

News; International

**Russian Requests Military Assistance From China In Ukraine; American Journalist Brent Renaud Killed By Russian Forces; Community In Los Angeles Makes An Effort To Help Ukrainians Under Russian Attacks; Russian Airstrikes Hit Military Base Near NATO's Front Line; Russian Reporter Says She's Ashamed For Her Country; Letter Z Emerges As Pro-Russian Invasion Symbol; World Central Kitchen Works To Feed, Comfort Refugees. Aired 6-7p ET**

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[18:00:06]

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: This is our home. We will defend the country until the last drop of the blood.

CLARISSA WARD, CNN CHIEF INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: There were three, at least massive missile strikes leaving huge craters.

SEN. ROB PORTMAN (R-OH): It's concerning it was a western Ukraine attack. The people who were here on the border could hear it even though it's 15 miles away.

SEN. AMY KLOBUCHAR (D-MN): This is very provocative to be this close to Poland. This is all about air defense.

DANA BASH, CNN ANCHOR: Are you worried that giving those planes to Ukraine could actually trigger World War III?

PORTMAN: What we've heard from the Ukrainians is they want them badly. They want the ability to have better control over the skies in order to give them a fighting chance.

SEN. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL (D-CT): We need to provide Ukraine with everything it needs to defend itself against this onslaught including those planes.

PRES. VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY, UKRAINE (through translator): We shall continue defending ourselves. Ukraine does not surrender.

(END OF VIDEO CLIP)

PAMELA BROWN, CNN HOST: I'm Pamela Brown in Washington. Welcome to our viewers in the United States and around the world. You are live in the CNN NEWSROOM on this Sunday.

It is midnight right now in the capital of Ukraine. As Russian forces inch closer to Kyiv, a Russian airstrike comes dangerously close to the border of a NATO ally. Ukrainian officials say Russian warplanes fired more than 30 missiles on this military training facility near the western city of Lviv. It is about 12 miles from the border of Poland. And that adds to the fear that this conflict could catastrophically escalate and draw in NATO, including the United States. The airstrikes killed at least 25 people and wounded 134.

And to the south the reported death toll from Russia's siege on the strategic port city of Mariupol is close to 2200. Civilians trapped and unable to evacuate are living without heat, electricity, running water, just the basics to live and survive. They say food is quickly running out as well.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy posted these images and videos on social media today. He is seen as you see visiting wounding soldiers in the hospital. That's while Russian forces close in to within 15 miles of Kyiv's city center.

And in other developments today, Ukraine's foreign minister says Russian forces have abducted a second mayor in Ukraine. CNN could not independently confirm the claim.

The United Nations is reporting that 579 civilians have been killed and more than 1,000 injured. Of those civilian casualties 42 children are confirmed dead, 54 wounded. The United Nations concedes that the true numbers are almost certainly much higher.

And we are getting new video into CNN showing the latest on Moscow's brutal and unrelenting assault on the city of Mariupol with Russian tanks repeatedly firing at apartment buildings in the town. Let's take a look at that. All right. Let's begin.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: (speaking foreign language)

(END OF VIDEO CLIP)

BROWN: I mean, that just shows you the brutality on the ground firing upon these civilian -- these apartment buildings. It just shows you how brutal this is, the war crimes that are being committed, just indiscriminately attacking civilian areas. So horrifying and disturbing to see what is going on there on the ground in Ukraine. This is specifically in Mariupol.

I want to begin this hour at the Pentagon as we absorb what we just saw there, that video just coming in to CNN. CNN's Oren Lieberman is at the Pentagon for us.

So, Oren, we saw this video. There is also new reporting that Russia is looking for help as their invasion of Ukraine nears the one-month mark.

OREN LIEBERMANN, CNN PENTAGON CORRESPONDENT: New reporting from our colleague Jim Sciutto who spoke with a senior administration official who says Russia is asking China, has asked China already, for assistance for new military equipment that they would provide for Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine.

