

Case Study: Delivering Next-Level Duty of Care

How a “Whatever It Takes” approach to service and risk management provided critical support during crisis abroad

The Client

Our client is a U.S.-based data management company with nearly 500 customers distributed globally throughout 50+ countries, including enterprises listed on the Fortune 100 list.

The Crisis

The escalation of ongoing military conflicts in separatist regions of Ukraine took a rapid and unexpected turn towards full-scale war when Russia ordered the invasion of troops in late February 2022. The move shook a largely peaceful Europe and rattled economies around the world, leading to condemnation from the United Nations and to far-reaching sanctions from Western leaders. Within days, airspace suspensions and tightly regulated border crossings made travel in or out of Ukraine a daunting logistical nightmare for businesses and a harrowing proposition for travelers in the besieged eastern and southern parts of the country.

While our client did not have a formal business presence in Ukraine, the company faced a challenging duty of care crisis: **An employee visiting family in the country was unable to extricate himself from the city of Mykolaiv on the southern frontline of invading forces and resistance efforts. The employee, ‘Alex,’ had a father who had just undergone heart surgery when war broke out, leaving Alex with limited options for getting himself and his elderly parents out of the country.** Our client now faced the complicated task of identifying to what extent they could assist Alex and his family in making it out of Ukraine since the situation fell outside the traditional scope of responsibilities owed by the company to its employees.



The Strategy

Although Alex had traveled to Ukraine for personal reasons, our client fast-tracked internal conversations to ensure they had approval to extend tools and support from their corporate travel program to Alex. From there, a strategy was needed to help Alex secure transportation, lodging, and safe passage out of the country.

“I started where I always start, I called my account representative at Direct Travel,” explained the travel manager in charge of the situation. “I know whenever I have a question, the Direct Travel team will be ready with the answer.”

We worked with the travel manager to quickly understand the unique circumstances of this situation, mapping out a rapid response plan to match. Rather than deploying a full-fledged extrication, which was not a financially viable option, **we utilized our partnership with Crisis24 and our Direct ATPI global network to help make Alex’s journey as safe and well planned as possible.** We sourced pension stays along the route and stayed in constant communication to ensure confirmed bookings and secure payments.

The exit route was complicated by the age and health of Alex’s parents, which meant that waiting at the more accessible but frigid and crowded Polish border was not an option. Instead, a relay style of non-traditional transportation methods (including a freight ferry and an 8-hour taxi ride) was arranged to bring Alex and his parents past explosion-rigged bridges and numerous checkpoints to the Romanian border.

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Travel Manager**

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While the journey led Alex far from typical business travel routes, our client had recently opted into an enhanced version of the Crisis24 platform through Direct Travel, which included a GPS tracking tool. **By activating the GPS, the team could access and monitor Alex’s location 24/7. Throughout the day, the travel manager would check Alex’s location and share regular updates with the Direct Travel team, even sending the occasional after-hours message to keep everyone in the loop.**

“Our employees don’t travel to dangerous countries, so I never thought we’d actually use it,” noted the travel manager of the tool. “Clearly anything can happen though, and knowing that I can call anytime and get it turned on to track a traveler, that is a tremendous value for the peace of mind it provides.”

The Result

Our team coordinated with the client and key partners to provide in-country support in Romania once Alex and his family made it successfully to the border. Through round-the-clock efforts and after-hours calls, we were able to help ensure safe passage to the U.S. **The travel manager pointed to Direct Travel’s “Whatever It Takes” mentality in ensuring all gates were lifted and that no red tape stopped the process from happening quickly and efficiently.**

Notably, a sense of community and connection tied together all stages of the journey. From the GPS tool and text messages connecting the group with the latest updates to the cab driver and community members that risked their own safety to provide shelter and support, **the importance of communication, connectivity, and care in such a crisis cannot be overstated.**

