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Razom! Forging the Future in Ukraine

. Razom! A popular Ukrainian word that has taken on global meaning: together

The image before you is Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's capitol building, where members of parliament conduct the business of war and survival. It's surrounded by the heart of the Ukrainian government. Shrouded in darkness every night in full awareness of the ongoing threat to the very existence of Ukraine as a nation.

I arrived close to midnight by taxi from the train station with a pair of backpacks and portable wheels – most everything I'd need for the next 90 days in Poland. Last May, I had no idea that so many stairs would haunt my everyday life and travels over these last 10 months. I've been a nomad in five nations. But I finally have a base of operations for my few belongings in Kharkiv, the closest place to a home nowadays.

However, for the first time, I had a few days in the capital. Kyiv. I thought I'd found a well-situated hotel at a reasonable price but had second thoughts as the taxi came to a stop on a back

street, darkness everywhere, a couple of ominous-looking guys staring at us from the shadows. In the near-total darkness, I couldn't even distinguish the hotel entrance for all the barricades and tape around us. What's with that? Then, suddenly, I caught a glint of razor wire! I had to veer sharply to avoid it. When I lurched abruptly, one of the men came out of the shadows, rifle ready. The whole atmosphere took on new meaning as I realized those were soldiers watching my every movement.

I finally could relax when I entered my hotel room, dropped my bags after 5 hours of rail travel from Kharkiv and opened the curtain to my sealed-off patio. This photo you see was the view out that window. For my few days there, it brought into focus my whole project, why I was there, how these last 10 months had become a culmination of my life's work. I plan to remain here as Ukraine struggles to survive, rebuild, and reinvent itself to take its hard-won place among the great free nations of the world.

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First, I'll share some personal insights in an overview of **Ukraine's Disaster Landscape**.

- I'll be sharing with you first-hand accounts from living and working in Chernivtsi & Lviv in the quiet western part
- to the war-torn eastern regions of Ukraine, with connections in Bakhmut, and the former capital Kharkiv, about an hour drive to the Russian border, and still subjected to daily air raid alerts and ongoing missile attacks

Then, we'll explore the **Challenges of Working Internationally in a War Zone**.

- From a personal safety standpoint, it is best to come as part of a qualified organization. Should it ever be considered by an individual?
- I'll discuss some of the unique aspects to working in an active war zone without the typical organizational safeguards and structure to lean on.
- At various crossroads in this work, I revisit the question: Is it possible to make meaningful contributions without being a burden on the existing systems, constantly under such tremendous strain? The answer often means changes in strategy or even the work itself.

I'll present a few highlights of the **Resilient Village Project** which continues to evolve over time. I'll discuss:

- The request from the Ukrainian army for help improving soldiers' conditions in modern trench warfare
- Insights from discussions with the MFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Where this project goes in the future

Then let's take a look at **Opportunities for You to Make a Global Impact**

- Most, if not all of you, have been part of America's tremendous system of emergency management that has evolved over the decades. Nothing I've seen in the nations I've

worked in can even begin to approach it. What principles might be adapted here over time?

- You have a wide range of KSAs that could add meaningful contributions the efforts here
- You probably haven't had the opportunity to operate on a global level, so I'll offer some entry points that have developed specifically for people, like some of you, unique for this Ukrainian situation.
- Let's explore ways to take your KSAs, personal and professional, onto a new field with a new set of challenges.

After filling your heads with some crazy ideas, we'll dive into a live (and hopefully lively)

Brainstorming Session.

- We'll discuss concerns you may have about entering this particular disaster landscape
- We'll see if we can come up with ideas for some of the many nagging issues that are still not being addressed here.
- We may even take out the crystal ball, to try to identify future needs and how best to prepare for them.

Together – RAZOM – let's combine our collective knowledge, along with lessons learned and presented here today. Because without ongoing help from nations around the world, Ukraine would have ceased to exist over this last year. Let's apply the collective knowledge of emergency managers to a global setting in the midst of a brutal war with far reaching ramifications for our world.

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