

News; Domestic

**Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA) Is Being Interviewed About What She Learned And Took Away In Her Trip To Poland; Ukraine Rejects Russia Demand To Surrender Mariupol; Residential Building Hit By Russian Missiles; Russia Summons United States Ambassador Over Biden Rhetoric; United States Companies And Sectors Receive Classified Briefings; U.S. Pilots Spot Chinese Military Growth; Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson Completes First Day Of Confirmation Hearings; Russian Military Forces Continue Invasion Of Ukraine; Ukrainian Refugees Face Kidnappers While Attempting To Flee Warzones; U.S. Government Moves Towards Renewed Nuclear Agreement With Iran; President Biden Defends U.S. And NATO Provision Of Military To Equipment To Ukraine To Defend Against Russian Invasion; Reporting Indicates China Has Militarized South China Sea**

Bret Baier, Greg Palkot, Jacqui Heinrich, Mark Meredith, Shannon Bream, Aishah Hasnie, Rich Edson, Brit Hume, Katie Pavlich, Leslie Marshall

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Fox News: Special Report with Brett Baier

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English

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JOHNNY JOEY JONES, FOX NEWS MEDIA CONTRIBUTOR: This is an organization, warriorising.org that invest in veterans that are entrepreneurs, and you have to earn it, they don't just give it to you, and they help you start a business. They give a capital infusion mentorship.

DANA PERINO, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST (on camera): Awesome.

JONES: Fantastic.

JEANINE PIRRO, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST (on camera): All right. And I forgot to say, I'm hosting Laura Ingraham tonight at 10:00 Eastern Time and tomorrow night.

That's it for us. "SPECIAL REPORT", up next. Hey, Bret.

BRET BAIER, FOX NEWS CHANNEL ANCHOR (on camera): Our judge, I'll tune in 10:00 p.m.

PIRRO: OK.

BAIER: Thanks. Good evening. Welcome to Washington, I'm Bret Baier. "BREAKING TONIGHT", Russia pounds targets throughout Ukraine with as many as 300 air attacks in just the last 24 hours.

Vladimir Putin appears to be focusing on securing strategic terror -- territories in Ukraine's east. And to the south, the key port city of Mariupol refuses to give in to Russia's ultimatum of surrender, or else.

Now, we're at the or else stage. And as Ukrainian forces suffered losses, they're also launching counter offensives throughout the country.

And Russian troops are being forced to regroup as they also experience high casualties.

In Kyiv and aerial assault on a mall that Russia says was a legitimate target kills eight people. Efforts to negotiate a ceasefire continued to come up short. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says he is hoping for a breakthrough.

Senior foreign affairs correspondent Greg Palkot is live with the latest in Lviv tonight. Good evening, Greg.

GREG PALKOT, FOX NEWS CHANNEL SENIOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT (on camera): Hi, Bret.

Yes, we had some air raid sirens here tonight. Russia claiming last night to have hit a military training base to the northeast of here, as the war across this country rages.

PALKOT (voice-over): The embattled Ukrainian port city of Mariupol hangs on just. Based with the demand that it's surrendered to Russian forces early Monday morning local time. Ukraine said, no way.

Street to street fighting continues. More refugee shelters hit. Bodies buried along the sides of roads. 80 percent of the city destroyed, a departing diplomat can't believe it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MANOLIS ANDROULAKIS, GREECE CONSUL GENERAL (through translator): What I saw, I hope no one will ever see. And unfortunately, cannot be justified by my conscience.

PALKOT: This, as the capital Kyiv continues to get pounded. Overnight, a shopping mall and nearby residential buildings hit by Russian missiles, killing eight.

Russia claims Ukraine was storing its own missiles there. As Moscow's rockets rain down.

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY, PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE (through translator): Do not be afraid. You will hear the sound with which we are living already for 25 days. This sound has become normal for all in our city.

PALKOT: Other places targeted as well. The Important Black Sea port of Odessa struck. Tanks clashing around the battered northeast city of Kharkiv. And other strike in the town of Mykolaiv in the south. Radiation sensors around the stricken Chernobyl nuclear plant held by the Russians reportedly out.

And in Kherson, the only city Russia has captured, protesters out again. Russian troops shot in the air one resident injured.

OLEKSII REZNIKOV, UKRAINIAN DEFENSE MINISTER: Moscow is afraid of our army. So, they are fighting civilians. This is a state terrorism.

PALKOT: In fact, it's reported Western intelligence sources say, as many as 1,000 Russian troops are being killed or injured every day. While Ukraine is taking big losses too, analysts say it's forcing Russia to regroup and hunker down.

