

News; Domestic

The 11th Hour with Stephanie Ruhle for March 22, 2022, MSNBC

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MSNBC: The 11th Hour with Brian Williams

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(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

LAWRENCE O'DONNELL, MSNBC HOST: The Senate confirmation hearing of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson resumes tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. Eastern. That is tonight's "LAST WORD." THE 11TH HOUR with Stephanie Ruhle starts now.

[23:00:22]

STEPHANIE RUHLE, MSNBC HOST: Tonight, the fight for Ukraine a sign of hope as Ukrainians retake a Kyiv suburb, and Russia steps up its assault from the sea.

Also, the American organization evacuating the most vulnerable Ukrainians from the war zone. We'll talk to a 9/11 first responder turn rescuer in Ukraine.

Plus, history on Capitol Hill, Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson takes questions as Republican senators dig in on culture wars, how the Supreme Court nominee responded and what to watch for next as the 11th Hour gets underway on this Tuesday night.

Good evening, once again, I'm Stephanie Ruhle. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is entering day 28, four full weeks of conflict that show no sign of ending but today the Pentagon said Ukrainian forces are having more success in pushing back the Russians.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOHN KIRBY, PENTAGON SPOKESMAN: We have seen indications that the Ukrainians are going a bit more on the offense now. They have been defending very smartly. We have seen them now in places particularly in the south, near Kherson. They have tried to regain territory.

We continue to see indications that the Russians did not properly plan for logistics and sustainment. We know that they continue to have fuel issues across their force. And that they are still -- they're still struggling with food.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

RUHLE: Zelenskyy on offense. The Ukrainian military says it has recaptured a suburb to the west of Kyiv, a move that could further slow a takeover of the capitol as NBC's Richard Engel reports.

(BEGIN VIDEO TAPE)

RICHARD ENGEL, NBC NEWS CHIEF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): With Kyiv under a total curfew, Ukrainian troops today went on the offensive using hit and run tactics to drive back Russian troops from the capital.

Ukraine's main objective now is to prevent Russian forces from encircling Kyiv, like they did to Mariupol. This new drone video released by Ukraine appears to show Russian strikes on factories and industrial buildings. Meanwhile, Russia released new video of its attack on a shopping mall in Kyiv this week, insisting Ukraine was using it as a site to launch missiles and store ammunition.

Russia has met fierce resistance from Ukrainians across the country. And now for the first time today. A senior U.S. defense official says Russia has lost more than 10 percent of its combat power in Ukraine. But increasingly, resistance is also inside Russia and the Kremlin is trying to crush it.

A Russian court today sentence Putin's top critic Alexei Navalny to nine more years in a maximum security prison, allegedly for fraud.

(BEGIN VIDEO TAPE)

RUHLE: A senior defense official at the Pentagon says Russia is now firing on the embattled port city of Mariupol from several ships now off the southern coast of Ukraine. New satellite images showed the damage from the relentless assault on the city and the thousands of people still trapped there.

But Russia struggled to take control of Ukraine is raising new concerns about Putin's next moves and whether they could include nuclear strikes. Today, Putin spokesman refused to rule that out.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR, CNN HOST: I want to know whether you are convinced or confident that your boss will not use that option.

DMITRY PESKOV, KREMLIN SPOKESMAN: Well, we have a concept of domestic security and public. You can read all the reasons for nuclear arms to be used. So if it is an existential threat a threat for our country, then it can be used in accordance with our content.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

RUHLE: That is concerning. Tomorrow, President Biden heads to Europe for an emergency summit with NATO allies. The White House says he will push for new sanctions. And according to the Wall Street Journal, those sanctions will target Russian lawmakers. NBC News has also learned Biden may announced a permanent increase in the number of U.S. troops stationed in NATO countries near Ukraine.

So let's bring in NBC's Ali Arouzi live from the Lviv tonight. Ali, good to see you. It is so, so early there so we appreciate you joining us. Take us across the country to Kyiv.

[23:05:09]

Ukrainians aren't just fending off Russians anymore. They are fighting back and having success. Tell us what's going on?

ALI AROUZI, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: That's right. Well, the Russians had made some advances on suburbs on the northwest of Kyiv. They have controlled some key places there. But in other places like Makariv, they had taken parts of Makariv but the Ukrainians pushed back hard. They were fighting fiercely and push the Russians out of that very strategic area in the West suburb of Kyiv.

