



Galaad Montosse <galaad@natachamerritt.fr>

Final Update from Natacha and Adnan

2 messages

Natacha Merritt <nm@natachamerritt.fr>
To: Adnan Selimovic <adnan.selimovic@gmail.com>

Thu, Mar 17, 2022 at 8:36 PM



"Infinity" by Natacha Merritt, March 12th, 2022. While bombs fell not 20km from the Polish border, these vans formed a lifeline.

This newsletter concludes our mission.

And we have one final ask. Not for further donations, but for fortitude in the face of a relentless discouraging newscycle. Wallowing in negativity accomplishes nothing; whereas every member of this group took action to deliver in a real, huge way. Be proud.

I saw the impact of your contributions while directly on the ground in Poland, where I personally handed over the vehicles to real human beings. You all did this. We made this happen. Please take a moment to reflect on what we accomplished. Take it in, and then let it go. Give yourself the gift of letting this be enough. For today.

Below you'll find my recap of the final hours of our mission, results, and last but not least, special shoutouts to everyone who made this happen.

- Saturday – I escorted the vans from the workshop where I oversaw their preparation and makeover, from the tires to windshield wiper fluid (supplied by Lithuanian donors).
- Sunday – We delivered the vans for the next leg of the trip near the Polish border.
- Monday – The Ukrainian drivers arrived to join an eight hour line to the border crossing.
- Tuesday – With ample haggling, we got the vans processed without losing a single one.
- Wednesday – The vans departed to the border for the meeting point with all vested parties (see Groups Funded list below).

By Thursday morning, Nikolai Koleba had received six vehicles, with the rest en route to confidential locations. As of today, 20 passenger minivans have been delivered to the humanitarian heroes on the frontlines. These vans will continue to evacuate people and bring aid supplies.

As of this writing, your contributions have secured the safe evacuation of 1,571 lives.

Before departing home for Paris, I was tempted to stay and try to do more. But a voice inside reminded me that because solving everything is possible, we must do what we can and be proud of it. It's hard to believe that less than two weeks ago we were skiing in Courchevel, where Adnan catalyzed our transformation from passive bystanders in a remote war to active participants. His urgency would prove crucial (in the face of much institutional gridlock), as the evacuation corridors our vans traversed systematically closed right after we used them.

As those who know me can attest, calling my husband Adnan “commander” was an adjustment, as was obeying everything he ordered me to do on the ground without question or knowledge of what the next day, much less hour, would bring. Logistics kept shifting down to the morning of my departure, wherein even I had to be kept in the dark for my own security. Despite my discomfort, I did my best to put on a brave face for my new assistant Galaad, who went above and beyond his job description in accompanying me to Poland (a far cry from his previous position at Gucci). And while I have since reclaimed my role as commander in chief(!), my trust, pride, and lust for Adnan have never been stronger.

This is how we created a guerrilla humanitarian aid and evacuation network four days out from the invasion. We began by amassing a small war chest of flexible cash funds. This was critical to our success. By putting small donations behind messages of support immediately following initial contact with the party in need, we became trustworthy allies. From there, almost every communication turned into a viable network link in a quickly evolving chain. The network design was simple and node-based: in strategically funding proximate, interdependent operations, we strengthened their collaborations, forming bonds we could rely upon for future use.

The vehicles solidified these network connections. Once Adnan executed the order, our vans moved like water filling a canal, retracing the paths made by funds and reinforcing them with the promised supplies, traversing from the west to Kharkiv on the east. And our strategy worked. By matching words with deeds (cash; right away), we quickly got on the radar of national grassroots networks in Ukraine. Even now as evacuation corridors continue to open and close, the logistical chains between these coordinating parties persists.

To protect this logistical line we must plan ahead and use it strictly for humanitarian purposes. To ensure international treaties and human rights conventions are respected, we are carefully filtering requests to use our network ranging from the biggest diaspora NGO in the US to the resistance and territorial division defense. Even if the corridor we established is attacked, those who do us harm will be considered war criminals, and will be prosecuted at the Hague.