There are reports a dissatisfied Russian President Putin is cracking down on his own intelligence officials as the security clamp down on continuing anti-war protests in Russia, 1,000s arrested. Talks to end the fighting continue, with no end in sight.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I am really very pessimistic about diplomatic solution.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

PALKOT: And you are right, Bret, there's more of a distance approach to killing that Russia is getting involved with right now in this country. A senior defense official says that just in the past 24 hours, there were 300 Air sorties by Russia, just adding to the carnage here. Back to you.

BAIER: Greg Pakot, live in Lviv. Greg, thank you.

President Biden spoke with European leaders today ahead of his visit to Poland and NATO Headquarters later this week. His trip comes as Ukrainian President Zelenskyy warns the world could be nearing World War III, if efforts to negotiate with Russia fail.

White House correspondent Jacqui Heinrich is following that tonight from the North Lawn. Good evening, Jacqui.

JACQUI HEINRICH, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT (on camera): Good evening to you, Bret.

Concerns about the impact of Russia's war are also escalating here at home in terms of the effect on prices and supply chains. Soon, the president is meeting with 16 CEOs from food, energy, and manufacturing companies, because there is no sign that Vladimir Putin is changing course.

HEINRICH (voice-over): The Kremlin summoned the U.S. Ambassador to Russia to warn today Russian-American relations are "on the verge of a breach" after President Biden called Vladimir Putin a war criminal.

The White House brushing it off.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JEN PSAKI, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY: We're seeing clear evidence that they're intentionally targeting civilians and committing indiscriminate attacks. The global perception of them is based on their actions.

HEINRICH: But the administration is warning American companies, they're at heightened risk of Russian retaliation in the form of cyber-attacks.

ANNE NEUBERGER, DEPUTY NATIONAL SECURITY, CYBER AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGY: There is no certainty there'll be a cyber-incident on critical infrastructure. So, why am I here? Because this is a call to action, and a call to responsibility for all of us.

HEINRICH: The White House is telling you as companies to urgently mandate multi factor authentication, deploy modern security tools to scan and mitigate threats, patch and protect systems against known vulnerabilities, change passwords, backup and encrypt data and keep offline backups as well.

The administration declining to lay out what kind of Russian activity they're watching, or which industries or companies may be at the highest risk, at least publicly.

HEINRICH (on camera): The people, the industries that need to know about this risk, know?

NEUBERGER: We believe the key entities who need to know have been provided classified briefings. I mentioned, for example, just last week, several 100 companies were brought in to get that briefing.

HEINRICH (voice-over): Meantime, concerns escalating in Europe about the potential for a Russian chemical attack on Ukraine, as Ukrainian President Zelensky is warning, World War III is on the horizon. If peace talks with Russia continue to fail.

JENS STOLTENBERG, SECRETARY GENERAL, NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION: We know that Russia has used chemical agents in Europe before against their own political opponents. And they -- Russia has been facilitating supporting the Assad regime in Syria, where chemical weapons has been used. So, this is something we take extremely serious.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HEINRICH: Later this week, the president will head to Brussels and Poland in a show of solidarity with NATO allies. There are no plans right now for him to go to Ukraine. But a meeting with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy is still possible, according to NATO's Secretary General. Bret.

BAIER: Jacqui Heinrich, live in the North Lawn. Jacquie, thank you.

Let's bring in Iowa Republican Senator Joni Ernst. She's a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and is just back from Poland. Senator, thanks for being here.

SEN. JONI ERNST (R-IA): Thank you, Bret, very much.

BAIER: Well, first of all, let's start there about your trip, what you learned, what you took away from it.

ERNST: Yes, walking away from that trip, which was 10 United States senators, a bipartisan delegation. What we heard while we were in Poland, and in Germany, was that Ukraine can win. They can win this war against Russia.

However, in order to do that, they need to have the lethal aid necessary to push back against the Russians. That can be provided by America. It can also be provided by our NATO allies.

BAIER: We're looking at pictures of your trip. But, there is this hesitancy on the administration's part and some on Capitol Hill as well, about being too provocative in what we're providing, or that there is a line here.

Do you see that and the jump to World War III?

ERNST: I don't see that as we're providing aid to the Ukrainians. The Ukrainians need a mechanism to defend themselves. What we see as provocation coming from Russia. They are the ones that invaded Ukraine.

We have been aiding and assisting the Ukrainians for decades now, as they have built up their defenses, as we have trained their army. So, this should come as no surprise from Vladimir Putin that we are staying in Ukraine.

So it's already escalated within Ukraine. We need to provide the Ukrainians the means to defend themselves.