Now it's unclear what exactly they have requested, but that official says one of the elements they've requested is drones which is the kind of military equipment that may be able to push what is a force advantage, a combat power advantage, for Russia more towards a technological advantage as we see this invasion, which was supposed to only take a few days, now nearing the point where it's gone on for a month.

[18:04:11]

The U.S. of course watching this very closely. In fact National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on CNN earlier today they're watching closely the dynamics and the interplay between Russia and China, what goes back and forth not only in terms of material but also in terms of economic aid warning China that if it tried to help Russia avert sanctions there would be a price to pay for that.

All the while, of course, we are keeping an eye on what's happening in Ukraine as Russia's invasion grows wider and broader.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

LIEBERMANN (voice-over): The attack on the Yavoriv military base is the closest Russian attack to a NATO member. The barrage of missiles hit just about 11 miles from Poland, killing at least 35 people according to the Lviv Military Administration, and wounding more than 100 others. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine grows more destructive by the day.

Near the city of Mykolaiv on the Black Sea, nine people were killed at a Russian bombardment according to the regional administration. And satellite images show the city of Mariupol burning. Russia has besieged the city for days, Ukrainian officials say, leaving hundreds of thousands without power and water. Nearly 2,200 people have been killed there since Russia's invasion began according to the city council.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says help is on the way if it can get through.

ZELENSKYY (through translator): Our humanitarian convoy is two hours away with only 80 kilometers remaining. We're doing everything possible to fight the resistance of the occupants who block even the orthodox church priests who are escorting the convoy with food, water, medication. Ukraine has supplied 100 tons of the basic necessities for its citizens.

LIEBERMANN: Among those killed in this war American journalist Brent Renaud. Russian forces shot him outside of Kyiv according to regional police. Another journalist was wounded.

JUAN ARREDONDO, JOURNALIST ACCOMPANYING BRENT RENAUD: So the driver turned around and they kept shooting. There's two of us.

LIEBERMANN: The widening attack on Ukraine has not deterred the U.S. and NATO allies from shipping in weapons and equipment that have proven effective at slowing down Russia.

JAKE SULLIVAN, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER: We believe we will continue to be able to flow substantial amounts of military assistance and weapons to the front lines to help the Ukrainians ensure that Ukraine is a strategic failure for Vladimir Putin.

LIEBERMANN: Multiple rounds of negotiation between Russia and Ukraine have led to few, if any, breakthroughs. Another round of talks is set for Monday.

WENDY SHERMAN, DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE: We are seeing some signs of a willingness to have real serious negotiations, but I have to say as your reporter said, so far it appears that Vladimir Putin is intent on destroying Ukraine.

LIEBERMANN: Halfway through the third week of the Russian invasion there are no clear signs of an end to the fighting. Ukraine's resistance has slowed the Russian advance toward the capital city of Kyiv. Russia has so far been unable to encircle the city. Meanwhile, the U.S. is watching for any threat of chemical weapons from Russia in a possible false-flag operation.

JOHN KIRBY, PENTAGON PRESS SECRETARY: It is of the Russian playbook that that which they accuse you of they're planning to do. Now, again, we haven't seen anything that indicates some sort of imminent chemical or biological attack right now but we're watching this very, very closely.

LIEBERMANN: A Russian airstrike Saturday night damaged the Holy Dormition Sviatogirsk Lavra monastery in the Donetsk region, according to Ukraine's parliament. The historic church sheltered more than 500 displaced people, parliament said.

In Kherson, the first major Ukrainian city to fall to Russia, protesters held a mass rally marching amid armed Russian troops, a brazen show of spirit for Ukraine in Kherson's Svobody Square, which means freedom square.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

LIEBERMANN: Another \$200 million in assistance approved from the U.S. to go into Ukraine and that's just a couple of weeks after we saw the White House approved \$350 million. So just in the past two weeks or so more than half a billion dollars of assistance.

