

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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H.R.7002 & H.R.7075

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As a representative organization of the nearly 2 million Americans of Ukrainian descent, the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America would like to thank the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands of the Natural Resources Committee for this opportunity to provide written testimony regarding H.R. 7002 and H.R.7075, bills to designate the NPS site in NW Washington, DC where a statue to Taras Shevchenko, the 19th century bard of Ukraine, currently resides as Ukrainian Independence Park. Similarly, measures to illuminate the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri in Ukraine's national colors of blue and yellow signify the unmeasurable empathy of the American nation for the people of Ukraine as they defend their sovereignty and independence from a foreign aggressor.

The worldwide attention given to Ukraine since February 24, 2022 as a result of Russia's unprovoked war is of great importance to the Ukrainian American community. H.R.7002 and H.R.7075 provide a unique opportunity to highlight symbolically the brave and heroic resolve of the Ukrainian people to maintain their independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. For decades since Ukraine declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the Ukrainian American community has been advocating for greater bilateral relationship between Ukraine and the United States, as a free, independent, and democratic Ukraine is in the national security interests of the United States.

Purpose of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) is a national umbrella organization representing the interests of the Ukrainian community in the United States. Founded by the First Congress of Ukrainians in America in 1940 in Washington, DC, the main purpose of the UCCA is to support cultural, educational, and humanitarian activities that emphasize the Ukrainian American heritage and to effectively coordinate the work of the community. These goals are achieved through a nationwide network of branches, member organizations, and a variety of internal UCCA commissions that are tasked with specific projects.

As a not-for-profit, educational and charitable institution, the UCCA has a long history of actively pursuing issues that affect the Ukrainian American community, particularly in the arena of U.S.-former Soviet and for the past 30 years, the enhancement of U.S.-Ukraine relations. The hopes and dreams of Ukrainians worldwide came to fruition when Ukraine restored its independence on August 24, 1991. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the UCCA redirected its efforts toward supporting Ukraine's democratic development and economic rebirth while sustaining a vibrant Ukrainian community in the United States.

In 2004, the UCCA organized the largest NGO election monitoring team for Ukraine's presidential elections, with over 2,400 international elections observers traveling to Ukraine during the Christmas holiday to ensure that Ukraine's re-runoff of the presidential elections were held in a free, fair, and transparent manner. The results became known as the "*Orange Revolution*" with the nation of Ukraine democratically electing their next

president, Viktor Yushchenko. Similarly, following the 2013-2014 *Revolution of Dignity* in Ukraine, the UCCA sponsored an observer mission to monitor the ad-hoc presidential elections, which elected Petro Poroshenko as president. The UCCA is the only not-for-profit American organization that has participated in each election in Ukraine as International Observer Mission (IOM) since that country's independence in 1991.

However, the most important task of the UCCA was, and continues to be, educating the American public about Ukraine, its history, culture, and political development. Pursuant to this mission, the UCCA has raised U.S. awareness of Ukraine, as well as represented the interests of Ukrainian Americans before the U.S. government by organizing various conferences, seminars, commemorations, cultural events and the like.

The UCCA also strives to educate the American public about the long, rich, and sometimes tragic history of the Ukrainian people through various publications including *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, the only English language scholarly journal of Ukrainian and international affairs. In our efforts to disseminate information and highlight the thousand-year history and culture of Ukraine, one of the most important projects of the UCCA has been the establishment of the Taras Shevchenko statue in 1964, at the parcel of land that is now being considered to be renamed as Ukrainian Independence Park.

Statement of Policy: U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership

The Ukrainian American community is united in its support for the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. As Americans, we believe that a democratic and independent Ukraine is in the national security interests of the United States and consistent with our traditions of support for individual freedom and self-determination.

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In the context of U.S. geo-strategic interests, the current war in Ukraine cannot be understood without recognizing its far-reaching consequences for the world's security dynamics. russia's outright unprovoked invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, as well as its invasion of eastern Ukraine in the spring of 2014; its illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea in 2014; the neo-colonialist and imperialist policy of expanding a "russkyi mir" ("russian world"), not to mention the multi-vectored, political, economic, social, cultural, and religious aggression directed against Ukraine's sovereignty, is a direct security threat to the Euro-Atlantic community. As a result, russia's two invasions of Ukraine in the past eight years are rightly viewed with alarm by our NATO allies, most particularly by those in Central Europe. It is understood to be a threat to the stabilizing transnational, trans-Atlantic security framework that first emerged in the years after World War II.

For the United States and its allies, the post-WWII collective security model delivered the space to develop economic growth at a pace that the world had never before seen. That

security model consisted of not only sustained military dominance, but the continued spread of democracy, further generating greater peace and prosperity. Today, the security components that ushered American global leadership has fostered a new understanding of overt threats that exist to the United States, as well as to our allies.

A new set of partnerships, developed after the fall of the Soviet Union, have increasingly emerged as additional stabilizing partners the United States has been seeking. Most notably, countries within the Euro-Atlantic alliance understand the threat of russia hegemony and imperialism and are proving to meet the security needs of Ukraine as it defends its territory and citizens from the travesties of the kremlin's war.

As we are witnessing right now, Europe's largest country – Ukraine – is on pace to field Europe's largest and nimble military, with its experience fending off the russian aggressor. Furthermore, Ukraine already stands as the only non-NATO partner to have contributed actively to all NATO-led operations and missions for the past 25 years. As we quickly approach the anniversary of the end of World War II in May 2022, nearly eight decades after the conclusion of that war, russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and again in 2022 has resulted in thousands of civilians and military personnel killed. Approximately one-quarter of Ukraine's population (10 million+ civilians) has also been temporarily displaced - the largest wartime displacement in Europe since 1945.