And that's because Kyiv is very strategic place. It's very strategic for the Russians. And it's very hard for them to crack. It's a city on a hill, it's heavily fortified. It's got tight roads and streets where the Russian tanks can't really maneuver their way around.

And of course, the Ukrainians aren't giving up, their president is there and they're fighting for their capital. But in other places, Stephanie, the situation is much worse, like Mariupol that you mentioned, that city has been destroyed, it has borne the brunt of the Russian attacks, and it is in a worse situation than any other place in Ukraine.

They've encircled that city. They're starving the population. They're constantly bombing and shelling and missiling (ph) that place, but they haven't been able to capture it. And that's made them resort to these starvation tactics. They've sparked a humanitarian crisis there. People that have no food, water, electricity.

We spoke to a young woman who had escaped Kyiv. Just a few days ago, she was painting a horrifying picture of what was going on there. Let's take a listen to what she had to say. And I can fill you in some more of it on the other side.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ANASTASIA HRECHKINA, ESCAPED FROM MARIUPOL, UKRAINE: We would hoped not to die from hunger, because it would be, you know, it would be much easier to die immediately. My sister told me that if we run out of foods, we should - - we will commit suicide together.

After being trapped in Mariupol, I feel -- I constantly feel fear of that being repeated. I don't want to be surrounded by Russians. I want to be as far as possible from the place where they are.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

AROUZI: I mean, incredible to hear, I think talking about creating a suicide pack so she didn't have to suffer the pain of starving to death. And Stephanie, her journey out of Mariupol was also really disturbing to hear she said that they had to go through Russian checkpoints. She could only take her laptop and her sneakers with her. She ran away from the city. She said when they crossed the Russian checkpoints, the Russian soldiers started taunting her, laughing at her of what they've done to her city. Her mother was in her car -- in a car behind their. They pulled the driver out of that car stripped him. They saw a tattoo on him accused him of being a sniper.

He had to convince them that he wasn't a sniper by being sympathetic to the Russian invasion of his country. She said if the Russian troops didn't believe him, her mother wouldn't have gotten out of Mariupol either. But thankfully they did get out but for the other residents that are being trapped in that city, it's a worst case scenario.

The Russians are probably going to double down on their bombing of that city and make little distinction between the armed forces there and the battered civilians of Mariupol.

RUHLE: A young healthy woman making a suicide path. Ali Arouzi, thank you so much for joining us. I appreciate it. With that, I want to bring in our experts this evening, Michael McFaul, former U.S. ambassador to Russia and an MSNBC international affairs analyst. His book titled from "Cold War to Hot Peace: American Ambassador in Putin's Russia."

Ben Rhodes, former deputy national security adviser for President Obama, and Kevin Baron, the executive editor of Defense One with more than 15 years in Washington's defense, national security and foreign affairs scene.

Ambassador McFaul I asked you first, the Pentagon says Russian troops continue having problems with basic supplies like food and fuel. You know Kremlin better than anyone I know. Is that what we should expect from Putin's superpower? His boys don't have enough food or fuel.

MICHAEL MCFAUL, FMR. U.S. AMBASSADOR TO RUSSIA: Well, he's very frustrated. And you don't need to have a PhD in Russian studies to understand it. Just listen to his speeches. He's mad. They're underperforming. He's removed some of his intelligence generals because of that. He's frustrated. That's the good news.

And by the way, the Ukrainians I just talked to a very senior official in Ukraine today in Kyiv with the Zelenskyy government, they feel pretty good about the way they are performing.

[23:10:04]

It's not just about capabilities, it's about will the fight. The Ukrainians have the will to fight, the Russians don't.

The bad news, as you just reported is the flip side of what our Pentagon just said. That is 10 percent have been lost. That is very good news. That means 90 percent of Putin's forces are still available to fight. And I see no indication yet that he is prepared to begin to super peace. This is not a stalemate on the battlefield yet. And until there's a stalemate, I don't think there's going to be a peace settlement moving forward.

RUHLE: Let's go back to the good news portion. Then, Kevin, we're hearing these reports that Ukrainians are recapturing territory, where do things stand in the fight on the ground?

KEVIN BARON, DEFENSE ONE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Well, it's not a stalemate, it's close on the ground. I mean, we keep hearing the last few days from either the Pentagon or from the UK intelligence assessments that they're putting out daily that, you know, Russians have slowed their bombing, but they've slowed their advances. And then we -- as we've been reporting for days, as everyone has, that it's in this kind of a siege.

