

News; Domestic

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[21:00:13]

CHRIS HAYES, MSNBC HOST: That is "ALL IN" on Tuesday night.

THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW with Ali Velshi starts now.

Good evening, Ali.

ALI VELSHI, MSNBC HOST: Chris, thank you. Good evening to you, and we'll see you tomorrow.

And thanks to you at home for joining us. Tonight, I'm in Budapest, Hungary, where earlier today, several hundred thousand Hungarians filled the streets here for what was dubbed a peace march through the capital. They waved Hungarian flags, saying "no war".

But despite what you might assume, this was not actually a march for Ukraine. This was on march in support for Hungary's right-wing authoritarian prime minister, Viktor Orban.

Orban has had these big rallies every year, these big nationalists gathering supporting him in his party which they call peace marches. Viktor Orban is the longest serving leader in the European Union. He's been in office since 2010. So, it's quite had quite a few of these matches. But the peace march takes on the heightened meaning in the current context.

And Viktor Orban is up for reelection in just two weeks, facing the most organized consolidated opposition that he has faced in years.

Which means that Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in addition to being a humanitarian disaster, a global calamity, and great power conflict, is a very local political issue here in Hungary. Not only is this war right on Hungary's doorstep, but 250,000 Ukrainian refugees have poured into Hungary already.

Now, Viktor Orban has presided over a sharp backsliding of democracy in this country over the last decade. His government has removed judges, curbed the press freedom, and given Orban the freedom to rule by decree. His party is also racist, Islamophobic, anti-immigrant and particularly hostile to LGBTQ rights.

Orban's increasingly autocratic rule has made relationships with his fellow democracies in the European Union tense and combative for years now. But he has become a hero and a model for Donald Trump, and his supporters and the United States. So I guess that's nice.

Trump has repeatedly endorsed Orban for reelection this year, including in this new supportive statement that he put out today. And just like his right wing American acolytes, Viktor Orban has long been a fan of Vladimir Putin. In fact, just last month, even as Putin's forces were amassing on Ukraine's borders, Orban was meeting with Putin, in Moscow, saying that Putin's demands of Ukraine in the West were totally reasonable and, besides, there was no way Putin was actually going to invade Ukraine.

So, when Putin did invade Ukraine, Viktor Orban was suddenly in a very awkward spot. Because however Hungarians feel about Viktor Orban, or about Vladimir Putin for that matter, one thing Hungarians pretty

universally have a negative opinion on is Russia taking over neighboring countries. In fact, plenty of Hungarians remember of Soviet tanks in the streets of Budapest, this city in 1956.

So, today, as Orban held his big political rally, his opposition held their own rally in another part of the capital. The opposition leader told supporters that the election is a choice, between throwing and Hungary's future with democratic Europe or with autocratic Russia, as supporters chanted Europa, Europa.

There are plenty of anti-Putin placards by the way, including this balloon with a mocked up picture of Viktor Orban and Vladimir Putin kissing with the war word for "criminal". So, Viktor Orban is trying to thread this very tricky needle. He's condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, he has agreed to the European Union's sanctions on Russia, something that was almost unthinkable almost three weeks ago. But he is also refused to give any Ukrainians weapons. Or to let any other nations' weapons cross through Hungary to get to the Ukraine.

He also says that while he won't block E.U. sanctions, he will not support sanctions that affect Hungary's energy supplies from Russia. Hundreds of thousands of refugees from Ukraine have poured into Hungary. But the Hungarian government has done much less than other European governments to help them, living it largely to civil society, humanitarian groups, and religious organizations.

At his rally today, Orban cynically to paint is pro democracy pro Europe opponents as warmongers who will drag Hungary into the war in Ukraine, which is quite a contrast when you consider that as Orban was making those remarks, at his reaction rally, right here in Budapest today, prime ministers from three surrounding countries were on their way to Kyiv by train, no less.

[21:05:01]

This is video of the prime ministers of Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic meeting with Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy inside Kyiv today. They all pledged to do more in part because they said they fear that their countries could be next on Putin's list.

