

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We write to elevate the plight and wrongful detention of American Charles “Chuck” Zimmerman. A father of two, Navy veteran, master electrician, and sailor, Zimmerman has been held for more than 250 days at the time of this writing under what can only be described as politically retributive pretenses.

Zimmerman’s passion for sailing and travel extended well past his time in the Navy, and he decided it was time to realize his dream of sailing the world in a 35’ sailboat with a course set for New Zealand. On his journey, he had made it all the way to the Mediterranean and decided to explore the Black Sea before sailing through the Suez Canal.

However, almost immediately upon entering the Black Sea via the Bosphorus Strait, the Russian Navy intercepted his boat in international waters. Upon arrival, Zimmerman voluntarily declared and surrendered a firearm onboard his boat meant for self-protection, a common practice among sailors.

Following the search and seizure of the vessel that would have yielded no material threat, the Russian government arrested Zimmerman, brought what can only be seen as political charges related to arms smuggling, and imposed a retributive five-year prison sentence.

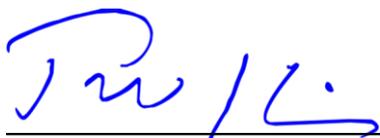
Chief among our concerns is the denial of consular services, visits, or calls that could substantiate Zimmerman’s health and wellbeing. It is our understanding that no American official has seen him in over seven months. These concerns are elevated due to our understanding that he is currently imprisoned in penal colony IK-9, with a diet that supplements gruel with only one nutritionally dense meal of protein and vegetables per week, and without any confirmed allowance for exercise.

We therefore ask that this case be made a priority for the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs so that the U.S. Government can work expeditiously towards his release. Additionally, we ask that your department designate Zimmerman as ‘wrongfully detained’ by the Russian government and continue to consider his case in the ongoing negotiations with the Russian government.

Sincerely,



Ben Cline  
Member of Congress



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator