

# SURVIVAL

## MODE

TWO NATIVE UKRAINIANS  
FIND COMFORT IN  
COLORADO

By Arianna Bergman, Maren Holecek, Zoey Perrine, Brenna Severson, and Maya VanVleet

**I**t started out so simply for Tymur Minzyanov '24. One year and six months ago, he left his home in Kyiv, Ukraine to play hockey in New Hampshire.

"I was studying in an online school and playing for a club hockey team," Minzyanov said.

Simple. No big deal.

On February 20, 2022, he planned to return home.

That's when things became complicated.

Due to the rising tensions between Ukraine and Russia, going home was too dangerous. Just four days after Minzyanov was supposed to fly back to his home country, Russia launched their official invasion into Ukraine. He called his parents, brother, and sister

"It's not us that started this war, but we have to fight it."

– Ukrainian soldier  
Andriy Chersak

every day to check up on them.

"I felt guilty because I was safe, but my parents and siblings were in this situation," Minzyanov said. "I was worried. I wanted to help them."

Minzyanov was stranded. The time allotted for Minzyanov to stay in New Hampshire was up, but his home a world away was not the way he left. So, just before the beginning of the 22-23 school year, Minzyanov's junior year, he moved to Colorado.

He lived in a world of uncertainty. "It was pretty hard to move on because I didn't know when I was going to meet my family again," he said.

As if living in a foreign country without his parents as a teenager wasn't hard enough, not knowing what was happening in the place he knew as home was even more difficult.

"First finding out about the war, I was just so worried about my family because I was all the way in America," Minzyanov said.

At the same time Minzyanov was separated from his family, fellow countryman Andriy Chersak made the tough decision to join the military to fight for Ukraine. To fight for people like Minzyanov. To fight for every Ukrainian.

"I didn't serve until the war began," Chersak said. "I started during the second month of the war."

In late March of 2022, Chersak left his home, a small village town just outside of Odessa. He also left behind his 6 month old child.

With each passing week, warfare became more and more dangerous.

"We were 100 meters from the Russians every day, sitting in the same spot," Chersak said. "They were trying their best to harm us. They had a lot of artillery, and our troop did not."

One day, in the middle of a battle, Chersak and his troop were forced to take a break. They hid near a bridge surrounded by piles of shrapnel from the missiles launched a little over three miles away, while ten of their men went to gather more supplies.

"They needed to get supplies," Chersak said. "They had to carry 60 liters of water and 20 grenades back. The route they were taking was very dangerous, and the field was covered in mines."

Carrying that much weight on your back is difficult, and in addition, they had to weave through unexploded weaponry and land mines, so returning with the supplies took much longer than was expected.

"The Russians were using drone attacks on the land," Chersak said. "They covered things with fertilizers so that it would burn and make it harder for our men to get back, and they were throwing grenades."

Surrounded by violence, Chersak found it difficult to stay optimistic. As the war continued, his initial hopefulness dwindled.

"I had a hard time believing that there was goodness still in people," Chersak said. "It's not us that started this war, but we have to fight it."

Then came the big blow to Chersak's

Ukrainian soldier Andriy Chersak shows off his prosthetic leg. A non-profit organization called Limbs for Liberty helped bring him to Colorado to receive prosthetic treatment.



# TIMELINE

FEB. 2022

Russia invades Ukraine

JUN. 2022

Russian missile strikes shopping mall in the city of Kremenchuk

OCT. 2022

Russia launches campaign against Ukraine's energy infrastructure

FEB. 2023

U.S. President Joe Biden visits Ukraine

APR. 2022

Massive Russian missile strike on train station in Kramatorsk

AUG. 2022

Ukraine launches attack on the only land gateway to Crimea

DEC. 2022

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy comes to White House

fight for freedom. He was ambushed in a machine gun attack and wounded. As a result, had no choice but to have his leg amputated from the knee down. However, because of the situation in Ukraine, Chersak was unable to receive the proper treatment.

Before he knew it, he found himself in Louisville, Colorado, just like Minzyanov.

Through an organization called Limbs for Liberty, Chersak received a prosthetic leg. Everyday, he saw the immense support that the United States was providing Ukraine, and the tremendous impact that it has had on his community.

"Our whole country should know that America is behind us, and they are going to continue to help us," Chersak said.

In March of 2022, following Russia's invasion, President Joe Biden announced plans to provide 100,000 Ukrainians safe haven in the United States. Among them was Minzyanov's family.

