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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UKRAINIAN AMERICANS STUNNED BY WHITE HOUSE JOINT STATEMENT

New York, NY (UCCA) – On Friday, April 24, Russia unveiled images of Vladimir Putin’s pet project: a new Russian Orthodox cathedral, located in the center of a “military theme park” near Moscow, which was set to open on May 9. Putin has fixated on May 9 unlike any other Soviet or Russian ruler since Stalin, even more so on this 75th anniversary of the Allied victory over Nazi Germany in World War II. Inside this cathedral, so-called religious mosaics depict Putin alongside his Minister of Defense, and the director of the FSB (the modern-day successor to the KGB). Another mosaic depicts Stalin’s portrait held above a crowd of Soviet soldiers during the World War II Victory Day parade of 1945 on Red Square. In a final act of sacrilege, the cathedral walls display a tribute in mosaic to Russia’s illegal invasion and ongoing military occupation of Ukraine’s Crimea, with one fragment declaring “our Crimea”.

Just one day after Putin launched this new disinformation campaign about the Soviet Union in advance of May 9, President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a rare joint statement to illustrate "how our countries can put aside differences, build trust and cooperate in pursuit of a greater cause." Ostensibly issued to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the first meeting between U.S. and Soviet troops during World War II, this symbolic gesture is quite alarming. The Ukrainian American community, therefore, has responded with incredulity to the joint statement issued by the White House and the Kremlin this Saturday, April 25.

Unfortunately, the “meeting at the Elbe,” cited in the joint statement and throughout Russian media, only led to decades of brutal authoritarian control by the Soviet Union to all parts of Eastern Europe and, in particular, to the people of Ukraine. Nearly seven decades later, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014 has resulted in over 13,000 people killed and over 2.5 million civilians displaced - the largest wartime displacement in Europe since World War II, which began in 1939 as a joint invasion of Ukrainian lands by Stalin and Hitler. The United States government has consistently supported Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, and the inviolability of Ukraine’s borders since Russia’s invasion, declaring as official state policy to “assist the government of Ukraine in restoring its sovereignty and territorial integrity in order to deter the government of the Russian Federation from further destabilizing and invading Ukraine and other independent countries.”

As patriotic Americans, the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), the largest representation of Americans of Ukrainian descent, looks to our political leaders to stand in defense of liberty and democratic ideals when confronted by a foreign adversary. When Putin announced his intention to host a high-level delegation from the United States at his Victory Day parade in Moscow, UCCA made our position clear in advance of May 9. While the May 9 parade has been postponed in light of the worldwide pandemic, Putin has increased his worldwide disinformation campaign designed to test the will of the international sanctions regime enacted against Russia.

Instead of issuing joint statements with the murderous Putin regime, UCCA calls on the United States to continue to support Ukraine in its struggle against Russian aggression by increasing sanctions on Russia until all covert and overt Russian forces and equipment are removed from Ukraine, including a withdrawal of any territorial claim over the Crimean peninsula.