BAIER: And the administration is saying, hey, we're doing it. We're already doing it. We're flowing this these weapons in, we are with NATO putting different systems in. They're saying they're doing it, are they not?

ERNST: Well, they say they are doing it. But what we see is a slow walk by this administration. When they are asking -- the Ukrainians are asking for lethal aid. They need it immediately. And this administration is so risk averse that they are just overthinking. I think, so many of the actions that are required for the Ukrainians to push back on Putin and the Russians.

So, we need to move expeditiously in making sure that the Ukrainians are getting what they asked for not just random things that can be sent to them, but exactly what they need to win this war and they can win this war.

BAIER: OK. Listen to John Kirby at the Pentagon today. It's really interesting as they look at the map and look at Russian forces. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REAR ADM. JOHN KIRBY (RET.), PENTAGON PRESS SECRETARY: I mean, we're at day 26th. Day 26th. And they're still well outside Kyiv. They haven't taken Kharkiv, they haven't taken Chernihiv. They haven't taken Mariupol. And we're seeing them react to this frustration by evermore bombardment.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: You were in the military. You're on the Senate Armed Services Committee. Are you surprised by Russia's lack of accomplishment here on their goals on the ground?

ERNST: I am surprised and Vladimir Putin as always touted the strength of his army. He has not unleashed the full strength of his army, and we do see an incredible will and resistance coming from the Ukrainian people, the Ukrainian army.

But, what we are doing as NATO and as the United States is providing for the status quo right now. And what we need to do is make sure that they have the overwhelming superiority within Ukraine in order to make that difference and actually push the Russians back. Because well, Kirby did not state it there, the Russians are making incremental steps forward. And again, this is not leading us and pushing them out.

BAIER: Do you think the ultimate -- the ultimate goal is maybe adjusted now, for Putin. Do you think that he wants to just control that sea port area and a land bridge to Crimea?

I mean, do you think it's going to be scaled back or he still has ambitions to go elsewhere?

ERNST: Well, I think he's still does have ambitions to go elsewhere. And I would never trust Vladimir Putin any further than I could throw him. But, what we cannot accept is something that the Ukrainian people are unwilling to accept.

And right now they will not accept losing any part of their free and sovereign country.

BAIER: A lot of praise for Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian president. However, a couple of things he did this week are raising some eyebrows. Here is Jonathan Turley, he writes, the "Bans on opposition parties in Ukraine blow to free speech: Many of us strongly support the fight of Ukraine against the Russian invasion. Yet, that support should not shield the country or Zelenskyy from criticism whether it involves filming POWs or cracking down on free speech. The latter concern has arisen after Zelenskyy banned Ukraine's main opposition party and 10 other parties."

And then the week says that also there is in this ban a nationalization of T.V. news. As "Zelenskyy's Information policy involves, combining all national T.V. channels, the program content of which consists mainly of information and or information-analytical programs, into a single information platform of strategic communication to be called United News."

Do you have any problems with either one of those things?

ERNST: Well, I can't defend what President Zelenskyy has done. I don't know the information that he has received. So, I can't comment on that. But what I would say is, I really do think we have the greatest system in the world. And we do have, you know, opposing parties here in the United States and ways to express our opinions.

It is a different situation in Ukraine right now, obviously, they are fighting a deadly war with Russian invader, so I'm not sure what intelligence they had to back his decision.

BAIER: I just have a few seconds here, Senator, but you get classified briefings. You get briefed all the time. Do we know where China is on this war?

ERNST: I don't know that we will ever know for certain where China is, but China has expressed displeasure in the brutality and the violence in Ukraine.

However, they have not condemned Russia. So, that tells me they are still with Russia.

BAIER: Senator Joni Ernst, just back from Poland. We appreciate you stopping by.

ERNST: Thank you, Bret.

BAIER: Speaking of China, China's reaction to the war in Ukraine. He is raising concerns about Beijing's plans for Taiwan. It comes as China's military is bolstering its forces in the disputed South China Sea in a big way.

Correspondent Mark Meredith has the latest from the Pentagon this evening.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KIRBY: Nothing's changed about our One China Policy.

MARK MEREDITH, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): But U.S. officials say they stand by their decision to send the USS Ralph Johnson, a naval destroyer through the Taiwan Strait. Even as China's military calls the move provocative.

KIRBY: International waters. Freedom of navigation doesn't just exist for whales and icebergs and free -- those are international waters.

MEREDITH: Russia's invasion into Ukraine has prompted foreign policy experts to examine what China's future plans may be for Taiwan. The U.S. does not recognize Taiwan as an independent country, but it does sell Taipei defensive weapons, a decision Chinese officials criticized repeatedly.