And that was not an easy trip for them to make, nor was it with that personal risk to those leaders. The train ride from Warsaw to Kyiv can be 12 hours in normal time. Of course, these prime ministers were riding for hours through what is an active war zone.

The capital city itself where they met president-elect ski, is increasingly dangerous. Kyiv has come under increased Russian bombardment that is seemingly targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Dawn today brought strikes against the capital, including a missile that had a residential apartment building killing at least four people. Also hit was one of Kyiv's main subway stations.

NBC News chief foreign correspondent, Richard Engel, was there.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RICHARD ENGEL, NBC NEWS CHIEF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT: This is one of Kyiv's main subway stations and you can't get more central than this. In some ways, it shows that Russia is expanding its military breach, hitting right into the heart of Kyiv. But it's also a sign of weakness because Russia's front lines is tanks and armored vehicles haven't been advancing.

So, instead, Russia is relying on its long range weapons, it's rockets and artillery and carry on attacks like this which are generally unguided and just hit civilians.

Upstairs, the station is ruined. But down below, Ukrainians are hiding from Russian attacks. In a parked subway car that has been her home for more than a week, Tanya heard the blast up above.

Why do you think Russia is doing this? Attacking the center of the city, attacking the people, places where people are trying to hide from the bombings?

So that they can suck some land from us, she says. They've destroyed so much in Kharkiv and areas of Kyiv. It's like they don't have enough. They want more.

In the corridor is Elena. Her family, and three year old daughter, Anna.

We're scared because no matter where you are hiding, the danger can follow you.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VELSHI: Now that danger in Kyiv falls not just civilians, but journalists as well. Today, Fox News announced that one of their longtime cameraman, Pierre Zakrzewski was killed, alongside a Ukrainian colleague,

Alexandra Kuvshynova. Their car came under fire outside of Kyiv. Fox News reporter Benjamin Hall was also injured and remains hospitalized.

In response to the increased Russian attack on the capital, Kyiv's mayor announced a 35-hour curfew which went into effect this evening. There are fears that Russia plans to do to keep what it's doing to eastern cities like Kharkiv, where the city center has been pounded to rubble by Russian shelling. And Mariupol where hundreds of thousands of residents are trapped in freezing conditions with no heat, no food, or clean water, and thousands have been killed by Russian strikes.

Joining us live now from Kyiv is Richard Engel, NBC News chief foreign correspondent.

Richard, thank you for being here with us.

It appears that the shelling in Kyiv has intensified just tonight. What are you -- what are you hearing around you?

ENGEL: Well, on the outskirts of the city, we have been hearing a lot of explosions, and there are reports that Ukrainian forces are on the offensive, some reports that they are doing quite well. It's hard to know at this moment, but we have heard quite a few explosions. They seem to be to the north of the city, slightly northwest, which is where there have also been reports of a major battle underway.

So, if it's true, it would be the first time that we are having -- it's not the first time that Ukrainian forces are on the offensive, but first time, or early time you are hearing about Ukrainian forces being on a major offensive to try to take back some of the territory around Kyiv. We will see how that develops.

But it is -- there is, in the rest of the city, I must say there is an uneasy calm here tonight, because we're in a situation of total blackout. So, it's very quiet, there are fewer lights on in the city than you would normally see. People are in their homes, now, at this time of home. It's not like people were out in the streets anyway.

But now, nobody's out. And they are not allowed to go out tomorrow either because there is a full blackout curfew.

VELSHI: Talk to me about, when you talk about the clash between Russia and Ukrainian forces, but we've seen is an interesting strategy by the Ukrainian forces and civil defense, where they have a defensive position and city centers, and the Russians surround them, and the direct fighting is going on there, and yet, we continue to see your reporting of attacks taking place in Kyiv and other residential areas.

