

ITIJ

# Assistance & Repatriation Review

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## ASSISTING UKRAINE

# Reaction on the ground – the importance of clear and honest information and operations

### CASE STUDY

**Forty eight hours after the conflict in Ukraine began, global risk advisory firm Inherent Risks deployed its own crisis response team to the region, led by Dan Kaine, Head of Risk and Crisis Advisory**

Our primary objective during those first few days was to gather intelligence and assess risks in order to gain ground truth and dispel misinformation. This was in support of emergency evacuation operations the firm had been retained by its clients to conduct.

When conducting successful emergency evacuations in conflict zones, whether extracting people out of the country, or relocating them to a safe haven within the country, such missions have to be intelligence led, and quite often rely on the ability of a team to quickly establish high-level networks, recruit local assets, and source essential equipment and supplies.

Misinformation in any conflict is common, but more so at the outbreak of

war. This is often fuelled by mainstream media broadcasting opinions from afar until facts are established. However, the most difficult and frustrating part of their tasks in Ukraine in the early days of the conflict, and to some extent up to present day, was and is to dispel false information and exaggerated capabilities that providers claim for their own publicity and financial gain.

#### **Taking advantage of a desperate situation**

War is a business. That's a fact. Innocent people are dying and suffering while some corporations see it as a 'cash cow'

to milk. No truer is this than to describe what has been happening in Ukraine since hostilities with Russia began.

On several occasions, we were the on-the-ground evacuation provider contracted by the third, fourth and even fifth down the supply chain from the original company that the client had trusted to provide the services. Private clients and corporations were being billed astronomical amounts to evacuate desperate people, and they were trusting the provider they had paid to do the job, only then for it to be farmed out several times over to a provider with actual boots-on-the-ground capabilities.



In the early days, we were very much the pathfinders for a lot of organisations who were either trying to evacuate their people out of the country, or for media and humanitarian organisations trying to enter. This was affirmed when in the space of a week, we were contracted by some of the largest risk management firms in the world to provide services on their behalf.

### Know the capabilities of the provider you contract

It's entirely possible that the original providers contracted by the client were oblivious to the fact that it was in fact Inherent Risks who conducted the evacuations on their behalf, as each provider in the chain obviously believed the next provider's claims of capabilities, otherwise each one in the chain wouldn't have been retained to provide the services in the first place.

Claims were being made by some companies on social media of questionably high numbers of rescues and evacuations – over 250 per day in one case. This was at a time, and in a region, when realistically it was extremely difficult to evacuate even 10 to 20 individuals per day!

Meanwhile, some operators were allegedly cramming 60 to 80 people onto one bus for a short ride to the train station, a journey that was repeated two to three times per day, and publishing each person as an individual rescue in order to bolster numbers.

Unfortunately, as we saw not too long ago in Afghanistan, there are tragic consequences to companies over-promising and under-delivering: people die. Time and again, these organisations are not held to account, and media agencies continue to publish their stories as fact, without any due diligence being conducted. The result of exaggerating capabilities sets unrealistic expectations for those being rescued, and completely unnecessary time pressures and constraints on the rescuers.

### Establishing safe routes for evacuation

As well as evacuating an undisclosed amount of expat employees of

multinational organisations and family members of high-net-worth individuals, we established systems and corridors out of the country for Ukrainian citizens with medical and mental health issues – including for military age males who under martial law had been forbidden from leaving the country – as well as for children without parental supervision, who were placed into the care of vetted families waiting at borders.

We are also the exclusive medical assistance and incident response provider in Ukraine for Lloyd's Market insurer Atrium Underwriting, and continue to work with several insurers, including Hotspot Cover, and high-risk brokers, to provide bespoke risk advisory, close protection, emergency assistance and incident response for organisations and individuals entering the country.

We have had a continued presence in

Ukraine since February, and established a permanent 24/7 operations centre in the region, staffed with multilingual medical, security and logistics specialists.

Since the conflict began, Inherent Risks, on behalf of its client donors, has sourced and delivered over £1 million of essential equipment and aid to front-line troops, hospitals and orphanages. ●

Dan Kaine is the Head of Risk & Crisis Advisory at Inherent Risks and has held several key roles over 25-years at military, government and corporate levels which included extensive tenures in the Middle East, west and east Africa, and Latin America.