Above the South China Sea, U.S. pilots say it's easy to spot where China's military is growing. The head of U.S. Indo Pacific Command says China has now fully militarized three manmade islands, deploying everything from fighter jets to anti-aircraft missiles.

This month, Commander John Aquilino told Congress, China's moves are no coincidence.

ADM. JOHN AQUILINO, COMMANDER, UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND: The People's Republic of China is the most consequential strategic competitor to the United States. The PRC is executing a dedicated campaign that utilizes all forms of national power --

MEREDITH: As the war in Ukraine drags on, some lawmakers are calling on President Biden to be more aggressive with China.

Florida Senator Marco Rubio tweeting, "Have zero doubt about whose side China is on. They are 100 percent behind Putin."

But China's ambassador to the U.S. says his country is proud to have relationships with both the U.S. and Russia.

QIN GANG, CHINESE AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES: And China is part of the solution -- is not part of the problem.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MEREDITH: China's ambassador refused to say if China plans to ever give Russian military assistance when it comes to Ukraine, but President Biden is warning China directly not to provide any assistance to Moscow or there could be consequences. Bret, the White House is not laying out what those consequences yet would be, Bret.

BRET BAIER, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: Mark Meredith at the Pentagon. Mark, thank you.

Here's some other headlines we're following. The Securities and Exchange Commission, the SEC is proposing requiring U.S. listed companies to disclose a range of climate related risks and greenhouse gas emissions.

The SEC chair says the agency is responding to investor demands for consistent information on how climate change will affect financial performance of companies they invest in. Republicans who are accusing the regulator of overstepping its legal authority.

Dr. Anthony Fauci says now is not the time to declare victory over the coronavirus. President Biden's chief medical adviser is predicting an uptick in COVID cases similar to the current increase seen in Europe. Fauci says the BA.2 subvariant is a more contagious version of the Omicron variant but causes less severe illness in most people. Fauci is urging flexibility and ramping up restrictions if hospitalizations rise again.

Meantime, search and rescue efforts are underway in China after a China Eastern Airlines flight with 132 people on board crashed in mountains in Southern China today, after a sudden descent from cruising altitude.

Media reports say there are no signs of survivors there, the cause of that crash is under investigation.

Up next, President Biden's historic Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson faces the Senate Judiciary Committee for the first time.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KETANJI BROWN JACKSON, SUPREME COURT NOMINEE: I have dedicated my career to ensuring that the words engraved on the front of the Supreme Court building equal justice under law are a reality and not just an ideal.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BAIER: Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell is vowing tough action on inflation, which he says is much too high and jeopardizes another one strong economic recovery. Powell says the Fed will continue to hike rates until inflation comes under control. And he signaled the action may be even more aggressive than last week's increase, which was the first-rate hike in more than three years. Inflation as we've said is running at its highest level in 40 years.

Stock market didn't particularly like the Fed's hawkish comments today, the Dow lost 202, the S&P 500 fell two, the NASDAQ dropped 55.

Confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson began today up on Capitol Hill. If confirmed, she'll be the first black woman to serve on the nation's highest court.

Fox News Chief Legal Correspondent anchor of "FOX NEWS @ NIGHT" Shannon Bream with a wrap of today's meeting and shows us where we go from here. Good evening, Shannon.

SHANNON BREAM, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST (on camera): Hello, Bret. So, day one is in the books. The real action starts Tuesday morning, Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson has spent weeks going through the so-called murder boards. They prepare her for the pointed questions she is sure to face and lawmakers gave us a bit of a preview today.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JACKSON: Thank you for this historic chance to join the highest court to work with brilliant colleagues to inspire future generations and to ensure liberty and justice for all.

BREAM (voice over): For the first time since she was nominated, federal appeals court Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson address the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee who will probe her record and temperament this week and ultimately vote on sending her nomination to the full Senate. Republicans say they're still quibbling over getting relevant documents.

SEN. CHUCK GRASSLEY (R-IA): The White House has still withheld 48,000 pages under the Presidential Records Act and FOIA exemptions. Now, that's a lot of hiding.

BREAM: And that they'll ask tough questions about her record of sentencing people convicted on child pornography charges.

SEN. JOSH HAWLEY (R-MO): What concerns me and I've been very candid about this is that in every case in each of these seven, Judge Jackson handed down a lenient sentence that was below what the federal guidelines recommended.

BREAM: Committee Chair Democrat Dick Durbin warned Republicans not to cross the line.

SEN. DICK DURBIN (D-IL): I'm confident the American people will see through these attacks and any other last-minute attempts to derail your confirmation.