ENGEL: So, you have several different dynamics, and some of this falls to the fact that the Russians have been very ineffective in their attacks and all battles are improvised and we've been speaking to Ukrainian soldiers and they talked about this. How the Russians have been surrounding cities or attempting to surround cities, and then, for the first two weeks of this conflict, they were sending in small forays of Russian troops, some Russian armored personnel carriers.

But they generally weren't sending them with air cover. And I've been told by sources that even some of the Russian military, especially some in the Russian military, are furious with this tactic because they have been sending some of the best soldiers who are getting wiped out because they don't have the proper support.

So, with those kinds of assault, hit and run kind of assaults not having much success, the Russian troops are consolidating their positions, they're not advancing, and it's that they have been lobbying in missiles and rockets into the centers of cities, in theory to soften them, in theory to force the government to capitulate.

But here in Kyiv, I must say they haven't been that intense. They have been strong enough to kill people, to frighten people, but not enough to bring the city to its knees. Not enough to force the government to capitulate, so much so that point leaders were able to come here, three eastern European NATO nation members came here to meet Zelenskyy.

So it's a city under fire, but not a city that Russia, in any way, is devastating or bringing to its knees.

VELSHI: There was quite a thing to see the three prime ministers of neighboring nations going into Kyiv and standing with Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Obviously, that is not the position that the Hungarian president has taken.

However, the message that Zelenskyy gave to the Canadian parliament today, and will give to the U.S. Congress tomorrow, is we are the front lines of the battle for democracy in Europe. These members of parliament, the civil defense, they are all fighting as if Ukraine goes down, democracy in Europe is in peril. That's at least our argument.

ENGEL: I think you saw some of that today in the streets of Budapest. In this country, very much feels -- when I say this country, I mean everyone that I have spoken to, feels that they have a tremendous

responsibility that they are burying to a degree the weight of democracy on their backs. They feel that if democracy here is able to win and Ukrainian forces defending the democratic rights that they have achieved, particularly over the last eight years, and they are able to beat the Russians into some kind of war of attrition and survive on the battlefield, and survive as a government, that it will not only send a message to Vladimir Putin and others like him, but it will inspire a Democratic movement all across Europe and potentially across the world.

And I think we are already seeing this in this Ukraine war and the resistance of the Ukrainian people, it's inspiring people's imaginations all across the globe. But conversely, they also believe, if this country falls, and Russia eventually grinds its way across this country, using its still numerically superior armed forces, then it will send a wave of tyranny that will begin at the borders of Ukraine and just continue.

VELSHI: Richard, your work and the work of your team and your crew around you are bearing witness to something for the rest of the world, and we are grateful to you for it. Please, please stay safe my friend.

Richard Engel, NBC's chief foreign correspondent for us in Kyiv tonight.

Today, the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy continued those appeals that Richard was just talking about to the West, for more help, as this country tries to repel Russian forces. In a virtual address to the Canadian parliament, he invoked one of my hometown's best known landmark, saying, quote, can you imagine the famous CN Tower in Toronto, if it was hit by Russian bombs?

Earlier in the day, Zelenskyy also spoke to European leaders asking them for more weapons and stronger sanctions against Russia. Tomorrow, he is going to deliver a virtual address to members of Congress to make another direct appeal to U.S. lawmakers for support.

We've learned tonight that following Zelenskyy's speech to Congress, President Biden will announce one billion dollars in military aid to Ukraine. The package will reportedly consist of more of the same type of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles that the U.S. has been supplying with Ukraine to date.

One of the people working side by side with President Zelenskyy as he directs the country's war effort and tries to rally support from western allies is Serhiy Leshchenko, who currently serves as an adviser to President Zelenskyy's chief of staff.

[21:15:14]

And joining us now is Serhiy Leshchenko.

Mr. Leshchenko, thank you for making time for us the night.

Today, President Zelenskyy spoke to the Canadian parliament. Tomorrow, he's going to address the U.S. Congress.

What does the president want to achieve and talking to U.S. lawmakers tomorrow?

