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Ukraine Cannot Trademark Phrase 'Russian Warship, Go F*** Yourself,' EU Court Says

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A billboard reading "Russian warship, go f*** yourself" in Zaporizhzhia. **Ed JONES / AFP**

An EU court ruled Wednesday that Ukraine cannot trademark the phrase "Russian warship, go f*** yourself," ending a two-year dispute over intellectual property rights to the viral slogan.

Ukraine's border guard service filed a trademark application on March 16, 2022, three weeks after a Ukrainian soldier uttered the defiant phrase during a radio exchange with a Russian warship on the first day of Moscow's full-scale invasion.

Kyiv argues it should hold sole authorship of the phrase — which became a symbol of Ukraine's resistance against invading Russian forces — to prevent others from profiting from the various commercial products that feature it.

The European Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) in Spain had previously rejected the Ukrainian border guard service's application, claiming the trademark uses "vulgar language

with an insulting sexual connotation" and would constitute immoral war profiteering.

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On Wednesday, the European Union's General Court in Luxembourg upheld the rejection on the basis that the Ukrainian rallying cry is a "political slogan."

"Whilst the applicant submits that the phrase [is] an expressive reaction to an imminent threat of mortal danger, the fact remains that, directly after the event which gave rise to that reaction, that phrase became a political slogan," the latest decision states.

The phrase originated on Feb. 24, 2022, when a Ukrainian border guard used it during Russia's capture of Snake Island. The Ukrainian soldiers stationed there were taken prisoner but were later exchanged in a prisoner swap, and Ukrainian forces retook the island in June 2022.

A protester in Russia was fined this summer over his tattoo that features the phrase.

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