

Beat: News

Hungary Prepares for Refugees Amid the Attacks on Ukraine

Military Set for Any Possibility

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USPA NEWS - For those who have never really studied geography and have not left the United States, you may not realize that the European Union, with all its countries, is smaller than the United States. As a comparison, Ohio, which is where I am from, has about the same land mass area as Hungary, which is where I live now. However, Ohio has a larger population. Based on the 2020 census, it was 11.80 million. Hungary's population in 2021 was 9.6 million. Each are in the same climate zone and experience four seasons, yet they are 4,835 miles from each other, as the crow flies. Hungary borders Ukraine to the east and that border is 100 miles from where I reside. Whether Russia realizes it or not, more than Ukraine is preparing a defence to their recent actions. Even this little country that is no bigger than the state of Ohio.

Hungary has a long and varied history, going back to the 5th century, that is the year AD 500. We will not look back that far, but I want to familiarize you with the modern, post-communist country. In 1990 the Communist party gave up its autocracy and a multi-party parliamentary democracy came into being in the country. Thus that same year, the Soviet army left Hungary. In 1999, Hungary became a full member of NATO, along with the Czech Republic and Poland. Hungary borders seven countries: Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. Having this many borders, leads to a country with an ethnically diverse citizen base that speaks multiple languages. One thing that we all have in common is the desire to live peacefully.

Yesterday evening I received an e-mail from the Government of Hungary. I believe I received this because as a foreigner, I hold a valid residence permit allowing me to reside in the country. In the letter, they reiterated what they had been informing citizens on the news and in social media posts yesterday "it is our fundamental interest for Hungary to stay out of the war conflict." The government has no plans to send troops or weapons to aid the Ukrainians in the defence of their country, however, the military has troops moving east, to reinforce the border with Ukraine. After seeing the troop movement through the country, the Ministry of Defence received numerous letters, phone calls and requests for information from citizens. The e-mail I received must have been in addition to the media reports that were released.

The population of Hungary is currently not considered to be in direct danger. The defence forces are prepared for any possibility, deploying technical equipment to the border and securing airspace. They are also expecting about 600,000 refugees from Ukraine. The Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia are also prepared to receive Ukrainians. There are about 150,000 ethnic Hungarians also living in Ukraine and the Hungarian Embassy is trying to aid in their removal. Various churches and ministries in Hungary are already preparing and sending food and supplies to Ukraine to help residents affected by the conflict. They are also ready to donate to any refugees that may enter the country. For a list of groups accepting monetary donations to aid those staying in Ukraine and the refugees fleeing to Hungary, you can contact me on Instagram or Twitter.

The NATO Military Committee considers Hungary to be a major contributor to NATO's collective security, while the Hungarian Defence Minister says Hungary is committed to NATO. Since 2007, Pápa Air Base in western Hungary has been the Main Operating Base of the SAC C-17 aircraft. This base, which hosted the Hungarian Defence Forces 47th Tactical Fighter Wing until August 2000, had been chosen as a NATO contingency air base. The base is located 163 km from Budapest, 161 km from Vienna, and 118 km from Bratislava (NATO, 2022). Although Hungary is committed to staying out of Ukrainian-Russian war, should NATO troops be activated, I imagine Pápa Air Base will be utilized. For now, the Ukrainians and their military are on their own. They are a strong people, taking up arms against their enemy. They should know that there are individuals from other countries willing to help them. Especially those that are their neighbors.

Thank you for reading my article. These are merely my thoughts and insights based on the facts. You can follow me on Instagram at @wendywesthoven or on Twitter at @wendy_westhoven.

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