Pamela, where it used to take weeks if not months for this to get in, now it's getting in within days. The White House, the administration promising it will keep going in.

BROWN: All right, Oren Liebermann live for us from the Pentagon tonight, thank you so much.

And as Oren just mentioned in his report, American journalist Brent Renaud was killed today by Russian gunfire in northern Ukraine near the capital. His friend and fellow journalist Juan Arredondo was wounded. He described from a hospital in Kyiv what happened to them. Apparently at the time he didn't know his friend was killed.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Tell me please, what is your name?

ARREDONDO: Juan.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Juan?

ARREDONDO: Juan.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Where are you from?

ARREDONDO: The U.S.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: U.S. What's happened to you?

ARREDONDO: We were -- we crossed the first bridge in Irpin. We're going to film other refugees leaving. And we got onto a car. Somebody offered to take us through the other bridge and we crossed a checkpoint and they start shooting at us.

[18:10:01]

So the driver turned around and they kept shooting. There's two of us, my friend is Brent Renaud, and he's been shot and left behind.

UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER: And how is he?

ARREDONDO: I don't know. I don't know.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You don't know. You don't know what happened to him?

ARREDONDO: I saw him being shot in the neck, and -- we got split. And I got pulled into the --

UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER: And who brought you here?

ARREDONDO: An ambulance. I don't know.

(END OF VIDEO CLIP)

BROWN: Christof Putzel was friends with Renaud and his brother Craig. They are all pictured here on your screen. He says Renaud was working on a documentary about refugees when the crisis in Ukraine hit.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHRISTOF PUTZEL, FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE OF BRENT RENAUD: Brent had this ability to go anywhere, get any story, listen and communicate what was happening to people that otherwise wouldn't otherwise see it, and it is a devastating loss to journalism today. The only thing bigger than Brent's balls are his heart, and I stand by that.

(END OF VIDEO CLIP) BROWN: And, of course, our hearts go out to his loved ones.

I want to bring in now retired Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt. He was assistant secretary of state for political and military affairs under President George W. Bush.

Let's start with this news coming out tonight, these new reports reporting that CNN has as well from my colleague Jim Sciutto tonight that Russia is asking China for military assistance in Ukraine. What does that say to you?

BRIG. GEN. MARK KIMMITT (RET.), U.S. ARMY: Well, what it says is they've identified on the battlefield some of their weaknesses. I heard mention of drones. The Ukrainians have been devastating with the Bayraktar drone coming out of Turkey. So I think what they want to do is get that -- get those drones in there to discover the formations of Ukrainians from battalion size down to squad sniper teams.

BROWN: And I do want to note this is something, this partnership with Russia and China, the alliance that they have had previously, of course the U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told our Dana Bash today that they're watching China closely to see if it does provide support to Russia during this time. So we don't know what the latest is other than Russia asking China for that support.

But I want to get to this viewer question on this topic. Why won't China put pressure on Putin? Doesn't China know it will be associated with Putin? This viewer wants to know about this. What do you say?

KIMMITT: Well, my view is that China has a long-term plan. They're focused internally on expanding their economy and expanding their footprint on the world. They could very well see what's happening inside of Ukraine as a distraction from their goals, a distraction from their plans, and so it very well may be that they don't want to have anything to do with this conflict. They'd rather sit on the sidelines and watch it happen.

BROWN: General, the Russian missile strike on the military training facility near Lviv was just a dozen miles from the border of NATO ally Poland. We're seeing here video on the screen of some of the devastation. Some say it adds to fears of the West being drawn in to combat. What do you think? Is this just too close for comfort?

KIMMITT: Well, I think the biggest thing that we've got to worry about in the near term, Pam, is either a mistake or a miscalculation on the part of the tactical units on the ground. One can only imagine if an artillery unit accidentally fired a couple of rounds on the other side of the border. What does NATO do then? Does NATO recognize that as an infringement, as an attack on NATO?