BREAM: But it's clear Republicans have not forgotten the contentious Kavanaugh hearings.

SEN. TED CRUZ (R-TX): Judge Jackson, I can assure you that your hearing will feature none of that disgraceful behavior. No one is going to inquire into your teenage dating habits.

BREAM: Members on both sides of the aisle today noted the historical significance of Judge Jackson's position as the first black woman nominated to the courts in its 233-year history.

SEN. MAZIE HIRONO (D-HI): It's about time our highest court better reflects the country it serves.

SEN. LINDSEY GRAHAM (R-SC): I think it's good for the court to look like America. So, count me in on the idea of making the court more diverse.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BREAM (on camera): Number of senators say they're concerned about Judge Jackson's unwillingness to weigh in on the issue of court packing, noting that the man she hopes to replace Justice Breyer himself said he thought that was a bad idea, that is certain to be among the many questions she will face this week, Bret.

BAIER: Shannon, we also found out last night that Justice Clarence Thomas was hospitalized over the weekend, updates tonight?

BREAM: Yes, so Justice Thomas had flu like symptoms were told when he went to the hospital Friday night, doctors discovered an infection. We're told they've been treating that with IV antibiotics. He's been steadily improving. He's expected to be released very soon. He is taking part in work remotely and I'm told today he's in good spirits and "getting better and better".

At 73, Justice Thomas is the court's most senior member, not the oldest, though. We'll keep you updated as soon as we learned anything new, Bret.

BAIER: OK, we wish him well and we'll follow all the hearings this week. Shannon, thank you. See you tonight.

Up next, week go to the touchscreen for a look at what's happening on the ground and the war. Plus, some of the threats facing Ukrainian refugees as they move towards surrounding nations.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BAIER: Welcome back to SPECIAL REPORT. Let's take a look what's happening in the ground in Ukraine. Right now, Russian forces appear to be stalled all over the country. Here in Kyiv, there really hasn't been much movement over than there are reports now of minefields being used by Russian forces as they dig in for what is going to be a long, drawn out fight.

There's not really one city, according to the experts who are looking at this, that is totally in control. Kherson was, but you see these blue dots. These are Ukrainian pushback or protests or counteroffensives. The biggest place is over here in Mariupol where it's really been surrounded by Russian forces and bombarded.

And we have seen a lot of activity in the south, but, again, no control. The Russians say that they fired on this city right here, Mykolaiv, from the Black Sea, missiles from vessels in the Black Sea. But, again, you look at these blue dots, these are Ukrainian protests, pushback, this is claimed Russian control here, but the big focus has been Mariupol and this squeeze on that city as it's been bombarding.

Mariupol has not given up, the Ukrainians saying they are not going to submit to the Russians even though this bombardment baby intense. And this is the city of Mariupol. All these yellow and red dots, this is damaged or destroyed buildings. This is the city itself. Imagine all of these red dots, there's 391 of them, damaged or destroyed buildings in the city of Mariupol. And the human tragedy there is real, and we're just getting some sense of it. There aren't really any journalists still left inside.

There are also strikes happening further out west and this is, again, only 43 miles from the Polish border where our correspondents are in Lviv. The airport there struck. We'll take a look at some video from that. You can see in the distance this big plume of smoke. That was a missile attack believed to hit the Lviv international airport, and another provocative strike out in the west as Russians try to take out some of that airfield.

Go back to this. The big push, obviously, is the continued refugee issue and millions of refugees going to Poland, going through the main part of Ukraine. And millions of women and children are fleeing Ukraine, and the United Nations is now calling this the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. And they are facing all kinds of things. They're facing kidnapping, human trafficking.

Correspondent Aishah Hasnie is right here on the border, and she has our report tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEO TAPE)

AISHAH HASNIE, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Idaho native Rob Sturgill is offering a free ride to a hotel to a young mom who just arrived from Ukraine. He's one of the countless volunteers in Poland showing the best of humanity.

But the constant waves of women and children, oftentimes only able to speak Ukrainian, has opened the door to trafficking. A week ago, police detained a 49-year-old man in western Poland for alleging raping a young refugee girl. He reportedly lured her in by offering her a place to stay. Crisis managers are on the lookout for kidnappers posing as good Samaritans.

PAUL SMINES, PRZEMYSŁ RECEPTION CENTER: People coming down here and stand outside the center, or at the border, offering, and when we go and ask them, they can't give us a really good answer for what organization they are coming from or where they are going.

HASNIE: There is also a new system that requires volunteer drivers to register with local authorities and wear a bracelet that proves they are clear to transport refugees wherever they might need to go. Sturgill has that bracelet. He's also sharing his personal information with the refugees to make them feel at ease.