SERHIY LESHCHENKO, ADVISER TO PRES. ZELENSKY'S CHIEF OF STAFF: Our president wants to have the coalition to support Ukraine in this brutal war started by Russia. We need weapons. We need military support on the ground, but especially on the air. We called for closing the sky to have no fly zone over Ukraine, to stop the bombing of Ukrainian cities.

Unfortunately, we have negative answers from our partners. Then we call to provide a soviet fighter jets which are now based in our neighbor countries, which are members of NATO. But unfortunately, this operation was not successful as well.

For today, we're calling for more anti-aircraft support because what you see on the ground, Russia is quite weak. Their army is not powerful. Their army is just big and long. But, they have powerful aircraft, powerful fighters, powerful bombing, and they destroyed a lot of Ukrainian cities. They started to attack Kyiv, starting from the weekend, and they bombed our -- not just the neighborhoods of Kyiv, but the city of Kyiv itself.

And to stop this, we need support on the sky. And unfortunately, for today, we have a very weak answer from our partners around this topic. That is why the president is going to address the issue for American lawmakers on American citizens to call for unity, to call for solidarity, to call for humanities to provide more support for Ukraine.

We very much appreciate all the support done by citizens and American governments for Ukraine. But as the president spoke today to the British prime minister, the support provided us for weeks, we spend the support for 20 hours. We need more weapons to defend our country.

VELSHI: One of the problems, Mr. Leshchenko, is that NATO countries are saying that Ukraine is not a NATO member. Today, he addressed the EU leaders, President Zelenskyy appeared to give up on the prospect of Ukraine ever joining NATO. Ukraine's constitution commits Ukraine to actually pursuing membership in NATO.

So, why did that happen? Why did the president say he thinks that NATO, Ukraine is not going to join NATO which is exactly what Vladimir Putin wants?

LESHCHENKO: I cannot comment on the president. This is his legal right to say, but we know what Ukraine has. And Ukraine expects more support from the partners, especially the government because Ukraine is not just fighting for itself. Ukraine is fighting for Europe. We defend Europe from Russia, because, believe me, Russia will not stop on Ukraine there will expand their power for the European countries, and the Baltic countries, Poland.

So members of NATO say, the deal for Putin is not just occupy Ukraine or to make this denazification of Ukraine, or demilitarization of Ukraine. His goal is to destroy the global order created after the Second World War, which is occupied eight years ago by Russia. That is, why Ukraine is calling for support from our partners to provide their weapons, which we are looking for.

But unfortunately, that answer is very weak. And argument is that if we as NATO members provide this weapon, we will escalate. We will provoke Russian more.

But, my question is, if you as our partners are afraid to provide us these weapons because Russia can be nervous, will you accept our application to NATO, which makes pressure crazy? It looks like you're not going to do this. It looks like we are in a dream, you know? But it's time to wake up because we are losing our country, we're losing our people, we're losing our economy.

And we have to find a form of the guarantees of our serenity, of our integrity, of our security, because without these guarantees, this war can happen again and again. That is why the idea of negotiation knowledge to find the formula of the security guarantees which can be for my neighbor countries. You can be from our guarantors from Budapest memorandum in 1994 where Ukraine's top nuclear program as a post-Soviet country.

And this Budapest Memorandum was just the lame duck, not able to defend Ukraine. So this is part of negotiations. But with a problem is Ukraine is living in a state of war three weeks already, and we are looking for more support from our partners.

VELSHI: Serhiy Leshchenko is the current advisor to President Zelenskyy's chief of staff, Mr. Leshchenko, thank you for a time tonight.

LESHCHENKO: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

VELSHI: Despite the very difficult situation -- despite the very difficult situation in Ukraine, tonight, there are actually some encouraging signs for the Ukrainian military. We've got that story live from Kyiv, next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:25:01]

VELSHI: Okay, take a look at this map, you can see particularly in the South, all the Ukrainian territory that Russian forces have taken since the start of the invasion on February 24th, up until March 10th. But ever since March 4th, Russian progress has been much slower because the Ukrainian army aided by a civilian resistance, has managed to significantly stall the Russian expansion across Ukraine.

