



One of the cemeteries that holds fallen soldiers, graced with many Ukraine flags.

Submitted Photo

Eastman out as softball coach

Interim Coach Salinas named

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Three weeks into the season, Javelina Softball Coach Douglas Eastman has been replaced.

Late Thursday, Javelina Athletics announced interim coach Orlando Salinas has taken over with little explanation as to why the abrupt change.

Eastman began his position at Texas A&M University-Kingsville in August 2022, and six months later is gone. Assistant Coach Erika Bennett was also removed, according to athletic officials.

Salinas has named his own assistant who is arriving Wednesday. Salinas met with softball players Thursday afternoon to discuss overall goals.

When asked about the situation Executive Director of Athletics Steve Roach refused to comment but did tout Salinas's tie to TAMUK.

"I think when you look at his resumé and his family connection to A&M Kingsville, then his passion for the student athlete and his experience, it was an easy decision and he is just highly committed to



Orlando Salinas

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The war at home

Student rescues mother from Ukraine

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When Inna Titova stepped out of the Houston airport in December, she was in awe of the clear blue skies overhead, the sight of nonmilitary

planes in the air, and no sirens blaring the warning of incoming missiles.

After 10 months of living in war-torn Ukraine, Inna was safe.

Oleksandr Zhalkovskyi, a master student in the Communication Sciences

and Disorders program at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, had one goal for the December holiday break - bring his mother to safety.

Oleksandr was born and raised in Ukraine and at the start of the war, his

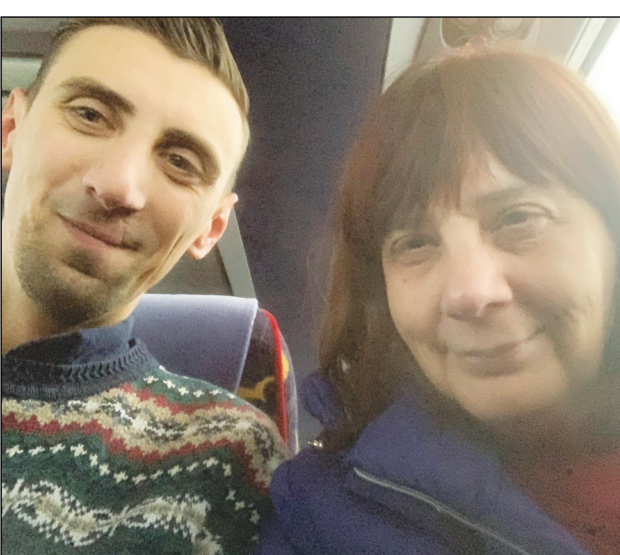
mother and grandmother remained in Ukraine, along with his cousins and several other family members.

"I just did not know what's next and that's probably what was the scariest emotion out of all

the feelings that come to your mind," he said.

In the late evening of Feb. 23 and early morning of Feb. 24, 2022, Oleksandr watched live as Russia announced its invasion

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Submitted Photo

Oleksandr and his mother Inna, make their way out of Ukraine, a three-day journey of long bus rides and fights.



Submitted Photo

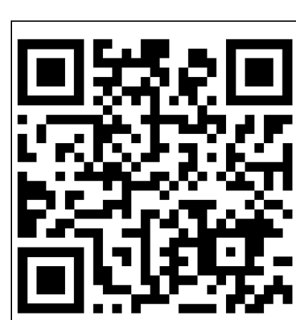
A building targeted in one of the Russian attacks, and the former place of work for Inna.

Online Beat

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COVID-19 update

Though the COVID-19 pandemic lingers, students may still feel the need to protect themselves.



Path to NASA from TAMUK

Jackson recognized during Black Heritage Month

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Heavy textbooks, scribbled notes and the strong smell of coffee surrounded Sherie Jackson as she prepared for a late night of studying in a small Denny's booth. Jackson, a student athlete with the Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMUK) women's basketball team, was an engineering student and single mom who tirelessly sought success through her studies.

The work in the dimly lit dining room with the

sound of clanging dishes later transformed into work for the military and the roaring of jet engines. Jackson now works at NASA's Johnson Space Center serving as the Mission Assurance Lead for the Vertex Company.

Jackson, Class of 2000, finds it important for a closely knit community like TAMUK to have strong alumni. She is constantly looking for ways to provide opportunities and to shed light on the quality education she feels TAMUK offers.

Jackson looks at her career with disbelief and the amazement of how far hard work has taken her.

"I always tell people [about] where I ended up. It would sound like I'm making it up, like it's not real. I come from Placedo, Texas, and now I get to train astronauts. I

work on military projects and weapons and work with fighter pilots and on 777 Jumbo jets. It's just amazing to look back and see where I am now and where I started and everything in between," Jackson shared.