So I am concerned, I think like a lot of other people, but I also believe that that's exactly why this hotline was set up between the United States and Russia, this deconfliction line. And let's certainly hope that as they get closer to the borders, as they attack the supply lines, that we don't see some sort of mistake or candidly some mischief that happens on the border, that it spirals beyond what we're looking at right now.

BROWN: Right, because we've reported that Russia has been deploying these so-called dumb bombs that are not as precise as other weapons and so forth, and so that does raise the concern that there could be an unintentional crossing into a NATO ally.

I want to ask you about what Jake Sullivan had to say. He, again, is Biden's National Security adviser. He said this about America's posture when it comes to nuclear defense. Let's listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SULLIVAN: The escalation risk with a nuclear power is severe, and it is a different kind of conflict than other conflicts the American people have seen over the years. As things stand today, the United States has not adjusted our nuclear posture, but it is something that we monitor day by day, hour by hour because it is of paramount priority to the president.

(END OF VIDEO CLIP)

[18:15:07]

BROWN: We just talked about this de-escalation hotline and so forth. Do you think that that is the right approach from the U.S. at this point?

KIMMITT: Well, I really do. I think we've got to recognize that we are still operating under this policy and this practice of mutually assured destruction. But where we have problems is the United States sees a clear delineation, a cliff between conventional war and nuclear war.

Soviet doctrine doesn't see it that way. Where we see it as a cliff, they simply see it as a continuum, a stair step. So the notion that the Russians would hold back from using tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield on our part may be a hope but it's certainly not their plan.

BROWN: And I just want to ask you finally this last question, we know the Russian forces are just about 15 miles away from the capital city of Kyiv. How concerning is that to you? What do you expect to unfold in the upcoming hours?

KIMMITT: Well, look at Mariupol. That is classic Soviet tactics, surround, bombard, starve and then send your troops in. Now Kyiv is much, much larger but soldiers have a tendency to stick to their doctrine, stick to their tactics, so what we're seeing in Mariupol morbidly it may be a preview of coming attractions.

BROWN: All right, General Mark Kimmitt, thank you for your time tonight.

KIMMITT: Sure, Pam.

BROWN: We're getting a lot of great viewer questions about the situation in Ukraine. Just asked one of them. Send me yours through Twitter or Instagram and I'll try to pose them to the experts joining me this evening.

And coming up on this Sunday, how a character that isn't even in the Russian alphabet has become a symbol of Putin's invasion and his propaganda war at home. But first, our Paul Vercammen is in L.A. where they're preparing to send aid to Ukraine -- Paul.

PAUL VERCAMMEN, CNN CORRESPONDENT: That's right, Pam. We're seeing a lot of support for Ukrainians in Los Angeles, the community here. So much so that look at this, even the dogs are wearing the colors of Ukraine. That's coming up in just a moment.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[18:21:40]

BROWN: Wow, look at that. You are looking at Kherson, Ukraine, a city under Russian occupation. This morning hundreds of people turned out for the largest protest since the Russians invaded. You just saw there at least one Russian soldier firing over their heads to make them disperse. Clearly that didn't work. The protesters held their ground. They continued to chant anti-Russian slogans and slurs aimed at Putin. The mayor says his city's main weapon is unity.

Kherson's mayor also said the city is cut off from humanitarian aid and is running out of pretty much everything. Other Ukrainian cities are facing the same dire situation and the international community is trying to help.

CNN's Paul Vercammen is at a church in Los Angeles, where the city's Ukrainian Cultural Center is organizing an aid shipment. So what are they packing up there, Paul?

VERCAMMEN: All sorts of things, Pam. If you look over this shoulder you can see that there's medical supplies and this is a scene being played out in the Ukrainian community throughout Los Angeles, at some 14,000 people strong. Over here we see some of the volunteers. They also put together some supplies for military over there including long johns and the rest, and there's an interesting tradition here.