"In April, they moved to the U.S.," Minzyanov said. "They are in California."

Neither Minzyanov or Chersak ever planned to be in Colorado. But as a result of tragedy, they both somehow found their way to Boulder County.

After receiving his prosthetic, Chersak has gone back to Ukraine. "I'm hoping to bring back this really big, strong, positive outlook that's going to permeate through the people around me," Chersak said.

Despite the losses that Chersak has suffered, he continues to look for ways he can support Ukraine and help people like Minzyanov return home safely.

Minzyanov's family currently lives with a host family. "They are thinking of moving to Europe," Minzyanov said. "One of the European countries, but not exactly Ukraine. They will wait for a little bit longer, though."

Minzyanov is still over 1,000 miles away from his family.

Chersak's home is still surrounded by violence.

There is no perfect, happy ending to Minzyanov and Chersak's stories.

Their love and the fight for their country unites and connects them, though their stories are separate.

"Ukraine will win," Chersak said.

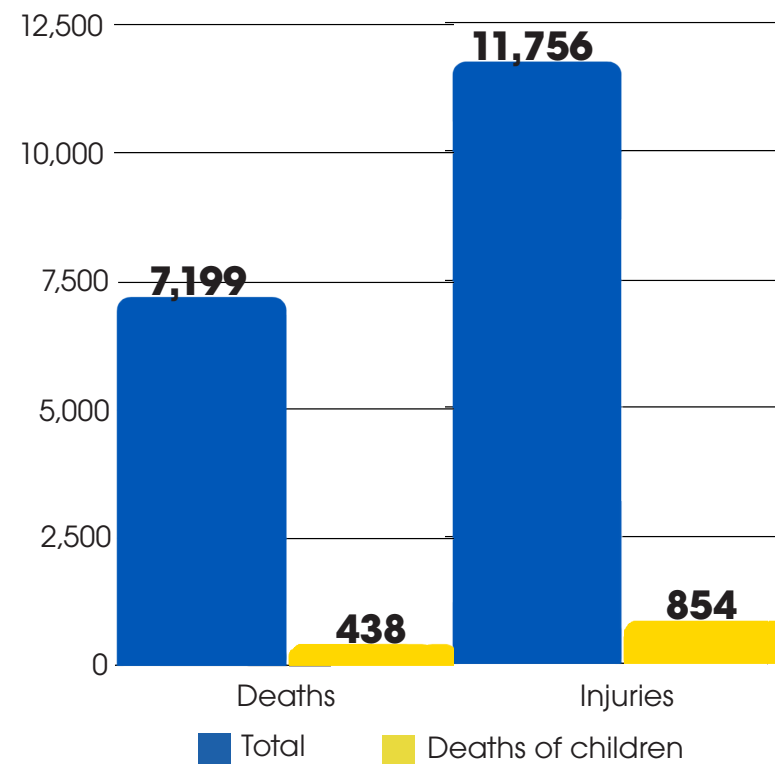
"Ukraine above all else. They will win."

# how to HELP

In Colorado, there are many places to make donations:

- Sunflower Seeds Ukraine
- Ukrainians of Colorado
- Caritas Ukraine
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

# Ukrainian Civilian CASUALTIES

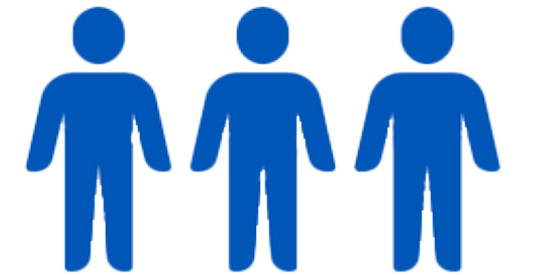
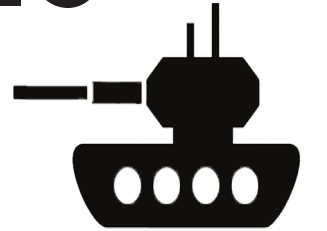


According to National Geographic, BBC, The New York Times, and Statista

# United States SUPPORT

\$77.3 billion dollars

31 tanks



3,000 US troops

# Ukraine DEBRIEF

- Ukraine was absorbed into the Soviet Union in 1922
- After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Ukraine became an independent country.
- Russia illegally annexed Crimea in 2014