Over the last few weeks, Russia has resorted to even more draconian warfare, launching what appears to be indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations, and military experts believe that Russia could eventually take control of more major cities of Ukraine. But so far, the Ukrainian army continues to mount a big defense against Russian tactics.

"The Washington Post" reporter Sudarsan Raghavan has a new report from Ukraine detailing how Ukrainian forces have managed to fend off Russian forces for so long in the north and around the capital city of Kyiv. On the first day of the war, Russian forces took control of a nearby airport, a military airport, leading many people to believe that Kyiv would fall short after. But the front lines near that airport outside of Kyiv, while fluid, have not moved considerably in two weeks.

The Washington Post reports that Ukrainian forces have taken a shrewd approach of retreating to the cities, conserving the weaponry, and focusing on defending their positions in those cities, instead of attacking. They've blown up bridges. They have lined the roads into the city with obstacles while still managing to keep

corridors open for fleeing civilians, and they say, they are ready for any Russian advance that comes their way.

Joining us now from Kyiv, Sudarsan Raghavan, correspondent at large for "The Washington Post", who I am happy to announce, as of tonight, is an MSNBC contributor.

Sudarsan, thank you. Welcome to the team.

And I was just speaking to people, including Richard Engel, who has explaining that this tactic the Ukrainian army, that none of us would've known or thought, would be that strategic or prepared, given their history in that country, has been remarkably effective against a much bigger, much more mighty army.

SUDARSAN RAGHAVAN, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR: Great to be with you, Ali. It's great to be an MSNBC contributor.

So, yeah. I mean, look, everyone expected the Russians to enter Kyiv by now, but we are seeing is an unbelievably stiff resistance by Ukrainian forces. And it's a very smart move. They understand that they don't have the massive weaponry that the Russians have. So instead what they are doing is, they have retreated back to the cities, they are using guerrilla-style tactics. They dug trenches in places like Irpin, which is a city just north of -- the northern edges of the capital Kyiv, and a key gateway into the city the Russians are trying to push through.

They are inside people's houses. They are -- they are behind trees, positioned, camouflaged and ready for the Ukrainians to come down streets. But at the same time, what they told me they are being held by is the Russian -- Russia's own unpreparedness. The Russian soldiers lack of understanding of the geography of the Ukrainian terrain.

There have been examples of Russians running out of food and other supplies, on gas as well, turning down wrong streets inside Irpin, and suddenly getting targeted by an anti tank missile. So, yes, definitely the Ukrainians are using the smart -- and the other thing they are not doing is they are not counterattacking. So this is one place where I was, one frontline a couple of days ago in which it was shelled by the Russians, at least 20 or 25 times during the night, and the Ukrainians told me -- they did reply once, because they didn't want to -- they want to conserve their weaponry, but at the same time, they didn't want to turn that frontline into a battle zone because civilians were fleeing along that very road.

So when I asked them, what happens if at some point, Russian tanks to come through, then one of the commanders went and grabbed an NLAW anti-tank missile which was inside of a warehouse and basically said, we're ready.

VELSHI: Wow, a lot of the people, I'm talking, to especially members of parliament who have taken up arms and joint civilian militias, they're talking about the morale. And the morale has kept the country alive far larger than U.S. intelligence thought it would survive a Russian onslaught.

On the other side, there's an argument that there's a lack of moral for those Russian soldiers who are sort of less clear of about why they're fighting and combined with the fact that there unfamiliar territory and getting into urban warfare with people who know the local terrain.

[21:30:08]

RAGHAVAN: That's right, and you got to understand that, you know, before the war started, there's been an intense propaganda by the Kremlin and is reaching these Russian soldiers and they actually thought at one point that the Ukrainians are going to welcome them with flowers. That was all over social media.

Instead, so -- you know, they're expecting an easy fight coming in. Instead, what they found is a very strong resistance that is now including the military and the civilians. They've joined by the thousands to prepare you with the Russian forces. And they're doing this in many different ways. Many of join these territorial defense units who are now posted a checkpoints all around Kyiv, as well as fighting inside Irpin and that area.

