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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Putin Invades Ukraine - #SanctionRussiaNOW

New York (UCCA) - The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), the representative organization of nearly 2 million Americans of Ukrainian descent, condemns in the strongest possible terms Vladimir Putin's announcement on February 21 that recognizes constituent Ukrainian territory as independent states. This illegal action is a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. By his actions today, Putin withdrew from the diplomatic process and made clear his intention to destroy an independent, democratic Ukraine.

Recognizing the great peril before us, and understanding that a halfhearted response limited to simply sanctioning residents of the so-called LNR and DNR will only embolden Putin's criminality, UCCA calls upon President Biden, NATO leaders and Ukraine's international allies to immediately impose crippling sanctions on those in the Russian Federation responsible for this crime. First and foremost, such sanctions must be imposed on the person of Vladimir Putin himself and his extensive financial reserves. Furthermore, Russian assets must be banned from international financial institutions, and the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project must be permanently halted. Finally, Ukraine must be confident in sustained military support, especially anti-tank, anti-aircraft and anti-missile technology. Ukraine must be adequately equipped to defend itself and our allies. The fate of not only Ukraine, but that of Europe and indeed the world, depends on decisive American leadership.

Vladimir Putin has already ordered Russian troops across Ukraine's border under the guise of peacekeeping. That is not an incursion. That is an invasion. Furthermore, Putin intimated that his intentions go beyond the borders of Ukraine itself to, at the very least, the borders of Imperial Russia.

Putin's announcement underscores his continued blatant disregard of all global norms and brazenly violates international law: Russia has illegally occupied Ukrainian Crimea since 2014; Russian led and controlled forces have terrorized Ukrainian Donbas since that same year; countless brutal war crimes and crimes against humanity have been meticulously documented in those territories as well as against Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar political prisoners abducted and held in Russian prisons; and 298 innocent passengers and crew, including 20 families and 80 children, were murdered by a Buk anti-aircraft missile launched at Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 from Russian occupied territory in Ukraine. Russia is a rogue state and must be stopped.

A generation ago, Winston Churchill stated "If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age..." The Ukrainian American community asks all supporters of democracy and freedom to stand up today in the footprints of that greatest generation so that future generations speak well of us and say, "That was their finest hour."