So I think what a lot of us are looking for is with this trip to NATO and to Poland from the President, what will be the next step that can really change the game. We're seeing a lot of big name national security leaders and former leaders calling for things like, you know, humanitarian airlifts on or some sort of either brown operations bring in manager nature in western Ukraine, some way for the for the NATO countries and the United States to carve out a piece of -- some kind of foothold in the country.

You know, just today, we have an op-ed Defense One from General Breedlove, who you see on TV a lot, the former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, calling for one of these humanitarian corridors saying it could be done, it was done in Georgia. These are all very risky propositions. Some people think they're impatient, some people think they're absolutely necessary and could save thousands of lives.

But it's these big political movements of some kind, that might be the next real, real shift, that we're going to see that's going to make a difference. It's not going to be, you know, Ukrainians gaining ground or Russians gaining ground.

RUHLE: Kevin, we've seen Russia and what it's done to Mariupol, it's decimated it, then why haven't they been able to overtake the city?

BARON: Well, because they don't want to. I mean, we've said all along, if Putin wanted to flatten Ukraine instantly, he could. If he wanted to send the entire army and to take over Ukraine, he could. You know, initially it was assumed that Putin might carve out certain portions of the East hope that the country's leadership would give up and hand Ukraine over to Moscow, and that enough Ukrainians would welcome it. And there you go, Ukraine as part of the new Russia. And instead of what happened is what we've seen happen.

So you know, you get these fits and starts of missile attacks. We've seen some footage of we think are legitimate footage of, you know, cruise missiles coming from the ships, but there have been ships parked offshore that are loaded with a lot more missiles, they just haven't fired them, you know, to do so again would flatten the city.

You know, and again, most of western Ukraine remains untouched, relatively. So this is not, again, it's not an operation of conquest. It's a psychological operation. I realize as we're keeping told, and it really will come down to either Putin changing his calculus and turning his troops around, which I don't know anybody who thinks that's going to happen, or some other NATO lead, U.S. lead change a policy that changes the game that forces Putin's hand, and takes a risk that right now, a lot of leaders seem they're not yet really willing to take.

RUHLE: Well, tomorrow, President Biden is leaving for that NATO summit in Brussels, Ben, you have been on these types of trips. Do you forecast any big change in policy from the U.S. and our western NATO allies?

BEN RHODES, FMR. DEPUTY NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER: I don't. I don't think that they're going to be looking at the kind of direct involvement in Ukraine that either a humanitarian corridor in Ukraine or a no-fly zone would entail.

I think what you'll see is them taking a lot of the emergency steps that they put in place, and try to figure out how to make that kind of standing policy, right. So the United States has moved a lot of forces in Eastern Europe as a part of reassuring those allies. I think what they're going to be talking about the summit is what is the long term force posture in which the United States is more present in those regions?

You've seen, obviously, NATO Allies work together, not just to impose sanctions, but to provide an extraordinary amount of military assistance to Ukraine. I think you'll see them wanting to kind of scrutinize those channels and discussing, frankly, how are they going to continue to make sure that they can get all of those weapons and systems into the Ukrainians across various border crossings.

And I think the political questions well obviously be prevalent at the summit too. One of the areas under negotiation according to President Zelenskyy himself, of course, is this demand from Russia that Ukraine declared neutrality that did not join NATO as part of any settlement.

[23:15:03]

That's obviously not the preferred outcome for either NATO or Ukraine, but President Zelenskyy himself has expressed frustration with NATO's failure to extend formal membership to Ukraine and therefore said he'd be willing to entertain this. So I think NATO to think about how does it approach the political negotiations as well.

So there's a lot to do and a lot to cover. And I think the President will be wanting to signal unity, signal continued and even increasing commitment to Ukraine, signal these increased consequences on Russia. And that's why they're preparing a tranche of sanctions. And I'm sure they want the Europeans to announce some sanctions in coordination with them. But I think in terms of escalating into direct conflict with Russia, I think that is not likely to come from the summit.

RUHLE: Ben, is Brussels where President Biden needs to be or does he need to stay on Air Force One and head straight to Beijing and sit down with Xi Jinping face to face?

RHODES: Well, I you know, it's interesting you say that something, I mean, you know, one of the -- arguably the most important conversation that President Biden has had in the last several days was the one with Xi Jinping.