ROB STURGILL, VOLUNTEER: We actually let them contact family, take a picture of our passports, take a picture of our license plates on the vehicles that we have. And sometimes it does take quite an effort to get them, because these people are -- they are scared. They are scared to death.

HASNIE: A few days ago, he got on the phone with a worried Ukrainian man and reassured him that his family was in good hands.

STURGILL: It's tragic. That is one of the reasons why we have come is to help try to be the good guys.

(END VIDEO TAPE)

HASNIE (on camera): And, Bret, those crisis managers at those welcome centers are now in talks with police. They would like police here in these small rural communities to start banning private vehicles from showing up to these border crossings of these train stations just to avoid any confusion and to keep these refugees safe. They would like for these refugees to use the buses that are paid for by humanitarian aid groups, and also for these refugees to travel in groups. There is always safety in numbers. Bret?

BAIER: Aishah Hasnie live in Poland. Aishah, thank you.

Well, big thank you now to Save Our Allies. That's a nonprofit organization that helped rescue FOX News correspondent Benjamin Hall after he was severely injured in that attack in Ukraine. Two of our colleagues died in that same attack. Co-founder of the group Sarah Verardo joined AMERICA'S NEWSROOM today to discuss that mission to get Ben out that ultimately led Hall to safety following that attack.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SARAH VERARDO, "SAVE OUR ALLIES" CO-FOUNDER: This is a very complex situation, but we have people in our team that are willing to go into harm's way to protect those from evil. And especially when we got the call for help from FOX, we could not move quickly enough to mobilize a multinational effort to secure Ben's extraction from a very dangerous combat zone.

This is an operation that typically would take months to plan as well as coordination from multiple government agencies. They moved heaven and earth to move Ben not only quickly out of an active hostile combat zone, but safely due to the grave condition he was in and his injuries.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: Our thanks to them, also to Defense Secretary Austin. Benjamin is recovering in Germany. He is in good spirits, and he is on the mend.

To help Save Our Allies with their efforts in Ukraine or anywhere else in the world, if you feel so inclined to donate, please visit their website [SaveOurAllies.org](https://www.SaveOurAllies.org). We'll put a link on our website as well.

Up next, the Biden administration is defending itself from critics as the U.S. government moves towards a new nuclear agreement with Iran.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)



BAIER: The U.S. and Iran are nearing an agreement on a new nuclear deal tonight, but one significant obstacle remains in the way. Senior national correspondent Rich Edson has the latest tonight from the State Department.

(BEGIN VIDEO TAPE)

RICH EDSON, FOX NEWS STATE DEPARTMENT CORRESPONDENT: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the last significant hurdle between the United States and Iran in securing a new nuclear agreement. The IRGC is on the U.S. list of foreign terrorist organizations. The Biden administration would consider removing it if it stopped targeting Americans.

NED PRICE, STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN: We are prepared to make difficult decisions to return Iran's nuclear program to its JCPOA limits.

EDSON: The JCPOA was the initial 2015 nuclear deal. Since the Trump administration withdrew from it, the current administration argues a new deal is vital to constrain Iran's growing nuclear program. Opponents say a new nuclear agreement will only give Iran billions more to fund Iranian missiles, militias, and the IRGC.

NAFTALI BENNETT, ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER, (through translator): We are seeing determination to sign a nuclear deal at almost any cost, including saying that the biggest terrorist group in the world is not a terrorist organization. This is too steep a price.

EDSON: The emerging Iran deal is the latest strain on the Biden administration's relationship with some allies in the region, with Saudi Arabia, the administration has been critical of the kingdom's human rights record and its war against the Iran backed Houthis in Yemen. As the Houthis intensify their drone and missile strikes against the Saudis, the U.S. has reportedly transferred Patriot missile defense systems to Saudi Arabia over the past several weeks.

ALEX VATANKA, MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE: Are there issues right now dividing the Saudis in the United States? Absolutely. And there's a bitterness, in fact, on both sides on a number of issues. But on the strategic level, the two need one another.

(END VIDEO TAPE)

EDSON (on camera): This weekend the Houthis launched another attack against Saudi oil and gas facilities. Hours later, Saudi Arabia's government said it will refuse any responsibility for global oil shortages because of attacks like that from Iranian-backed Houthi militias. Bret?

BAIER: Rich Edson live at the State Department. Rich, thank you.

Up next, the panel on today's news. First, what some of our FOX affiliates around the country are covering tonight. FOX 29 in Philadelphia where three people, including two state troopers have died following a crash on I-95 this morning. The troopers were assisting a man who was walking on the highway when a driver struck all three men at high speed. State police say they are conducting an active investigation that is DUI related.

