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Russia Releases Coins Celebrating Crimea Annexation

By The Moscow Times

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Both coins are worth 10 rubles.

Russia's Central Bank has released two coins celebrating the fateful annexation of Crimea, or, as Russia would have it, the territory's reunification with its rightful government.

Released late this week, the two coins are emblazoned with images of the peninsula, the phrase "Russian Federation" and the date March 18, 2014, when the treaty on Crimea's accession to Russia was signed in the Kremlin, according to a statement on the Central Bank's website.

One coin is inscribed with the phrase "Republic of Crimea" and an image of the Swallow's Nest, a tiny neo-gothic castle teetering atop a cliff face that is one of the region's most popular tourist attractions. The other is dedicated to the southern Crimean naval port city of Sevastopol and features an image of the city's Monument to the Scuttled Ships.

Both coins are worth 10 rubles, or $0.25. Ten million of each kind will be released.

The decision to release coins commemorating the annexation should come as no surprise: The move was wildly popular among Russians and triggered a wave of nationalist sentiment that is still evident in everything from commemorative T-Shirts to President Vladimir Putin's sky-high ratings.

The Central Bank is not the first to come up with the idea, and is even a bit late to the game. In April, a foundry in the Ural Mountains announced it would release a collection of commemorative coins adorned with images of Putin and the annexed peninsula.

Precipitated by the downfall of Ukraine's former pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych following months of street protests in Kiev, the annexation was followed by a separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine that has killed more than 3,600 people to date, according to the United Nations. Western leaders blame Moscow for fomenting the violence.

Most of the international community has refused to recognize Crimea as part of Russia.

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