Now, there, there's both the things that China could do that are unhelpful, and then the things that they could do that are helpful. On the unhelpful side of the ledger, I think the United States is really focused on dissuading China from providing arms to Russia, backfilling some of these capabilities that they're losing, and sustainment they need to maintain, essentially an occupation of Ukraine.

Then second to that are sanctions. And will China try to backfill sanctions by buying Russian oil at a discounted price, by sanctions busting, by providing technologies to Russia that had been restricted under U.S. export controls?

There, I think the jury's still out and want to see how things go moving forward.

Now, on the positive side, China could apply some degree of leverage on Russia to move towards a peace negotiation or natural peace deal. That doesn't seem to be coming out of Beijing at this point.

So I think for now, he has to kind of reinforce the alliance of the world's democracies that are standing up to Putin. And that is part of the message to China, because part of what China was concerned about is wasn't the United States saying, we're going to be watching whether you evade sanctions. Europe was sending that message to Beijing too, that's unusual, Stephanie, for Europe to be standing up to China like that.

So I think by showing the reinforced NATO and U.S. European Alliance, the messages to Putin, it's Zelenskyy, but it's also division.

RUHLE: All right. Well, I got something else unusual. Ambassador McFaul, yesterday, a pro-Kremlin tabloid said nearly 10,000 Russian troops have been killed in Ukraine. But then they deleted that report, and they claim they were hacked. What is your take on that?

MCFAUL: I saw that. I don't know what happens. I think it shows that there is -- there's lots of people that think that 10,000 people have died in this war. And most certainly, we're recording that in the outside. And despite the fact that Twitter and Facebook have been banned, and Ekho Moskvyy, and TV Dozhd, TV Rain that the opposition television radio stations have been taken down. Information is flowing into Russia.

I think that's important to remember. And I think we need to do more to get that information to flow into Russia. They understand what the consequences of this war is. There's a draft coming up. The next cycle begins in April, and in the last war that Russia fought along these lines in Chechnya in 1999-2000 when they destroyed the city of Grozny like they're doing with Mariupol right now. It were the mothers of soldiers. So no organization and NGO a grass roots movement that helped to end that war.

I hope you'll see that kind of mobilization in the weeks and months to come inside Russia. Already, let's of brave people have been arrested there. And if tens of thousands are being arrested, that means that millions have the same view. They just don't want to go to jail for 15 years.

RUHLE: Well, 10,000 soldiers if that number is true, that means there are 10,000 mothers that don't even know yet if their sons are alive or dead. When and if they do, could those kind of numbers be the force that pushes Putin to stop or slow 10,000 women, 10,000 mothers, that's forceful?

MCFAUL: Well, it most certainly ended the first war in Chechnya. They were instrumental in doing that. But Russia was still a democracy back then. In the 90s, during that war, that was a war conducted by Boris Yeltsin. Russia today is a dictatorship. It's a cruel, brutal dictatorship. They just unjustly gave Alaexei Navalny nine more years in jail.

So it's not going to be as easy this time around. They've been co-opted. And then those kinds of organizations now are loyal to the state. But over time, it will have costs and that's why it's not enough, I think just to show up in Brussels, and to have a statement of solidarity and sanctions, there have to be real sanctions and more military assistance to Ukraine.

RUHLE: All right, then, thank you all so much for starting us off this evening. Ambassador Michael McFaul, Ben Rhodes and Kevin Baron.

[23:20:00]

Coming up next, the night's other major story a marathon question session for Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, her response to Republican attacks on her record. And later, how the world is reaching out to help millions of Ukraine refugees. THE 11TH HOUR just getting underway on a busy Tuesday night.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JUDGE KETANJI BROWN JACKSON, SUPREME COURT NOMINEE: I am committed to serving as an even handed Supreme Court justice. My record demonstrates. My impartiality, crime and the effects on the community and the need for law enforcement, those are not abstract concepts or political slogans to me.

SEN. DICK DURBIN (D-IL) JUDICIARY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN: The senator from Missouri has in his tweets said Judge Jackson has a pattern of letting child porn offenders off the hook for their appalling crimes.

JACKSON: As a mother and a judge who has had to deal with these cases, I was thinking that nothing could be further from the truth.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

RUHLE: Just a little while ago Supreme Court nominee Katanji Brown Jackson wrapped up more than 13 hours of answering senator's questions. As the New York Times Annie Karni points out today was just a preview of likely GOP campaign attack lines.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. TED CRUZ (R-TX): In your understanding what does critical race theory mean? What is it?