And this is a live look at New York. One of the big stories there tonight from our affiliate FOX 5, Christie's Auction House says it will sell a 1964 Andy Warhol silk screen of Marilyn Monroe for an estimated \$200 million. That would make it the most expensive 20th century artwork ever sold at auction. The auction is expected to be held in May, \$200 million.

That's tonight's live look outside the beltway from SPECIAL REPORT. The sun sets in New York. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, (D) PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: The idea that they don't have enough sophisticated equipment is just simply not accurate. They have every, every equipment -- every piece of equipment that makes rational sense based on our military and NATO's military for them to be able to do what they are doing. They are wreaking havoc on the -- on the Russian military.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: That's President Biden just a few minutes ago talking to the Business Roundtable here in Washington, D.C., saying Ukraine essentially has the sophisticated weaponry it needs as there is a stalemate on the ground.

Let's bring in our panel, FOX News senior political analyst Brit Hume, Katie Pavlich, news editor at Townhall.com, and Leslie Marshall, Democratic strategist. Brit, what about what the president is saying there, as there are calls for more help into the Ukrainians?

BRIT HUME, FOX NEWS SENIOR POLITICAL ANALYST: I think most people in the west would hope that that's true, but I think it would also seem to a lot of people that the people who know best what they need are the Ukrainians who are actually fighting the war instead of the heads of other states who are not. So I think it raises a question of whether what we are doing is sufficient. I think a lot of people give Biden credit for what he has done. NATO has rallied, and I think he has played a big part in that, and NATO rallying has an important role to play in the world, we see, after the Ukraine fight is over as well as now.

But I think it ought to be up to Ukrainians, probably, to figure out what they need. And this technicality they are using about sending, for example, the MiGs, they are an offensive weapon whereas other things are defensive. Well, look, if you are fighting over your own skies to protect your country, you're fighting on defense. And I think the distinction doesn't really make any sense. So we'll see how this plays out.

BAIER: Meantime, President Biden heads to Europe, is heading to Poland, he's heading to NATO headquarters. "Wall Street Journal" has this, "Russia's failing to achieve early victory in Ukraine is seen as shifting to Plan B. Senior U.S. officials see signs the Kremlin is shifting to a new strategy to secure key territorial objectives while seeking leverage to compel the Ukrainian government to accept neutrality between Russia and the west." Leslie, what do you think the goal is for President Biden as he heads to NATO and to Poland?

LESLIE MARSHALL, DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST: Well, I think in addition to further unification, to be clear, not just in what Ukraine needs, but what the western world needs to do, because military experts say even though President Zelenskyy has in a sense begged for a no-fly zone, we are not alone, our allies do agree that that would be entering possibly World War III.

Vladimir Putin, we see, is losing, and he is desperate. And there is a concern if he would use nuclear weapons. There is no no-fly zone light. We would have to shoot down Russian aircraft, military experts say. There is also no nuclear war light or nuclear arsenal weapon that's going to be used from Russia that could be light. So this is a very dangerous territory we could see ourselves in with Vladimir Putin, and I think that's what the president is going to talk about.

And additionally, prior to March 17th. I think people could question what the president said that you would ask Brit about, but 800 million, when you look at these drones that can up to 50 miles away take out Russian tanks, you have non-tank ability, you have Striker and Javelin missiles, I am trusting what the president says along with our allies as to what we are providing for the president and the military and the people of Ukraine.

BAIER: The question now, Katie, is what is Putin's goal? Has it shifted? Is there a settlement in the works here? President Zelenskyy, Ukrainian president, said that there will be referendum on any deal with Russia. Not sure how that works. If you can't get to the store, how do you get to the voting booth. But that's what he said today. What do you think, Katie?

KATIE PAVLICH, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: Well, President Zelenskyy has repeatedly asked for a one-on-one meeting with President Putin. There has been back and forth on whether that will happen. President Zelenskyy has said repeatedly that Ukraine will not give up, that they will not -- they will not surrender to the assault that has been inflicted on their country.

And I think the question for the United States as President Biden goes to Poland is, first, how they handle this refugee crisis which does impact the NATO countries. Of course, Poland has taken millions of refugees with more on the way. But the other is what the mission is in Ukraine with arming the Ukrainians. The Russians have been in Syria for six years. It is the goal of the United States and NATO of arming Ukrainians with what they say is less than they actually need to beat Russia. Is our goal to beat Russia or is it to simply manage this back-and-forth fight? You mentioned the Russians setting up minefields. I don't think that Vladimir Putin is interested in a short war here. He is a very patient man, and this is just the beginning of what we have gotten into.