Although she now finds herself more than 250 miles away, Jackson is continuously making an impact on TAMUK. She was recently selected as one of the Heritage Heroes for Black Heritage Month. This award is in honor of the contributions Jackson has made to the community and in recognition of her success.

"Any recognition I gain from my alma mater, I deeply honor and cherish. It is so special that someone has paid attention to what I've done or that what I've done has rung loud enough for it to be



Submitted Photo

Jackson's NASA portrait.

heard back in Kingsville," Jackson cheerfully shared. "For four-and-a-half years in Kingsville, everything that I accomplished and built are on what I experienced and took away from that community. I'm just

excited that you [TAMUK] care enough to recognize what I'm doing."

As Jackson has grown with her career and built upon experiences in a corporate environment, she

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From War Pg 1

of Ukraine, learning the war had started before most of his family living in Ukraine did.

"I thought that from daily conversations, daily phone calls and messages to my mother and other immediate family, I thought I had a pretty good idea of what daily living in the war time is like, but I realized not until I came there. I realized I had no idea what it's like," Oleksandr said.

After his grandmother passed away in August and the war encroached on his home city, Oleksandr tried to figure out a way to bring his mother out of Ukraine.

As Ukraine is a war zone, no commercial airlines fly over the country for safety reasons, meaning anyone interested in traveling to Ukraine must fly to a neighboring country and then journey on a bus into Ukraine.

Oleksandr flew to Poland and then began a 14-hour bus ride to Vinnytsia, his home city.

Each city's entrances and exits have checkpoints and a large military presence, he said.

"From the same moment as I entered the borders of Ukraine, the air raid siren went off, which means there's a threat of Russian missile bombing. When I finally got to my hometown the following morning, I woke up not to an alarm clock, not to sunshine but to the same sound, to the same siren," he said.

The first time he heard the sirens blare, his heart raced.

"It was interesting. I got up [and] I had no idea what's going on, so I was kind of lost and not sure what to do. So, I went to my mom and asked her 'hey, what do [we do] the siren went off,' and she said 'well, we go have breakfast.'"

Oleksandr said in an ideal situation, people would wait the siren out in a basement or bomb shelter and explained that a long siren meant a Russian airstrike or threat was taking place. A short siren indicated the end of the threat, a sign to return from underground bunkers.

"People are so used to it, and unfortunately, I have to say they are so used to living in the war, which is a horrible thing. No one should be used to living in the war but unfortunately, they are after almost a year of living in it, and



Submitted Photo

Inna arrives in Poland, and asks her son if they are allowed to take pictures, something they tried not to do in Ukraine for security reasons

these conditions," he said.

During his first morning in Ukraine, Oleksandr recalled the eerie sirens and video he took as he looked out the window to see a young boy walking outside with his backpack, unphased at the sirens that engrossed the city.

Ukrainian people have a lot of belief in their military, Oleksandr said.

Oleksandr's last trip to Ukraine, was in 2018 when he took his daughter. He had not seen his mother since his return to Ukraine in December.

In a Zoom interview, Inna recalled the start of the war.

"At five in the morning there was lots of explosions and I didn't know what it was, we didn't understand what was happening. There was a message from President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and then we finally understood it was the beginning of war," said Inna, as translated by her son.

As the first sirens rang out across the country last February, Ukrainians initially did not know how to react. They then learned they could either go home, go to basements or seek bomb shelters.

"The first three days we had a lot of difficult stress. I couldn't eat or sleep very well, lots of scary emotions," she recalled.

Their days were marked long siren to short siren.

Many prominent areas of Oleksandr's home city were destroyed.

"It's good to have her in the safety of the United States. It's interesting to hear some of the things she notices after living for 10 months in a country at war," Oleksandr said.

One notable sight were the civilian planes at the airport.

"I hope that people who live here in the safety in the peaceful country, I hope they will not take their safety for granted and appreciate their clear sky above their heads and the protected sky above their heads," he said.

Oleksandr continues to be an activist for Ukraine. Sharing his story and organizing rallies in support of Ukraine.

He has hopes to one day bring his children back to Ukraine. To not only share the places in which he grew up, but the places of destruction and to acknowledge the resilience of its people.



Submitted Photo

Inna safe in Texas.



Submitted Photo

An "unbreaking location" or type of refugee camp found in Ukraine. A place for people to stay warm and charge essential items.



Submitted Photo

A journalist streaming from a bomb shelter, a sight Oleksandr describes as unusual for Ukraine.



Submitted Photo

Oleksandr visits his grandparents grave.



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Oleksandr pictured with his family, a few years before the war.w

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