SEN. MARSHA BLACKBURN (R-TN): Can you provide a definition for the word woman? The fact that you can't give me a straight answer about something as fundamental as what a woman is underscores the dangers of the kind of progressive education that we are hearing about.

SEN. LINDSEY GRAHAM (R-SC): How important is your faith to you? On a scale of one to 10, how faithful would you say you are?

SEN. JOSH HAWLEY (R-MO): To take a guy who's 18 years old, who has what the government says is an extremely large collection of prepubescent pornography, and then you give him three months when frankly, a liberal prosecutor is asking for two full years.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

RUHLE: Back with us tonight, former U.S. Attorney Joyce Vance, who spent 25 years as a federal prosecutor and our dear friend Jeff Bennett, Chief Washington correspondent for PBS NewsHour and MSNBC political contributor.

Joyce, you know who love that line of questioning by the GOP, Fox News. Because it is part of the culture wars that have nothing to do with confirming a Supreme Court justice. So let's get to the facts. Our own Pete Williams provided factual context to that very case, Senator Hawley was referencing. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PETE WILLIAMS, NBC NWES JUSTICE CORRESPONDENT: The specifics in this case suggest that this was an 18-year-old who was curious about this kind of sexual activity that he sought out. The court records show that a detective when he realized that this young man was uploading some of this contacted him and said, How would you like to have real sexual activity with my 12- year-old daughter, which was make believe, and this young man never responded to him.

And there was a psychiatrist who evaluated the young man and said, this was basically his sort of curiosity about a specific kind of sexual activity. He wasn't interested in younger people. He was just sort of curious about this for his own purposes, that he was not a pedophile.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

RUHLE: Those are the facts. But the facts do not matter to the Republicans here. None of these things matter. It is a show to them. So are they actually asking her anything? Or are they just creating sound bites to confuse the American people about who Judge Jackson is and what she represents?

JOYCE VANCE, MSNBC LEGAL ANALYST: On the one hand, Republicans complained that they didn't know what Judge Jackson's judicial theory was. They didn't know what principles she used when she went about the business of judging, but they asked painfully few questions designed to figure out what her judicial philosophy was. And instead, they stuck on issues like this one.

And I think Pete's explanation of that one particular case that Senator Hawley focused on, really helps us understand the answers that Judge Jackson was trying to give. She was trying to explain some very difficult and nuanced Federal sentencing law, which requires federal judges to consider a large variety of factors before they arrive at a sentence that is no longer, no lengthier than necessary to achieve the goals of the criminal justice system.

It's almost mind boggling to try to explain in just a few short sentences, as the judge did, how that process works, but Senator Hawley, a Yale educated lawyer should have known, should have understood that she was cabined by laws that the Congress itself is responsible for, and seemed more interested, as you say, Stephanie, in eliciting footage that could perhaps be used in a future campaign, then in getting to the heart of her qualifications to sit on the Supreme Court.

RUHLE: Of course, Joyce, Senator Hawley did know he did understand, he's banking on the fact that his voters don't. Jeff, the RNC posted this nonsensical tweet, tying Judge Jackson to critical race theory. Well, Democratic Senator Chris Coons used his time to fact check that. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. CHRIS COONS (D-DE): Have you ever used employed relied upon critical race theory to determine the outcome of any case or to impose any sentence or as a framework for your decision making?

JACKSON: No, Senator.

COONS: Would you just explain to us briefly what sort of factors you do in fact consider in your analysis?

[23:30:05]

JACKSON: Senator, when I analyze a case, I am looking at the arguments that the parties raise in the case. I'm looking at the record, which is the facts of the case.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

RUHLE: Is that they all got, Jeff?

JEFF BENNETT, PBS NEWSHOUR CHIEF WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT: Well, look, you call that tweet nonsensical. I talked to a number of Judge Jackson supporters today who view that tweet as being racist on its face, that to suggest that Judge Jackson just by virtue of her very person, is some sort of Avatar for critical race theory. That yes, that does appear to be all that they have that Republicans today tried to paint her as a CRT activist, they tried to paint her as soft on crime. They tried to paint her as an advocate of people who would seek to exploit children.