The other question that we have now is what the White House said today, is that the president warned that the United States could come under a cyberattack from Russia. And if you look at what NATO has said recently about what that would mean for Article Five, they say a cyberattack significant enough could trigger Article Five. And so we're not just in the situation of just Ukraine, we're also in the situation of how NATO would handle an attack the president warned about today.

BAIER: And that likely is going to be a conversation at NATO headquarters.

Brit, the Associated Press about China, saying, a U.S. admiral saying it's fully militarized the South China Sea, "China has fully militarized at least three of several islands it built in the disputed South China Sea,

arming them with antiship, anti-aircraft missile systems, laser and jamming equipment, and fighter jets." As we try to determine what exactly China's role is going to be with Russia, it's doing its own militarization in a very open area.

HUME: Yes, it is. And I think a lot of strategists, I think, correctly believe that China is the greater long-term threat to the security of the United States, particularly as regards Taiwan, which is the source of great deal of the chips and other technological equipment that is needed for our high tech sector which is vital to our economy, much more vital than anything, for example, that Ukraine would offer. So I think that is the big, larger question.

And one can only hope that Xi Jinping looks at what's happening to Putin with the bloody nose that Putin has got in Ukraine and thinks, my God, is this the kind of thing that could happen to us if we attack Taiwan and tried to simply absorb it, if Taiwan would fight? And Taiwan has a lot of fighting equipment and the will to fight. So, let's hope that Xi Jinping takes that lesson from what's happening with Putin in Russia and not some other lesson.

BAIER: There is also the lesson of Iran, Leslie. The Iran supreme leader is still on Twitter. Our former president is not on Twitter, but the Iran supreme leader is on Twitter and tweeted out "One of the sweetest events in 1400 AHS was the Americans admitting they suffered a humiliating defeat in their maximum pressure policy against Iran. Other events took place in the world, too, all of which showed the correctness of the path of the Iranian people against arrogance." This comes, this tweet, as the U.S. gets ready to sign a deal that many experts are saying, Leslie, could be less than the deal in 2015, the Iran nuclear deal.

MARSHALL: And that's why, I think, you see pushback from both sides of the aisle on this, Democrats and Republicans, their concerns not only will they get less than 2015 during the Obama administration. They are also concerned of the timing. Is now the time to do this, especially because any kind of a deal that would be struck now, and I'm in agreement with those people who are critical of this on the left, on my fellow Democrats' side, because you could in a sense facilitate millions or even billions of dollars that Vladimir Putin would have access to, doing business with Iran, nuclear business with Iran with this new deal. So I don't think this is the time to be revisiting this, and I know some of my fellow Democrats agree with me on that.

BAIER: All right, panel, thank you so much. We have all week to talk about the confirmation hearings. Went off well today according to both sides of the aisle, for Ketanji Brown Jackson. Thank you very much.

Tonight, Tucker Carlson has exclusive interview with singer/songwriter Kid Rock who says he cannot be canceled.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TUCKER CARLSON, HOST, TUCKER CARLSON TONIGHT: Why haven't you been canceled? People aren't allowed to say what they think. You are.

KID ROCK, SINGER/SONGWRITER: I'm un-cancellable.

CARLSON: Why is that?

KID ROCK: Because I don't give a -- I'm not in bed with any big corporate things at the end of the day. There is nobody I am beholden to, no record companies, no corporate interest, no nothing. And you can't cancel me. I love it when they try.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: It's one to watch. Catch the interview tonight 8:00 p.m. eastern. Additional exclusive content behind the scenes footage from inside that interview later in all the new "Tucker Carlson Originals" documentary on FOX Nation.

Finally tonight, a SPECIAL REPORT salute to a bomb detecting dog in Ukraine. You see him suiting up with his vest and he helps find service workers finding explosive devices. According to the state emergency service of Ukraine the pup has assisted in clearing almost 90 explosive devices.

And now this, veterinarians and volunteers caring for animals who have been left behind as Ukrainians flee, all of those refugees. Newly released footage, various teams throughout Kyiv can be seen evacuating people and animals from dangerous areas amid sounds of ongoing bombardment in the distance. Well done. We need those animals, too.

Tomorrow on SPECIAL REPORT, exclusive interview with the Slovenian ambassador to the U.S. also in the mix.

Thanks for inviting us into your home tonight. That's it for the SPECIAL REPORT, fair, balanced, and still unafraid. "JESSE WATTERS PRIMETIME" starts in about five seconds. And it's Brian Kilmeade, surprise.

END

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