Our collaborators on the ground in Lithuania and Poland are invariably taking a risk. The van driver with whom I rode 16 hours to the border was fielding calls from his (now former) Russian friends who had fallen prey to misinformation. Many involved in our operations were reluctant to be documented for fear or persecution by potential occupying forces. And while this operation is ending, if they need protection should things escalate, I know I can trust each and every one of you to rise to the occasion.

Groups Funded:

- Koleba Nikolai (former ombudsman of Kiev) and his evacuation operation in the northeast
- Plast Scouts' Association in Ivans-Frankvist and their operation to provide first care to the evacuated infants and children
- Manifest Peace in Odessa and their operation to evacuate 240 families with children suffering from SMA
- City of Goodness and their operations to provide long-term settlement to evacuated women and children
- Every Child and their operation to assist the transportation of “state” children to safety and EU

- Euroasian Lesbian Community organization for their long-term hosted resettlement operation for women with children
- Fulcrum in Lviv and their critical role in moving evacuees from east to west
- Insight in Lviv and their operational role very similar to Fulcrum
- 88Ukrainian kids transportation to Switzerland go to Waldorf school with all expenses paid, their family comes with them and will receive aid in finding jobs. Thank you Dr. Misha and Jan!

Special Shoutouts:

To ReJ – you were there on the line as soon as Sylvio reached out. Your cash donation as our second biggest donor made so much of this possible. But more importantly, you connected me with a vital asset on the ground! At such a critical moment when we were running out of time-to-think. He ended up playing a core role in our operation. And even though he purchased and physically collected 20 vehicles, inspected and repaired them, and shipped them down, he refused to take a dime.

I also want to thank Hugues Picketty, who definitely gets the gold medal for best Airbnb host ever. He has been my landlord here in Paris since September and, acting on a strange intuition, I asked him to go be our man on the ground to manage purchases in Warsaw. He boarded a flight Galaad booked the next day, and then patiently awaited instructions. Two days later the mission changed and he got in a van and drove through the border to deliver one of our vans himself. He's home safe. Thank you Hughues!

We want to give special thanks to those of you who trusted us and transferred money directly into our accounts with no expected tax benefits. Had we waited to figure out how to do it, we would've not been able to safely evacuate the number of people that we did. We know now that any such effort would have been time wasted as no American or EU NGO would assist us with providing institutional legitimacy. There is a good reason for this, let's just say it has to do with the hard business of strategic priorities.

Adnan and I want to give a huge thank you to Sylvio Drouin, my wonderful ex husband, who was the first to wire money and was our largest donor on this project.

Adnan here for a moment, I'm just going to barge in when absolutely necessary: Sylvio was there, always a text or call away. Aside from his financial support, Sylvio played an absolutely critical role in getting the message out to the right people across our communities, who would answer the call. Without Sylvio our effort to raise the necessary funds would have taken weeks, not hours and couple of days... Additionally, Sylvio funded the City of Hope project immediately at the beginning of this operation, securing shelter and provisions for evacuated children—that operation is up and running already. I'm so lucky to have the two best fathers for our children, and we are lucky to have you all in our community.

And finally, thanks again to all our incredible donors:

Sylvio Drouin
Renaldas Zioma
David Helgason
Benjamin Vert
Philip Rosedale
Stefano Corazza
Sebastien Deguy
Sunil Paul
Clive Downie
Vjay Vachani
Michael Zyracki
Tony Parisi
Jonathan Gagne
Neilda Pacquing Gagne
Situ Patel
Virginia Vanders Lice
Anguelov Family Ust
Aras Pranckevicus

John Leckrone
Anuj Lal
Tatjana Dzambazova
Giovana Baldas
Adnan Selimovic and Natacha Merritt

Natacha Merritt
And Adnan Selimovic

Galaad Montosse <galaad@natachamerritt.fr>
To: bblosse@looandlougallery.com

Fri, Mar 18, 2022 at 3:04 AM

----- Message transféré -----

De : **Natacha Merritt** <nm@natachamerritt.fr>
Date : jeu. 17 mars 2022 à 20:38
Objet : Final Update from Natacha and Adnan
À : Adnan Selimovic <adnan.selimovic@gmail.com>

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Galaad
Natacha Merritt's Executive Assistant
Phone : +336.25.17.87.56
<https://www.natachamerritt.fr/>

