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Interviewer 00:00:00

Ukraine counting bodies as it clears the rubble from one of the deadliest Russian attacks since the invasion almost one year ago. CNN's senior international correspondent Ben Wedeman is joining us live from the war zone, he's got details. Ben, I understand the Ukrainian president is calling this missile strike a war crime, give us the latest.

Interviewee 1 00:00:22

Yes, that's right. In his nightly address, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described it as a war crime. He said that those who are behind this attack that killed 40 people, at least 40 people, there's still 25 people missing—those behind the attack, he said, will be identified and brought to justice. In the meantime, battles continue to rage here in eastern Ukraine.

Voiceover 1 00:00:52

[footage 1] Near Bakhmut's frontlines lost souls wander the streets. Those who can't leave, won't leave or have given up caring. [foreign language] "I put some food on the fire, I chopped some wood," says Svetlana, "And decided to go out for some fresh air." Dmytro pays no heed to the shelling. "This is my land," he says, "I won't leave." [firing in distance] The fighting echoes through the fog.

Interviewee 1 00:01:28

As the Russians seem to be gaining control of Soledar, north of here, in Bakhmut, the fighting seems to be intensifying. One local resident told us, whereas before mortars were flying over their heads, now it's bullets.

Voiceover 1 00:01:44

[footage 2] Soldiers prepared trenches inside the city, new defensive positions if the Russians push forward. [foreign language] "There will be sandbags with wood on top," says Valentyn, and three firing positions." On the ever so slightly safer western side of the city, a makeshift market offers the basics. With no electricity or running water, commerce is conducted in the open. [foreign language] "My two shops were destroyed," says Denis, so, I'm selling on the street." But this food is only for those who can afford it and Sergiy isn't one of them. [foreign language] "I'm living like an effing animal," he says. Ivan returns home after collecting firewood, the bitter cold as deadly as the shelling. [foreign language] "People have frozen to death in their apartments," he says. On a bluff overlooking Bakhmut this artillery officer nicknamed 'pilot' says they're up against troops; many of them convicts with the private military company Wagner. [foreign language] "We're fighting against soldiers brought to the slaughter," he says, "These Wagner guys have no choice, they are sentenced to death," and then the order comes to open fire. [firing continues]

Interviewee 1 00:03:22

And we are getting some reports that one of the towns to the south of Bakhmut may have been taken by the Russians. This means, Wolf, that perhaps in the near future this city could be surrounded by Russian forces.

Interviewer 00:03:37

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Very worrisome developments indeed. All right, Ben Wedeman, stay safe over there and thank you very much. Let's get an update right now and a new US efforts to try to help Ukraine fend off this latest Russian assault. Our Pentagon correspondent Oren Liebermann is joining us right now. Oren, I understand Patriot missile training involving Ukrainian soldiers will begin on US soil this week. Is that right?

Interviewee 2 00:04:00

That's right. Well, Fort Sill in Oklahoma where the US conducts its own training on Patriots for the US military, as well as, for others has announced that a team of Ukrainians has arrived to begin training on the Patriot missile system, a system that requires 90-100 troops to operate fully. The training expected to take several months but once that is completed and the Pentagon is working to accelerate that as much as possible. The Patriot will go to Ukraine to aid in the aerial defense there. So, that training is expected to begin any day now with the arrival of the Ukrainians and it's part of what we're seeing from the west. Take a look at this list here, announcements of bigger and more powerful weapons going in. The UK announced that it would send 12 of its own Challenger 2 tanks, Poland has signaled a willingness to send Leopard tanks. Those are German-made and will require German approval, and of course the US training on the Patriots to begin.

00:04:48

There is a key question here, could the Patriot have stopped this attack on the Dnipro apartment? That horrible attack where the death toll is at 40 and expected to still rise. It is a question that can't be answered with certainty, but yes, a Patriot missile is a long range aerial defense system, meaning its radar could have picked up that incoming missile at a greater range and its missile perhaps able to shoot it down. Of course, first that training needs to be completed but there's also a key question for Ukraine, it's getting one Patriot battery from the US and another from Germany. Ukraine will have to decide where it wants to focus those defensive systems. It can't defend the entire country, a Patriot is not capable of that. So, it will have to decide where to prioritize. Presumably, one will defend the capital of Kyiv and then it's up to Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the military on where it will want to use that other one. So, it's not a simple cover-all system that will defend Ukraine, Wolf. It will certainly help, however.

Interviewer 00:05:44

Yes, indeed. All right, Oren Liebermann at the Pentagon for us, thank you very much. Let's get some analysis right now from CNN contributor on Russian affairs, Jill Dougherty, and retired US Army General, Wesley Clark, he's a CNN military analyst, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander. General Clark, we have a lot to discuss but first, what does it say to you that Russia used a cruise missile against civilians in an apartment building, in what President Zelenskyy says was a war crime.

Interviewee 3 00:06:13

It's possibly a targeting mistake because this is not a very accurate missile. But the point is, he's using that missile, he knows it's not accurate and this is a war crime along with many other war crimes, Wolf, and it's a challenge to the West. We need to take not only Patriots and put them in there, we need to indict Mr. Putin and his team for war crimes.

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Interviewer 00:06:39

Will the brutality, Jill, of this latest attack spur Western Allies to boost support for Ukraine even further?

Interviewee 4 00:06:49

Well, Wolf, this is a very serious moment. I mean, this really, even in the Russian press, is being written about and reported on; so, it's a very important moment. It would appear that it would, precisely because of the brutality of it. However, it happened as the General said with all of these people who were killed and injured, so you would have to think that there would be more of support. But I think the terrible arithmetic, the math that the Ukrainians have to do is in this array, if you have a fight like this, you know, what do you defend, maybe when we were talking about Soledar, the city that's not too far from Bakhmut. These are the things that they have to decide. How much do you put into the fight? How much do you give up temporarily in order to protect your troops? Because we're all talking about in the spring, some type of offensive; Russians are actually talking about it, and then the Ukrainians definitely are. So, there are a lot of I think very difficult decisions that have to be made by the Ukrainians.

Interviewer 00:07:59

You're absolutely right. General Clark, as you've heard Ukrainian troops are now here in the United States. They're getting ready to train on the Patriot air defense missile system but it will be months before that makes a difference on the battlefield. Does the US need to provide more Patriots and other weapons to Ukraine right now to help out?

Interviewee 3 00:08:19

The answer is yes, and we need to be training for more than one Patriot battery, but we don't have those extra batteries. So, we're gonna be taking it from somewhere else. This battery is coming from the school at Fort Sill. So, we need to really mobilize, Wolf, we need to start producing more. This is a long term strategic problem for the United States. Unless, Ukraine collapses tomorrow, we're gonna be in this position of trying to give them assistance, two months from now, four months from now, eight months from now, a year from now. Putin is not relenting on what he's doing, he's mobilizing in Russia. I think we have to really get serious and understand this is a long term problem, but we can do more right now. Ten Challenger tanks are wonderful. Why not 20? Why not 40? Why not 60? 50 Bradley Fighting Vehicles? Why not 200? We're going to have to accept the fact that we can't penny packet this assistance and have it make a decisive difference for Ukraine. It's not enough to keep them there and letting them to be bloodied by these kinds of assaults. We need to give them what they need to work Russia, push them out of Ukraine.

Interviewer 00:09:35

Very strong words from General Wesley Clark, thanks so much for joining us. Jill Dougherty, thanks to you as well.