I'm going to bring in Dasha. She's going to explain to you how these young people are doing something here at St. Andrew that is reminiscent of what happened years and years ago. Tell us about that, Dasha.

DASHA ORLOVA, COORDINATOR AND VOLUNTEER: Yes. So after the Second World War Ukrainian immigrants who were fleeing the Soviet Union came here, bought this land and volunteered their time to build this church. And it's really ironic that now the second generation of Ukrainian immigrants in L.A., we're volunteering our time and basically doing the same thing to help people on the front lines fighting the Soviet regime.

VERCAMMEN: That's so great to hear. This is happening, as we said, at churches throughout the Los Angeles area. It's difficult to calculate how much money has been donated, but the cultural center is telling us in the hundreds of thousands. And the younger people are driving a lot of the packaging here. And if you look, Pam, we just had to show you this, yes, indeed, we have a golden doodle -- part golden retriever, part poodle. The dog of course wearing the colors of Ukraine. This dog's name is Leon.

It's been a rather upbeat scene here today as they put together these supplies for their loved ones and friends in Ukraine.

Reporting from Los Angeles, I'm Paul Vercammen. Now back to you, Pam.

BROWN: It's beautiful to see so many people coming together to help Ukrainians. Thanks so much, Paul, for bringing us that story out of L.A.

And, remember, if you want to help the people of Ukraine, just go to [CNN.com/impact](https://www.cnn.com/impact). At last check CNN viewers like you have helped raise nearly \$5 million to help Ukraine and neighboring countries with shelter, food, water and other critical basic needs.

Well, a new round of talks between Russia and Ukraine is set to begin hours from now. Could there be a breakthrough? I'm going to ask former ambassador to Ukraine, William Taylor, up next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[18:29:09]

BROWN: Are the threats in Ukraine increasing or receding? Russian and Ukrainian officials reportedly have given their most upbeat assessments yet of progress in talks suggesting that there could be positive results within days.

But, again, this is Vladimir Putin we are talking about. As we have reported dozens of Russian missiles hit a large Ukrainian base near the Polish border today killing at least 35 people and wounding more than 130 others according to authorities there, striking just a few miles from a bipartisan group of U.S. senators visiting a refugee site.

Joining me now is former ambassador to Ukraine, William Taylor.

Hi, Ambassador. So Senator Richard Blumenthal said the congregation could actually feel the ground shaking when those missiles hit. This is a training facility where U.S. forces have been training Ukrainian forces just a few weeks ago before they were pulled out. This is significant.

[18:30:04]

WILLIAM TAYLOR, FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO UKRAINE: Pam, this is significant, and this was a major facility that the NATO crew, primarily Americans but others as well, other NATO allies have been there training Ukrainian soldiers. And I will tell you, Ukraine's soldiers were also passing on information and things that they've learned about fighting the Russians. And so this was a very important facility there.

BROWN: And it's very close to Poland, about a dozen miles away. How concerned are you that this could spill over into a NATO ally?

TAYLOR: It would be a disaster if they were to spill over -- if they would fire something --

BROWN: Whether accidentally or intentionally. Right?

TAYLOR: Yes. Intentionally would be even worse. Accidentally, we've got this hotline, we've got this ability to talk to the Russians about what's going on there, and we should use that definitely. But if they intentionally then all bets are off.

BROWN: Senator Blumenthal also said that it is time to let Poland send its fighter jets to Ukraine. Let's listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BLUMENTHAL: I think we ought to use every tool that we have to keep Ukraine in the fight and to secure its airspace including jet fighters, aircraft defense such as increased batteries and missiles, and drones. Because right now Ukraine is a victim of indiscriminate and ruthless savage bombing by Putin's air force.

(END OF VIDEO CLIP)

BROWN: So there seems to be this growing bipartisan support to send jets into Ukraine but then you have the National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan saying that he worries it could risk escalation. Tony Blinken, the secretary of State, also said that. What do you think?

