

# Heroic Klitschko brothers proving they're willing to die for their country amid Ukraine-Russia crisis

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We've grown up alongside them, marveled at their skill, their will and their brilliance. We've cheered their immeasurable accomplishments, from jointly setting up children's charities, to each winning the heavyweight title multiple times, to both earning doctorate degrees to one becoming the mayor of Ukraine's biggest city.

Vitali and [Wladimir Klitschko](#) can't be true. They have to be the product of an author's fertile mind and vivid imagination. You don't meet guys who are as physically gifted in athletics but who are smarter than they are athletic, and whose devotion to country has proven to be boundless.

Boxers put their lives at risk every day they go to work by the very nature of their jobs. These guys put their lives at risk in order to try to improve the everyday lives of their countrymen. But for all the risks they took in combining to win 109 bouts in 117 boxing matches with 94 knockouts and more than 40 wins between them in title bouts, it pales in comparison to what these amazing brothers have taken on behalf of their country.



*Vitali Klitschko (L) and Wladimir Klitschko speak to the media during a visit to a volunteers recruitment centre in Kiev on Feb. 2, 2022. (Photo by GENYA SAVILOV/AFP via Getty Images)*

Vitali Klitschko has been mayor of Kiev, Ukraine, since June 5, 2014. He was a leader in the protests against government corruption of 2013 and 2014, in which he was the most visible and upfront figure. Even when the government used violence to quell the protest, Vitali Klitschko was not only the face of the opposition, he was front and center.

They face an even more dangerous opponent today. [Russian president Vladimir Putin seems to have been planning an invasion of Ukraine](#), which the Biden Administration has desperately been trying to prevent.

Russia has thousands of troops along its border with Ukraine. So what did Wladimir Klitschko do? He joined the Ukraine's military reserve.

[Mayor Vitali Klitschko told Reuters a diplomatic solution is preferred](#), but he wasn't backing down even though Putin is infinitely more dangerous than anyone who ever stepped into a boxing ring.

"If [a diplomatic solution can't be found], we have to prepare to take weapons in our hands and defend the country," he said.

He's the living embodiment of the kind of leadership American Gen. George S. Patton spoke of during World War II when he said, "Always do everything you ask of those you command."

Should it come to it, God forbid, the Mayor and his baby brother will be out there in fatigues, with a helmet on and a gun slung over their shoulders, prepared to stare down the Russian invaders.

Fighters often say they're willing to die in the ring; the Klitschko brothers are proving they're willing to die for what they believe in.

Unless the U.S. gets involved by sending troops, which would be hugely unpopular in an election year, Ukraine would stand very little chance against the powerful Russian military. And as the most public of figures, the Klitschkos would undoubtedly be targets of the Putin regime.

The prospect of hand-to-hand combat in the streets has to tie their stomachs in knots; It's far more terrifying than a blazing straight right from Lennox Lewis. But this is the path they have chosen and there is no other way for them to go.

We far too often anoint athletes as heroes for their feats on the playing field, and rarely is that honor deserved. These gigantic brothers are every bit the heroes in their everyday lives that they've been made to be for their exploits in the ring.

They're far from the only athletes willing to die for their country. On Dec. 9, 1941, two days after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called Dec. 7, 1941, "a date which will live in infamy," Cleveland Indians pitcher Bob Feller joined the Navy and earned six campaign ribbons and eight battle stars while rising to the rank of captain.

[Arizona Cardinals](#) safety Pat Tillman enlisted in the military, leaving a seven-figure NFL contract, only days after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Tillman was tragically killed by friendly fire.

The great hitter Ted Williams gave up five years of his MLB career to serve both in World War II and the Korean War. He flew 40 combat missions.

These are the kinds of people that Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko are following.

We pray that the Administration will be able to broker a peaceful solution and that there will be no need for anyone in either Ukraine and Russia, to pick up their arms.

If the need arises, though, the Klitschko brothers will be there, and not just blending into the crowd.

It's why it's a good idea to praise them now, while they're able to see the reaction their dedication to their country has generated. Once the bullets start flying and the bombs start dropping, it will be far too late to do anything but pray, wait and wonder.