But, you know, it's more than that. I mean, one -- some of the soldiers in Irpin were telling me that they're actually getting information from civilians, whoever their cell phone network, which is -- it's scant, but there are some areas where people still call out of Irpin, and they were giving positions a Russian tanks so that the Ukrainians can then use their own weaponry to target them.

So, it's a very cohesive resistance. And it's involving not just the military, but civilians as well.

VELSHI: That cohesive resistance didn't exist two months ago. It's remarkable to see how this has unfolded.

Sudarsan, welcome again to the fold. Sudarsan Raghavan is a correspondent at large for "Washington Post", and as of tonight, an MSNBC contributor. Thank you for your time. Please stay safe.

Still ahead here tonight, we're going to live to the hard hit city of Kharkiv to talk live with Ukrainian in a unique situation. But coming up next, Senator Amy Klobuchar joins us live. She's returned from the Poland and Ukraine border.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:36:41]

VELSHI: This was the scene this morning inside the Canadian parliament, a standing ovation after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the country's House of Commons. The standing ovation lasted nearly three minutes.

Members of the Canadian parliament chanted, "Glory to Ukraine" when the speech concluded after President Zelenskyy once again urge the West to do more to help Ukraine.

Tomorrow morning, President Zelenskyy will address a joint session of the U.S. Congress. He will also deliver those remarks virtually. And these are not completely new faces to him. In January, nearly two months ago, Zelenskyy met with a bipartisan congressional co-delegation of U.S. senators who -- congressional delegation of U.S. senators who visited Ukraine's capital to reaffirm the United States commitment and support to Ukraine sovereignty as fears of this Russian provocation were growing.

And one of the senators on that trip was Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar. This time around, when she hears from President Zelenskyy tomorrow, she will you have just returned from visiting the Poland and Ukraine border with some of her Senate colleagues just miles from the devastating war zone.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. AMY KLOBUCHAR (D-MN): It was both a group of refugees. They are coming in, as you can see with their lives on their backs. And they are just fleeing to safety in Poland. The kids, one of the most want to go to university. Little kids scared hearing the bombing in the middle of the night and they just keep coming.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VELSHI: And they just keep coming.

Joining us now is the Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar from the state of Minnesota. She has just returned from that bipartisan trip to Poland.

Senator, thank you for being here tonight.

It is something to be in these border countries watching these refugees come over literally as you said, with their lives on their backs. Years and years of their lives and choices they have to make, particularly all the ones coming across with little children. It changed the dynamic when you see it that way, right?

As an American legislature, seeing these refugees in real-time does make you realize, this is as much a humanitarian disaster as it is an unnecessary war.

KLOBUCHAR: It is, and was sometimes gets overlooked here, as you see these moms, so many of the moms and kids, their husbands left behind fighting for their country. Grandmas, grandpas, that's who's coming over.

And for me, there was another side that is now I was told, that I know you see where you are, and that is the Polish people. They are taking in these refugees, Ali, over 1.7 million now.

VELSHI: Yes.

KLOBUCAR: There are people standing there helping people get through. Polish border guards helping them with their suitcases, consoling them as they came over.

And Poland, for one example, there's a country that's been invaded by the Nazis, by the Prussians, by the Russians, by the Habsburg, and this time, this country is the ones that are helping the victims. And they are proud to stand up and do that.

And I think it's something we've got to remember as we go forward in terms of humanitarian aid, something on a bipartisan basis, that Congress just voted to do in big numbers last week, the help that's going to be needed to find locations.

[21:40:07]

And we all hope that they can go back their country. But for right now, they needed places to stay, and schools to go to. And that's what I came away with.

Just this incredible generosity of spirit as people took them into their hearts and into their homes.

VELSHI: Senator, the Ukrainians we speak to, government officials are desperate for either a no-fly zone, or that arrangement that we've been discussing for over a week that didn't seem to go through. The Polish MiG jets that their pilots can fly that would work through an American base.

You are in favor of more lethal weaponry going to Ukraine. How do we achieve that?

KLOBUCHAR: They need more air defense. There's no doubt about it. And we see the administration coming forward with significant numbers. And what I learned one island having been briefed with our own military, the 82nd Airborne, when we were there, seeing detailed briefings of all was going on.

They need help with more anti aircraft weapons, anti-tank weapons, everything from the Stingers and Javelins. We know drones have been incredibly effective. It was a surprise to many people in taking down these planes.

I was just described in your program, the mobility of some of these weapons is very helpful. And so, yes, we can look at planes. And I think one of the problems with the attention that was not everyone's fault. Everyone is trying made the such a thing that they almost have targets on them.

So I would like to see is not giving Vladimir Putin a roadmap. Getting the aid, getting the weapons end, because in modern warfare part of this is coverage. You're doing your job, that's where you cover. But you've got to be able to understand, some of this stuff, they have to get over there without it being on the news every day.

And I certainly know that there is a lot going on, not just from America, but from all of our allies that have stood together in addition to the crippling sanctions that we see is starting to have an effect on the vulnerable, but more and more to come. This is a long slog. It's not going to be over in one day.

VELSHI: Senator -- and we appreciate, not the just that you were involved in this, but the effort you put into it, the meetings you've had, the trips you've taken, and the fact that you know of what you speak because you've been watching it firsthand.

Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, thank you for your time. We always appreciate it.

KLOBUCHAR: Thanks, Ali. Great to be here.

VELSHI: Well, still ahead tonight, we're going to talk live with the Ukrainian rock star who is not living in a basement with his band mates in Kharkiv, a city that is now surrounded by Russian forces.

Also up next, one family here in Budapest opening up their homes help some of the Ukrainians who had to leave their homes.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:47:03]

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

VELSHI: On a busy street in Budapest, passed a steel gate in a building you would have no reason to notice is a soft landing for families fleeing Ukraine. Where, in spite of all they've been through, we found smiles.

ZSUSZANNA UJJ, BUDAPEST RESIDENT HOSTING UKRAINIANS: We actually had this idea in our mind that we would host them in our home. But it was clear that 11 people can't fit there.

VELSHI: What Budapest couples Zsuzsanna Ujj and Peter Foldes did have was a second flat under renovation. You can see it's not quite finished, but with the little love, this house is becoming a home for Ukrainians who have lost their own.

PETER FOLDES, BUDAPEST RESIDENT HOSTING UKRAINIANS: Many friends offered food and preparing hot food and we got washing powder and medicine and everything that they need. We got mattresses and pillows.

VELSHI: Nineteen people have already filtered through. There's no rush to leave. Alexandra Zhigalenko landed here with our family and a friend who also has a daughter.

ALEXANDRA ZHIGALENKO, UKRAINIAN REFUGEE: We stay here, maybe four or five days.

VELSHI: Their journey to Budapest first took them through Moldova and Romania before a train brought them here.

ZHIGALENKO: I hope it will be good. In the future, but we want to go home. My husband told us, stay here or there, not on Ukraine because the war will not stop for a few days.

VELSHI: Like so many we've met, our family is not complete. Alexandra only sees her husband now and photos, clinging to her phone with hope that they will be reunited.

ZHIGALENKO: Maybe they open the border from women, children, man, I'm my husband says, if they open, he will come to us if it'll be possible.

VELSHI: With her friend Rosanna and her children, they want to make it to Prague. For now, this half finished home as a respite and a reminder.

FOLDES: I think they are our guests now. And maybe I will be their guests tomorrow.

UJJ: Yeah, that's always a threat that the global situation is so fragile and the peace is so fragile. So, we always think about this that we can be in their place.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VELSHI (voice-over): So far, that Budapest Kabul has held 19 of the nearly 270,000 Ukrainian refugees who fled to Hungary as were wages and their country. The couple was happy to make their house finished flood a place for Ukrainian refugees to rest and recover forgot their next steps. Already, a few of their guests have moved on to join family in western European countries.