TAYLOR: Of course, it's a worry. They're responsible -- they are responsible -- that position is a responsible position. However, there are things that we can do that will defend the Ukrainians against these missiles, and apparently, they shot down some of the missiles, so the Ukrainians have the ability to shoot down, defend themselves. Eight got through. They shot down 22, so we can provide more of that kind of assistance, that kind of capability to knock down the missiles as they come in.

BROWN: I want to turn to this new reporting coming in from my colleague Jim Sciutto about Russia apparently asking China for military assistance including drones for its invasion of Ukraine. What is your reaction to that?

TAYLOR: Pam, my reaction to that is that the Russians are getting desperate. That Mr. Putin may be realizing that his military is not doing so well. He needs help from the Chinese. We've heard that he's getting help from the Syrians. He's trying to get other people, other soldiers in there. That's not a good sign. That's a good sign for us, a bad sign for Putin, that he's getting desperate. He needs help.

BROWN: How could this upend the Ukrainian forces' efforts if China does provide that support? And so far we have any reporting to suggest it has. But if it does, what would that mean? TAYLOR: That would mean the Chinese are taking sides. The Chinese have been careful up until now not to take sides. They didn't vote with the Russians in the U.N. Security Council. They didn't vote with the Russians in the U.N. General Assembly. They have not violated the embargo that the Americans have put on, the Europeans put on, the others, Japanese, Australians. So the Chinese have been very careful. They've got big investments in Ukraine. They have a lot of stakes. So they should be -- being very careful.

BROWN: So do you think it's unlikely then?

TAYLOR: I think they would think very hard before they send weapons into. That would make them a cobelligerent.

BROWN: I want to talk about, speaking of weapons, Russia is making these apparent false claims that Ukraine has chemical weapons, potentially teeing up justification for using those tactics itself. How likely do you think we're going to see chemical or even biological weapons used by Russia? We just talked about how struggling Russia has been with taking over Ukraine.

TAYLOR: This may be another indication of desperation. This may be another indication that other things aren't working, their military is bogging down on the ground. They've got to do something else so they can threaten weapons of mass destruction. That's what we're talking about here. So it's a threat. It would be a disaster. It would be a disaster for Russia to deploy those weapons.

BROWN: But we've seen Russia do it in the past. That's for sure. Syria and Chechnya, the former Ukrainian politician. Before we let you go, I want to get your take on these two seemingly different views of diplomatic talks. National Security Jake Sullivan and Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman discussed the talks and their views of it. Let's take a listen to what they both have to say.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SULLIVAN: And as things stand right now Vladimir Putin does not look like he is prepared to stop the onslaught and so we will continue to escalate the pressure against him and continue to support the Ukrainians as they fight to defend their territory.

[18:35:05]

SHERMAN: We are seeing some signs of a willingness to have real serious negotiations. But I have to say, as your reporter said, so far it appears that Vladimir Putin is intent on destroying Ukraine. We need to help the Ukrainians in every way we can.

(END OF VIDEO CLIP)

BROWN: So you heard Wendy Sherman there say, though, that there are positive signs. Talks will resume tomorrow. What do you make of that?

TAYLOR: So I think there are positive signs. I've had conversations myself with people who are in those talks and they indicate that they're making some progress on actual documents that they're working on. That said, the only way that those talks are going to get anywhere is if the Russian military bogs down. If the Russians are desperate, and as we've talked the Russians are desperate on several aspects. And if they're getting desperate they may be looking for these negotiations to get them out of there.

BROWN: So as far as you know they're working on putting something in writing.

TAYLOR: They're putting something in writing and the pressure on the Russians has to continue. That's what's pushing them toward this kind of a conversation.

BROWN: All right, Ambassador William Taylor, always great to see you. Thank you.

TAYLOR: Thank you, Pam.