And yet this is someone who has been three times confirmed by the Senate, twice for a seat on the judicial bench at the federal level and once for the Sentencing Commission, who has the support of the Fraternal Order of Police of a number of police chiefs across the country and some 83 retired state attorneys general that it just doesn't hold up against the facts.

That's not a partisan statement. That's just a statement of fact based on her background, her credentials, and the many voices Democrat and Republican who have come out in support of her.

RUHLE: All right, well, here's a fun fact, Joyce, Judge Jackson herself ruled for the RNC in a case during the height of the 2016 presidential race. That case got thousands of Hillary Clinton's e-mails. The Republicans know this. Obviously, Hawley and Ted Cruz, they do not care. But where are the Mitt Romney Republicans here?

VANCE: That's a really interesting question. We know that when Judge Jackson was confirmed to the Court of Appeals, just last year, she picked up three Republican votes. And that's the real issue we're looking at here, it seems very likely that she'll be confirmed following these hearings.

The issue is whether it will be a bipartisan vote, and if she'll pick up those same three votes, that she picked up the last time, Alaska, Maine, and of course, Lindsey Graham from South Carolina, or whether there might be Mitt Romney or other moderate senators who might view this judge, his qualifications are just immaculate. She spent time as a lawyer in private practice. She's worked as a federal defender at the appellate level. She's engaged as Judge both at the trial level and the appellate level. She really brings to the Supreme Court a skill set that they'll desperately need in replacing Justice Breyer this federal criminal sentencing skill set that sheets to possesses because of her work on the United States Sentencing Commission.

So it's tough, I think, to make a principled case that you shouldn't vote for this judge based on her credentials. The issue is whether some of the Republican senators will find their way there as well.

RUHLE: How about Democratic ones? Does Judge Jackson have enough support? I mean, people like Joe Manchin, Kyrsten Sinema, they can be a surprise every now and again, Jeff?

BENNETT: Yes. And look, even though Sinema and Manchin have really bedeviled so much of Joe Biden's domestic agenda. When it comes to judges, they have voted in support of all of his judicial nominees so far.

So it looks like Democrats do have the 50 votes that they need. And to Joyce's great point about whether or not there will be Republicans who come on board. Our team spoke with senators Collins and Romney today, and neither of them were in any way moved by the lines of attack that we heard today from senators Cruz, Hawley, and I guess later you could add to that list. Blackburn.

The conservative leaning National Review, saying that Hawley's accusations against Judge Jackson were meritless to the point of demagoguery, and there are certainly more Republicans than just those who worked at the National Review who believe that, Steph.

RUHLE: Meritless to the point of demagoguery, the words of the National Review, we're going to leave it there. Our thanks to Joyce Vance and Jeff Bennett on this Tuesday nights. Thanks, guys.

Coming up, the 9/11 first responder and US combat veteran now in Ukraine helping to lead an unarmed mission to get people out safely when the 11th Hour continues.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[23:34:02]

RUHLE: Since the Russian invasion began, millions of people have fled Ukraine, but for those who are unable to leave on their own aid groups are stepping in. One of those organizations is Project Dynamo, which recently rescued three newborn babies from Kyiv, delivering them safely to Poland.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BRYAN STERN, PROJECT DYNAMO CO-FOUNDER : It's kind of hard to see but there they are. They're in there. The doctors in there. And there's Katya. We're in the snow. Doctors doing a quick check, but we get some gas and everything is great. Let's see we can see this. There they are in there.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

RUHLE: Let's bring in that hero. Former Army and Navy combat veteran Bryan Stern. He was a 9/11 first responder Now the co-founder of Project Dynamo which was founded last year to help evacuate Americans from Afghanistan and is now rescuing people from the war in Ukraine.

Bryan, thank you for what you are doing. Help us understand what of the last six months look like for you in Project Dynamo, how did you end up in Ukraine?

STERN: We came here, my team and I came here about a week before the war just to set conditions for rescue operations to build that human and physical infrastructure so that in the event war broke out, we'd be kind of ready to react.

The war in Afghanistan, we showed up and it was already ongoing. The war in Ukraine, we were able to prepare a little bit better. So and it's worked out, it's worked out, we were able to do our first rescue in the first 60 minutes of hostilities opening on the 24th. We were already here.

So it's been dynamic. It's been crazy. It's been a team event. My team is awesome. My case managers are the real unsung heroes. My field guys are tremendous. And we're definitely in it to win it. That's for sure.

RUHLE: So for people who are in need of help, and there are millions of them, how do they find you?