[21:50:05]

The hosts say that's the least they can do. Already more than 3 million people have fled Ukraine, and they only those kind of help and hospitality as they figure out their next steps.

When we come back, we'll go live to a hard hit Kharkiv. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

VELSHI: This is a video out of Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkiv. Today, the mayor of Kharkiv said that more than 600 buildings have been destroyed since the Russian invasion began. And that the near constant Russians shelling and airstrikes have hit hospitals and government buildings, and completely destroyed 48 schools.

Yesterday alone, the Ukraine government counted 65 instances of Russian shelling in the city. But the people of Kharkiv are amazingly resilient. I want you to see this video that we shot yesterday in Kharkiv.

(VIDEO CLIP PLAYS)

[21:55:36]

VELSHI: That, of course, was "Take On Me" by the Norwegian '80s synth-pop group A-ha, performed entirely with traditional Ukrainian instruments in a basement in Kharkiv.

Ten people and a cat are sheltering from the near constant Russian shelling and that basement. But rather than just hiding, this band, Selo and Ludy, has been putting on concerts and streaming them live on Facebook using joy and music as an act of resistance. This is the band leader, Alexander Goncharov's home, which was destroyed by the Russian shelling. And yet, he plays on.

Joining us now from that basement in Kharkiv is Alexander Goncharov, the band leader of Silo and Ludy.

Alexander, thank you for being with us. I've never been in a place where my home had been bombed, I'm not sure how I would react of that had happened to me.

Your reaction is entirely surprising. You have gone somewhere else with your band mates on the cat, and you are continuing to perform and putting smiles on people's faces. Tell me about how this is all come to be.

ALEXANDER GONCHAROV, SELO I LUDY BAND LEADER: Well, it was my first time when my home was bombed. So I then have such an experience either, so I understand your astonishment. This is the first time I react to such things.

But, what wasn't new to me -- well, I was aware that the war was coming. The most part of Ukrainian citizens, when it comes to such a horror, people tend to stay in denial. Since the war is going on for more than eight years in Ukraine, started in 2014, well, many people wouldn't notice that. It was somewhere to the east, so small part of Ukraine was occupied. It's like I was a little bit prepared for that. And --

(CROSSTALK)

VELSHI: Some would argue -- sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you. Some might say that playing concerts in a war is denial, but it's not for you, it's resistance, right? You are doing something here for the morale of you and your band mates and the people who listen to your life streams.

GONCHAROV: Well, I cannot 100 percent exclude that I also do have some denial. But, it's not only denial, yeah, it's about resistance. It's about -- well, to save the energy, the hour, the people's energy to give support, to show support, to stand strong because -- well, in recent streams we were mostly talking, not just playing music like we did before, because, many people want to support. And they are inspired by the fact that we are alive. Then we are able to play.

And so, now, the worry is not only in our house. It actually touched all the world. And I see that all the world is scared and (INAUDIBLE).

We've done that before, inspiring the soldiers of the frontline during these eight years, visiting soldiers and playing music for them. And that is the part of my life when I realize that what we do is important because -- well, it wasn't always like that. I wasn't always an off musician. But when you see some things have happened, and you understand that is something important and something that you can share. So --

VELSHI: It's hard to smile in times like this, but watching your video brought a smile to my face.

GONCHAROV: I'm glad to hear the.

VELSHI: Well, I'm in Budapest, but I will continue to listen to your streams.

Thank you so much for what you do. Alexander Goncharov is the band leader of Silo I Ludy. We appreciate your time tonight.

GONCHAROV: Thank you.

VELSHI: Keep on doing what you're doing.

And that does it for us tonight. We're going to see you again tomorrow.

It's time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O'DONNELL."

Good evening, Lawrence.

I wouldn't have thought in the coverage of the war that we would be talking to somebody who plays an accordion and is playing live from the basement while living with 10 other people and a cat. But war does strange things.

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