

## This Day in History... February 24, 2022

### Ukraine War Stamps Chronicle History as it Happens

On February 24, 2022, Russia sparked outrage worldwide when it invaded Ukraine. Ukraine has not only fought back, they've harnessed the power of the postage stamp to bring worldwide attention to the conflict and raise money for its troops with clever, edgy, and playful issues.

On the first day of the invasion, the Russian warship *Moskva* (*Moscow*), flagship of the Black Sea Fleet, demanded the surrender of Ukrainian troops on Ukraine's Snake Island. Roman Hrybov, a marine defending the border, responded for his fellow guards: "Russian warship, go f\*\*\* yourself!"



*The first Ukraine stamps to commemorate the war, these were some of the most sought-after stamps of the last few years.*

The courage of the Snake Island soldiers inspired Ukraine's citizens and millions across the globe. Their refusal to surrender became a symbol of the country's resistance. It also inspired the idea of a postage stamp design contest centered around the now-famous phrase. The winner was 27-year-old Ukrainian artist Boris Groh. His interpretation of the soldiers' refusal to surrender was the image of a lone soldier standing on the shore, giving the finger to the *Moskva*.

The "F" stamp, issued for domestic mail, and the "W" stamp for international mail, went on sale April 12th. Two days later, Ukraine sunk the *Moskva*. Capturing worldwide media attention, the Snake Island stamps sold out quickly and raised \$135,000 for Ukraine's army. Ukrainian citizens waited in long lines for many hours to get the stamps. Following all the positive press focused on the stamps, Russia launched a cyber-attack, taking down the Ukraine Post website for a week.

On May 23, Ukraine issued another set of stamps celebrating the sinking of the *Moskva*. This time the flagship was missing from the coastal waters of Snake Island. Both stamps were imprinted with the lone soldier, his flippant gesture to the

*Moskva* crew's demand for surrender, and the date the ship was sunk. The stamps were issued with an attached label. The label shows the former ship with a clever facsimile postmark as part of the design, declaring "*Moskva* DONE," and bearing the April 24th, 2022, "cancellation" date.

Another stamp issued on June 28 pictures Ukraine's famous Antonov An-225 *Mriya* (*Dream*) plane – the world's largest transport plane and Ukraine's pride and joy. The stamp was originally planned to celebrate Ukraine's 30th anniversary of independence from the



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Soviet Union in 1991, but was delayed. On it is an image of the plane drawn by Sofia Kravchuk in answer to the Dream Contest question: "What is Ukraine for me?" But in late February 2022, the one-of-a-kind plane was destroyed during a Russian aerial bombardment at Antonov Airport. Ukraine cleverly repurposed the stamp to memorialize the plane.

The winner of Ukraine's third stamp design contest was graphic designer and art teacher Anatasia Bondarets, who depicted a tractor pulling a Russian tank along a rural road. This image won the popular vote of over 800,000 Ukrainians. The stamp commemorates the Ukrainian farmers hauling away damaged Russian tanks left behind. The added benefit to clearing the debris of war is that these ambitious farmers are allowed by their government to sell the tanks for scrap and don't have to pay tax. The "W" stamp sheet has the top row of stamps attached in the opposite direction from the bottom row. This format is called "tête bêche," French for "head to tail." So the pairs are joined together, inverted in relation to one another.

Another set of stamps issued on July 28 honor Patron, the mine-sniffing dog. His name, Patron, means "cartridge" in Ukrainian. He and his owner-trainer have received the Ukrainian Order of



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*"Good evening, we are from Ukraine" was taken from a popular song that came out a few months before the war started. It has become an unofficial greeting among military, political, and journalist circles.*

a reminder for the whole world of how expensive freedom is" according to the Ukraine State Postal Service. The sheet was issued on the 31st anniversary of independence from the Soviet Union, and exactly six months from the start of the invasion. Artist Anton Khrupin's design depicts six scenes, one for each of the first six months of the war. Each one is tied to an event, such as the bombing of the Mariupol theatre, where the Russian word for "children" appears outside the door, in the hope the Russians would spare it. At the same time, the artist gives the people of Ukraine hope with the image of a soldier, ready to defend his country's independence regardless of the cost.

Ukraine Post issued its first wartime stamped envelope on September 20. The inspiration for the stamped envelope comes from the remarks of a Ukrainian general concerning Russian president Vladimir Putin: "If Putin invades, we will welcome him to hell." The envelope's cachet features the back of Putin's head with the hand of a Ukrainian defender pushing the president forward to meet his destiny. The work of artist Roman Chaly was chosen by over 200,000 Ukrainians who voted for it in a stamp design contest.

On October 14, Ukraine issued a sheet of six semi-postal stamps showing the various branches of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, created by artist Anton Khrupin. Each stamp pays the postal rate for non-priority letters up to 50 grams mailed within Ukraine and the surcharge will go to support the troops.



*Ukraine Post said this stamp brings hope because in 2023 "we will win."*

One day after Russian President Vladimir Putin's 70th birthday, Ukraine bombed the Crimean Bridge. Ukrposhta, Ukraine's State Postal Service, taunted the president by revealing the planned issue of stamps celebrating the attack within hours after it occurred on October 8th, 2022. Ukrainian artist Yuri Shapoval designed the stamps, which compared the myth of the "unsinkable" *Titanic* ocean liner with the Russian-created myth of the bridge as a symbol of unbreakable ties between Crimea and Russia. As the *Titanic* myth was proven wrong, so has that of the bridge. The artist recreated an iconic scene from the movie *Titanic* to do it.

Ukraine's 2022 holiday stamp design was chosen in another public contest. The winner was an 11th grader named Valeria Mykhailova,

one of many people forced to flee the country after the war with Russia began. The stamp is titled "Victorious New Year" and pictures an image of a woman sitting by a Christmas tree on the left side and a soldier holding his gun on the right. This stamp is a reminder of the many families who didn't get to spend the holidays together in 2022 because of the war.

One of the final stamps of 2022 was released to celebrate Ukraine's liberation of Kherson from Russian occupation. The stamp design pictures a slice of watermelon with images of rallies, burning buildings, and torture that occurred while Russian troops attempted to hold the city. The watermelon seeds are meant to represent the countless bombs Russia dropped on Kherson. A watermelon was chosen to represent the city because the region is famous for growing them.

The end of 2022 also saw the issue of the Weapons of Victory stamp sheet. These stamps picture Ukrainian and foreign weapons being used to fight back against Russia. Ukraine's postal service said these stamps were issued "to thank the Armed Forces of Ukraine for their resilience, strength, and courage." A portion of the money earned from the sale of these stamps was also donated to Ukraine's Armed Forces.

Courage for Patron's work in detecting over 200 unexploded Russian landmines and bombs. The face value of each Semipostal, or charity, stamp shows that a surcharge has been added, which went toward the purchase of a minesweeping vehicle and to various animal shelters across Ukraine. The stamps show him at work, mixing the serious nature of that work with some playful situations.

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