STERN: Sometimes its referral, but the biggest way is through our website, projectdynamo.org. That's also where you can donate. We are donor funded. We're all volunteers. I'm a volunteer. So every dollar that you give goes to a rescue, goes to saving someone's life.

But projectdynamo.org is also where you can register to get evacuated. If you don't do that, and you don't or you go find us, then we don't know to get you out and where you are in your particular. So it's really important that people register and if they need evacuation, if you don't, that's great. But if you do, let us know and we'll take care.

RUHLE: Some parts of the country though are basically cut off like the city of Mariupol, can you even get there? And can those people communicate with you if they need to?

STERN: Depends on where. There's some places that are really hard. But just the other day we rescued, Robert Platt, who's a 82nd airborne paratrooper retired. He was he was in the Russian Carter for the offensive of Kyiv. He had Russian tanks parked on the street, and we were able to affect that rescue also.

So, some things are very difficult, but we tend to take on those cases, honestly, because of -- because they need to be taken on. So, we're not afraid of hard. We're not afraid of difficult. We're not afraid of trying to figure a problem out. If you don't rescue, I can't even start --

RUHLE: Is there a massive waitlist? I mean, how many people have registered.

STERN: So we -- our database right now is about 14,000 people, but that data is a little misleading because of that 14,000 a lot of people registered with us, and then we're able to self-evacuate, which is exactly what we want. So 14,000 registrations are 14,000 people asking for help. But a lot of those people have already gotten out. So -- But we go by location and we go by density mapping just kind of how we do it.

RUHLE: Quickly before we go, I need to ask you about one rescue you did a recent mission. Twin babies and their surrogate. You got them out of Ukraine and safely to Poland where their American dad was waiting. What was that like for you and for him?

STERN: I actually on that mission, there were three babies. There was a British baby, British premature baby also named Sophia. And the only way I can describe it is like being a delivery room nurse. They had not met their children before.

So it was kind of like, you know, hey, Papa get ready to be a Papa kind of thing. And it was really, really, really endearing. I love the baby operations. We did one yesterday. And it's a way for us to find a little bit of happiness and smile in this terrible war.

RUHLE: A lot of happiness and people can help your organization by donating we will let them know how. Bryan, thank you for everything you and your team are doing. Bryan Stern, Project Dynamo.

STERN: Thank you very much.

RUHLE: Coming up, as Western countries raised to sanction Russian billionaires. We are closer tonight to finding out who owns this multi, multi, multi 100 million dollar mega yacht when the 11th Hour continues.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[23:48:24]

RUHLE: As the refugee crisis in Europe worsens, even Ukrainian refugees themselves are stepping in and helping. NBC's Dasha Burns brings us that report tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEO TAPE)

DASHA BURNS, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT (on camera): Steph, you know, as you walk the streets of Krakow, you can sense very quickly how much this city, this country has changed in the last few weeks and continues to change. Everywhere you turn you see stories of everyday people putting their lives on hold to help those who have had to leave their lives behind.

I can't emphasize to you enough for how much this really has struck me as a completely bottom up effort.

The government is doing a lot, nonprofits are doing a lot, but really so much of the support for these refugees from housing to food, to just mental and emotional support has come from everyday people.

And today we met a really special woman named Marianna, she herself fled Ukraine. She was living in Kyiv and she fled to the Lviv and then crossed the border here to Poland. And once she arrived here, she immediately saw the need to help other Ukrainian refugees.

So we met her today volunteering at an operation called Soup for Ukrainians. She was helping to feed refugees arriving at the train station here in Krakow. But while she's helping people here right now, she also knows so many family members, friends people back in Ukraine and take a listen to some of our conversation with her.

How would you describe, how you're feeling right now?

MARIANNA MARKECYCH, UKRAINIAN REFUGEE (through translator): It's difficult because it's your homeland, where (INAUDIBLE) peaceful people are dying. (INAUDIBLE) A lot of buildings because it's easy to rebuild them. But you can't return the people.

It's very cruel because they are killing the peaceful people. People are going to get bread, took a water. And they are shooting this people.

BURNS: Steph, the government though is stepping up their efforts even today. We heard in the train station and announcement that Ukrainians can take the train for free throughout the country. We're going to see more and more of these kinds of steps Stephanie.