The United States government has consistently supported Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and the inviolability of its borders since russia's invasions, declaring as official government policy to "assist the government of Ukraine in restoring its sovereignty and territorial integrity in order to deter the government of the russian federation [sic] from further destabilizing and invading Ukraine and other independent countries." The Ukrainian American community looks to the United States to not only live up to its public and binding security guarantees to Ukraine, but to further develop this strategic relationship as a buffer against other rogue nations threatening the collective security order.

As such, the Ukrainian community strongly believes that the security of the U.S. lies in the expansion of democracy and mutual security guarantees, not in the appeasement of an imperial state. U.S. support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, ensuring the non-use of force by other nuclear states, or the use of economic coercion as a hybrid weapon, will eventually see a decrease in U.S. international deployments as Europe's pro-democratic East steps up to repay the faith invested in them.

Over the past two months, russia's war against Ukraine constitutes a fundamental challenge to the post-World War II order in Europe and jeopardizes every member of the community of democracies. Their illegal seizure of Crimea in 2014, was at that time the most blatant violation of international law and order – specifically a violation of the Budapest Memorandum, its commitments under the CSCE Final Act, the 1997 bilateral Ukraine-Russia Treaty, the United Nations Charter, to name a few – and threatens global

security while undermining the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Although the United States responded appropriately to Russia's initial illegal behavior towards Ukraine in 2014 by implementing sanctions against the NordStream2 pipeline (2019 and 2020), the Crimean Declaration (2018), and the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act 2017 (CAATSA), the United States must not be deterred in countering continuing actions that threaten European security and stability. The United States, as a signatory to the 1994 Trilateral Agreement, has an obligation to assist Ukraine in defense of its national security and territorial integrity and in its efforts to institutionalize democratic and economic reforms. The national security interests of the United States lie in the fulfillment of that obligation, and constitute the very foundation upon which the existing relationship between sovereign nations rests.

Thus, as the National Parks, Forests, & Public Lands Subcommittee of the Natural Resources Committee review and mark-up H.R.7002 and H.R.7075, the symbolism is a welcome gesture and show of support for Ukraine. While the Ukrainian American community supports these efforts, we also urge the United States to take the following concrete actions in support of Ukraine during and after wartime:

- ❖ Uphold a clear, unified, steadfast, and explicit commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and independence by the United States and our European allies. Ukraine's territorial integrity is non-negotiable and any change to it cannot be discussed as gestures for peace with the aggressor;
- ❖ Expedite direct security assistance to Ukraine, including heavy armaments of lethal defensive arms, naval and air force support, radar and communications equipment, shared intelligence from Western allies, and additional military training programs;
- ❖ Reject all forms of recognition of Russian rule over the illegally-occupied Crimean Peninsula by adhering to objectives explicitly stated in the Crimean Declaration of July 2018;
- ❖ Reinforce NATO's "Open Door" policy by providing immediate consideration for Ukraine's membership;
- ❖ Proclaim Putin's diatribe prior to the February 24th invasion of Ukraine, the utter destruction and razing of cities in Ukraine, and the resulting indiscriminate massacre of thousands of civilians in Ukraine as classic examples of a genocide against the Ukrainian people. The Ukrainian *Holodomor*, Stalin's forced famine-genocide of 1932-33, should also be designated as a genocide of the Ukrainian nation implemented by occupying Russian communist forces;
- ❖ Designate Russia as a State Sponsor of Terror for its terrorist activities in Ukraine and throughout the world;

- ❖ Augment targeted economic and sectoral sanctions against Russia, including revoking all Russian banks from the SWIFT international transaction network, until it fully complies with its international obligations, including the Budapest Memorandum;
- ❖ Monitor and ramp up U.S. counter-narrative objectives to the Russian propaganda operation through the already-established Global Engagement Center (GEC);
- ❖ Provide services of evidence collecting and legal counsel to Ukraine in its numerous investigations of war crimes committed by the invading Russian forces;
- ❖ Block access to all Russian ships to ports-of-call in the United States and other allied countries in Europe and throughout the world;
- ❖ Freeze and seize assets of, and deny visas to, elite Kremlin oligarchs, Putin cronies, and their families suspected of money laundering or involvement in the nefarious actions against the sovereignty of Ukraine. Funds obtained by the freeze/seize program would be used for the rebuilding and reconstruction of Ukraine after the war; and,
- ❖ Enhance the U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership to include comprehensive support of Ukraine's defense capacity, economic reform efforts, anti-corruption measures, and foreign direct investment opportunities.

Recognizing the Ukrainian Nation

It is clear that Ukraine is at a critical juncture in its war to sustain its independence and sovereignty. Ukraine is not only defending itself, but the entire European continent and the adherence of democratic principles. It is thus essential that the United States remains actively involved and continues to supply security and economic assistance to Ukraine, as well as to foster a strategic outlook for enhanced relations with Ukraine.

30 years of Ukrainian independence have brought nine U.S. ambassadors as envoys of American diplomacy. Each envoy has conveyed the support of the American people for a prosperous and democratic Ukraine ensconced in Euro-Atlantic structures and institutions. H.R.7002 and H.R.7075 are essential elements of showing support for Ukraine as a strategic partner of the United States. The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, on behalf of the 2 million Ukrainian American community, supports these measures and appreciates the commitment of the U.S. Congress in its sustained assistance of the Ukrainian nation.

We have a chance to assist Ukraine maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity, to be a strong, democratic nation with all the methods and technologies to continue self-improvement.