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By Nataliya Vasilyeva

Ukraine to take BBC journalists off its sanctions list
Україна видалить журналістів BBC із свого санкційного списку
Президент України доручив видалити із санкційного списку, що забороняє в'їзд на територію
України, імена трьох журналістів BBC.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/sep/17/ukraine-to-take-bbc-journalists-off-its-sanctions/>



MOSCOW (AP) - Ukraine's president has instructed security officials to strike the names of three BBC journalists off the country's sanctions list, a day after he signed the decree, his spokesman said on Thursday. Petro Poroshenko late on Wednesday signed a sanctions list barring nearly 400 individuals from entering Ukraine, including BBC correspondent Steve Rosenberg and producer Emma Wells, both British, and Russian cameraman Anton Chicherov.

This is the first sanctions list against Russia and foreign individuals that Kiev has introduced since a conflict broke out in April 2014 in eastern Ukraine, claiming more than 8,000 lives so far.

The decree which was published on the president's website said the reporters and media executives on the list presented an unspecified "threat to national interests, national security, sovereignty or territorial integrity."

It did not specify why the long-serving Moscow-based BBC journalists were singled out but a spokesman for the presidential administration said late Wednesday night that the Ukrainian Security Service would give an explanation on Thursday.

The BBC's foreign editor, Andrew Roy, described the ban as "a shameful attack on media freedom."

"These sanctions are completely inappropriate and inexplicable measures to take against BBC journalists who are reporting the situation in Ukraine impartially and objectively, and we call on the Ukrainian government to remove their names from this list immediately," he said in emailed comments.

Presidential spokesman Svyatoslav Tsegolko, however, said on Thursday that Poroshenko asked the Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council, which was responsible for drafting the list, to take off the names of the BBC staff.

Poroshenko announced his decision to the new British ambassador to Ukraine who presented her credentials to him on Thursday. The security council would issue a statement later, Tsegolko said.

Also on the list of banned journalists are Antonio Pampliega and Angel Sastre, two Spanish reporters who disappeared in Syria in July and are believed to have been kidnapped by the Islamic State group, and two reporters for Russian news agencies in South Africa and Turkey with no clear links to Ukraine.

Another journalist on the list says he has no links to Ukraine whatsoever.

"I have never been to Ukraine and don't have any intention of traveling there in the near future," Michael Rutz, a German journalist and author, told German news agency dpa. "I don't know how I got on this list."

The Russian news agency Tass on Thursday described the decision to blacklist three of its reporters, one based in Washington, D.C., one in South Africa and one in Moscow, as “odd” since two of the three do not even cover Ukraine.

Poroshenko said in a statement accompanying the list that the sanctions were introduced against people and companies “linked to the annexation of Crimea and aggression in Donbass” in eastern Ukraine.

Most of the people on the sanctions lists are Russian politicians and political activists who have called for the annexation of Crimea and advocated for Russia’s greater involvement in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine has barred entry to Russian journalists in the past, accusing them of inciting unrest in the Russian-speaking east.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists said in a statement that it is “dismayed” by Poroshenko’s actions.

“While the government may not like or agree with the coverage, labeling journalists a potential threat to national security is not an appropriate response,” said the committee’s Europe and Central Asia program coordinator, Nina Ognianova.

Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, on Thursday condemned the sanctions against journalists, saying that blacklisting reporters undermines freedom of speech in Ukraine.