(END VIDEO TAPE)

RUHLE: Our thanks to Dasha Burns. Now let's bring in my good friend and colleague Ali Velshi joining us from Warsaw, Poland tonight. Ali, Poland has not been so welcoming with refugees before this time is clearly different. What are you seeing?

ALI VELSHI, MSNBC HOST: Yes, in the Syrian refugee crisis, Poland wasn't getting an awards for their treatment of refugees. Much better this time, as Dasha was saying, she was describing that the Ukrainian refugees can use the transit systems for free. Here in Warsaw, they can do a lot of things for free.

In fact, you can sign up for the Polish equivalent of a social security number, it gives you access to education, to health care, to being able to work, lots of people are doing it. Remember, if you look at all these refugees who have left Ukraine 300,000, more than 300,000, almost 250,000 are in this city alone in Warsaw. This is, you know, it's massive the response, it's been very positive.

And unlike Hungary, it is much more coordinated by the government here in Poland. So, a very warm reception that they're getting here in Poland.

There is an issue though, that there are so many of them that the Polish authorities, including the mayor of this city are warning if they don't get some help them the rest of the world, either financially or people taking some of these refugees, they're going to run out of space for them.

RUHLE: All right, Ali, Ali, Ali, I cannot let you go without asking you. There's new reporting tonight about this mystery super yacht who possibly owns it. You've got some reporting tell us.

VELSHI: Yes, there's this one yacht and pretty much you can always tell who owns a yacht but there's this one yacht sitting off the coast of Italy. It's one of the fanciest yachts around it's got two heli pads. It's got a pool table that adjusts mechanically for the waves. It's got a piano that plays itself.

A group of activists in Russia, journalists have determined that this is Vladimir Putin's yacht. They are -- this what they do they, they were protesting the extra sentencing of Alexei Navalny, they sort of leader of the opposition movement in Russia. What they found is that the crew on that yacht, everybody except the captain is Russian, which would be explainable, except that all of the Russians who are on the staff also happen to be on Vladimir Putin staff, they not only aren't a staff, they're sort of the equivalent of the Secret Service in Russia.

So when they put this all together and said, it only makes sense that this would be Vladimir Putin's yacht, of course, we don't have a lot of transparency into his wealth. But there are some people who think he may be one of the richest people in the world, if not the richest man in the world, largely because of the kickbacks that occur under his watch.

RUHLE: Government employee for decades, possibly the richest man in the world, just quickly, I know we have no more time but the boat hasn't been seized yet has it?

VELSHI: It has not been seized yet. In fact, that's actually what's been happening. They're seizing yachts because they know who they -- who owns them. This yacht does not have a registered owner. And that's why these journalists have said it's Vladimir Putin's yacht, but that's not been confirmed by authorities who can actually take possession of it.

RUHLE: Alright, then, Ali Velshi always good to see you. Thank you. Coming up. Why even Vladimir Putin's very expensive jacket is part of the Russian propaganda machine when the 11th Hour continues.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[23:58:35]

RUHLE: The last thing before we go tonight fashion statements. After Putin's wars of choice and his rally in Moscow last week, NPR is out with this story. Putin's puffy coat and Zelenskyy's T-shirts show the power of fashion in war.

The blue coat Putin wear is from Italian luxury brand Loro Piana, it costs a whopping 14 grand, this as we're seeing reports out of Moscow of shortages on basic things like sugar and flour.

So why wear a coat that makes him look so out of touch with ordinary Russians. Well, NPR reports that according to fashion history journalist Marlin Kumar, it's part of the carefully curated way Putin attempts to present himself to the world. The coat is a strategic part of Putin's propaganda machine, which operates to combat reports portraying Russia as a poor suffering country on the brink of collapse behind its exterior image.

On the other side, he had President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. As a former actor, he is far more aware than most of the importance of image. He's often seen wearing a simple green T-shirt and military garb. Fashion historian Dr. Kimberly Chrisman Campbell tells NPR this, by wearing T-shirts and hoodies, the youthful egalitarian uniform of Silicon Valley rather than suits, Zelenskyy is projecting confidence and competence in a modern way.

Of course it takes more than just dressing the part to be a good leader. Every day we see Zelenskyy on the ground in Ukraine. He meets with his troops and he publicly grieves with his people.

[00:00:05]

While putting on the other hand is known for keeping everyone at a distance and extreme distance, two very different profiles in leadership.

And on that note, I wish you all a good night from our colleagues at NBC News. Thanks for staying up late with us. See you at the end of tomorrow.

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