BROWN: And when we come back, a reporter in Russia who risked being jailed for telling the truth speaks about the shame she now feels for her country.

You're in the CNN NEWSROOM.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[18:41:06]

BROWN: Russia has been cracking down on anti-war protesters again today. More than 800 people arrested in more than three dozen cities. Brutal images are flooding social media, showing riot police dragging people off the streets. Just for protesting. Just for letting their views be known.

CNN has learned that journalists were among those detained today. Russia's clamped down on independent media has forced most outlets, including CNN, to close shop and pull reporters out. Those who stay face harsh new media laws, gagging any criticism of Russia punishable by up to 15 years in prison. My colleague Brian Stelter spoke to one of them today.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

YEVGENIA ALBATS, EDITOR IN CHIEF, THE NEW TIMES: I'm a known enemy and, you know, I cannot say more than I've already said in my books and my articles and in my magazine, you know, which was -- whatever happened to the publication already happened. So what else? They can kill me. OK, you know, nobody promised me that I'm going to live forever.

BRIAN STELTER, CNN CHIEF MEDIA CORRESPONDENT: What you said resonates with me that it's too late to be afraid, but it sounds to me like you may fear for your country, not for yourself but for Russia.

ALBATS: I am ashamed. To be honest with you, if you asked me what, you know, the prevalent sense that I feel, I am so ashamed for my country. I am a citizen of the Russian Federation. I am ashamed that my taxes go into bombs that kill people in Ukraine. I am ashamed. I feel so badly. I understand -- I've been to Ukraine many, many times when I was a kid, when I was a teen, when I was a student, when I was a reporter, when I was a (INAUDIBLE). God, you know, it's a neighboring country.

And I traveled all around it. I drove my car all around Ukraine. And now, you know, I just -- when I think, when I see footage from Ukraine, I feel badly shamed. I feel like, you know, I want to get on my knees and say, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry that my country is doing this to you guys and that I totally failed, totally failed with this regime, and that's I think a prevalent notion for many intellectuals in Russia, for those who understand what's



happening. You know, they feel ashamed. We, after all, you know, you can (INAUDIBLE) position, it's true and many others were, too, but we totally failed to stop them.

STELTER: You haven't failed because you're here. You're speaking.

ALBATS: Yes. I believe (INAUDIBLE).

(END VIDEOTAPE)

BROWN: Really powerful interview there. A new pro-war symbol has emerged in Russia and it is a sign of division between those who believe Russia is right to invade Ukraine and almost everyone else who sees it as pure aggression.

CNN's Phil Black has the story.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

PHIL BLACK, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): It's impossible not to notice. Many of the Russian vehicles invading Ukraine carry a distinctive mark. Trucks, tanks, fighting, engineering and logistical vehicles, they are advancing through Ukraine with the letter Z painted conspicuously in white.

The people being invaded have noticed. Here in the eastern Ukrainian town of Kupyansk, an angry crowd swarms after and attacks a single vehicle. It's only obvious connection to the war, the letter Z.

ARIC TOLER, DIRECTOR, RESEARCH AND TRAINING BELINGCAT: It's almost certainly some kind of tactical grouping. There's a million different theories about what the Z means, but I think it's just a marking. Just an easy thing to do, easy thing to mark, just like a square or a triangle.

[18:45:03]

BLACK: In a war where the wannabe conquerors are not flying their national flag, that single character has taken on a special significance.

At a recent gymnastics World Cup event, 20-year-old Russian competitor Ivan Kuliak accepted his bronze medal wearing a Z prominently on his chest. He was standing next to a Ukrainian athlete. The sport's governing body described it as shocking behavior. But how do you describe this? Terminally-ill children and their carers formed a giant Z outside a hospice in the Russian city of Kazan.

PROF. BRIAN KLAAS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON: It's disgusting that the state is co-opting young children to be propaganda mechanisms for their war. It is dangerous when small little symbols become proxies for being a loyal citizen in an authoritarian regime during the time of war because those who don't wear it, those who don't show the Z could be targeted by the state.

