after we learned that the American basketball star Brittney Griner had been arrested in Russia, the US government suggested that it was working to help with her case. Speaking at a press conference alongside the President of Moldova, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken spoke briefly about Griner situation.

BLINKEN: With regard to the individual you mentioned, there's only so much I can say given privacy considerations at this point. Let me just say more generally, whenever an American is detained anywhere in the world, we of course stand ready to provide every possible assistance.

RIDDELL: Much about this case, however, it remains unclear. News of Griner's detention only emerged on Saturday when Russia's Federal Customs Service said an unnamed female basketball player had been arrested at an airport near Moscow in February. A Russian news agency later identified the U.S. citizen as Griner. The custom service claimed that Griner was carrying vape cartridges containing hashish oil in her luggage.

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As a result, the two time Olympic champion and seven time WNBA all- star could be facing a jail sentence of up to 10 years. Her case is now significantly complicated by Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine and the global condemnation of its hostile actions that may limit the U.S. government's ability to help especially as it is actively applying economic sanctions against Russia and trying not to further escalate tensions in the region.

Underlying the sensitive nature of her case, Brittney's wife has written about it on Instagram. Thank you to everyone who has reached out to me regarding my wife's safe return from Russia said Cherell Griner. Please honor our privacy as we continue to work on getting my wife home safely.

Meanwhile, there remains a great deal of concern for Brittney Griner's health and well-being. The American Iranian journalist Jason Resign, telling the quote, it appears to be the most audacious hostage taking by a state imaginable Resign calling for Griner's release and the release of other American citizens being held in Russia on Twitter.

Resigned spent 544 days unjustly imprisoned by Iran before he was released in January of 2016. Back to you.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SOARES: Thanks very much done there Don Riddell and that does it here on CNN Newsroom. I'm Isa Soares in London. Our breaking news coverage of the war in Ukraine continues on New Day with Brianna Keilar and John Berman. You are watching CNN.

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