UCCA Calls for Immediate Actions in Response to Russia’s Capture of Ukrainian Sailors

On November 25, 2018, the nation’s largest representative body of Americans of Ukrainian descent, the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), issued an immediate statement of condemnation following the Russian Federation’s premeditated and deliberate attack on three unarmed Ukrainian Naval vessels. This outrageous violation of a sovereign State’s right of innocent passage - impeding Ukraine’s lawful transit through the Kerch Strait – followed by the ramming of Ukrainian vessels, opening fire on them in international waters, before ultimately seizing the ships and arresting the sailors on board, is the latest brazen violation of international law by Russia’s criminal regime.
Following the Russian Federation's refusal to return Ukraine's Naval vessels as required under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the continued imprisonment and unlawful interrogations of 24 Ukrainian seamen in contravention of the European Court of Human Rights' orders, UCCA today calls upon the United States and the international community to not simply condemn the actions of the Russian Federation, but to take immediate action to reinforce their commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and the restoration of its territorial integrity.

Instead of giving Vladimir Putin a free pass to once again escalate his illegal war against Ukraine, Ukrainian-Americans and the entire Global Ukrainian Diaspora stand united in demanding the following actions:

- The immediate release of all 24 Ukrainian prisoners of war, as well as over 70 Ukrainian political prisoners illegally held in Russian captivity;
- The deployment of naval vessels from NATO member states to Ukrainian and NATO ally ports in the Black Sea;
- The immediate return of the two unarmed Ukrainian naval artillery vessels, the Nikopol and Berdiansk, and one military tugboat, the Iany Kapu;
- Increasing military assistance to Ukraine by utilizing measures already authorized by the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act, which would bolster Ukraine's naval capabilities, as with the recent transfer of the two excess Island-class cutters from the United States Coast Guard to the Ukrainian military.
- Strengthening sanctions against the Russian Federation - and specifically sectoral sanctions – including banning Russia from the SWIFT international payments system, and restricting the rights of anonymously-owned "shell" companies to buy property or access the financial system;
- The announcement of a temporary ban by Ukraine’s allies on the issuance of official and business visas for citizens of the Russian Federation until such time as the captured seamen are returned;

UCCA also calls for US Congressional Hearings to be convened on the situation in the Black Sea as well as the state of the Ukrainian political prisoners. We continue to urge our community to action in support of Ukraine on the local level.
Ukraine is not antagonizing Russia. Russia is invading Ukraine.

WHAT IS UCCA?
The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) is a non-profit, non-partisan community-based organization that has represented the interests of Ukrainians in the United States since 1940.

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