BLACK: And in this highly produced propaganda video, Russian men wearing that letter declared their support for the invasion, chanting, "For Russia, for the president, for Russia, for Putin." An aerial shot shows a giant Z made from the orange and black of the St. George's ribbon, a traditional symbol of Russian military glory usually associated with victory over Nazi, Germany.

By accident or design, a character that doesn't feature in Russia's alphabet has become an iconic symbol of Putin's invasion and the propaganda campaign to win support among his people.

Phil Black, CNN, London.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[18:51:14]

BROWN: In the span of just two weeks, nearly three million Ukrainians have fled their country. Organizations are stepping up to feed these new refugees, and for the people at World Central Kitchen, it's about providing a warm meal with a side of comfort.

CNN's Chloe Melas has been speaking to two ladies helping with this mission. So tell us what they've been up to, Chloe.

CHLOE MELAS, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Good evening, Pamela. I spoke to two women, Chef Karla HoyOs and Fiona Donovan, who are there on the border of Poland and Ukraine, in Poland feeding thousands

of Ukrainian refugees and they spoke to me about the logistical obstacles that they are facing while trying to get everyone a warm meal.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

FIONA DONOVAN, RELIEF OPERATIONS MANAGER, WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN: The numbers have been increasing steadily, and so we're just working to scale up our kitchen, become as prepared as possible so that as the needs increase, we're going to be ready to serve everyone in need.

MELAS: What kinds of meals are you feeding the refugees?

KARLA HOYOS, ACTIVATION CHEF LEAD, WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN: Very comforting meals so the idea is to feed them meals that are comforting for them. So we do a little research about the, you know, Ukrainian dishes, Ukrainian dishes that are comforting so one of the main ones that we've been cooking is Morsch. It's beef stew, it has potatoes, beans, cabbage, horse radish. It's been very, very good, people really like it. And also we adapt to the circumstances as part of the learning as we go.

With World Central Kitchen, normally we always focus on doing like high quality meals, like very nutritious to make sure that, you know, if people eat one meal a day that will be enough, but as healthier, you know, people are crossing the border, and it's cold, they're carrying all of their belongings, so sometimes they don't have, you know, room to have a full meal so whoever cannot take a full meal we're also making hot soup that can be served on a cup so they have something warm in their hands, hot chocolate. And we're also making a lot of the babies that are in the shelter, apple sauce.

MELAS: How would you all describe the spirit of the Ukrainian people?

DONOVAN: We've met so many families who have fled Ukraine while working at the border and what we're really seeing is people have travelled a very long distance. Some have been caught at the border for hours trying to cross into Poland and people are tired. They're overwhelmed, they're very cold. It's been below freezing here most days and so, you know, there's a lot of confusion and, you know, we're really here trying to offer some comfort, trying to show that in the midst of all of this chaos and this tragedy that we're thinking of them.

And, you know, we're going to be here 24 hours a day to offer food, to offer hot chocolate, to offer a smile and show some warmth.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

MELAS: Pamela, they were telling me that these Ukrainians who are coming across the border into Poland, they are just so thankful to just have something to eat. They're cold, they're tired, they have, some of them have been traveling for days by foot, they've left their cars. They said goodbye to their husbands and their loved ones back home, because remember like the woman that we spoke to the other weekend, she had to say goodbye to her husband at the border because he had to stay behind and fight.

[18:55:04]

And that they're making apple sauce for babies, and, you know, they're partnering with local restaurants in Poland to try to feed because there's so many thousands upon thousands of refugees coming in every day. It's incredible what they are doing in Poland.

BROWN: Yes, and she talked about these refugees sometimes have these young kids, so they're making apple sauce for the kids. Really incredible to see those efforts.

Chloe Melas, thank you for bringing that story to us. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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