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**TITLE:** The Magnitsky Human Rights Awards 2019 – Oleg Sentsov

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**SPEAKER**

MEGHAN McCAIN - M

OLEG SENTSOV: O

M: Thank you so much for having me back again, Bill, I didn't know if last year was going to be the only time I was going to be invited, but spending time with you and Vladimir and your wife is always so special. You have such a deep and intense place in my heart not only because we are like minded, but because Vladimir was a pallbearer for my father and you will always be considered a part of the McCain family both of you. So, thank you again, I am so honoured to be here tonight, but I'm more honoured to give tonight's award. When Russia invaded the Ukraine and seized Crimea in 2014 the world was faced with the most serious European crisis in a generation. A country whose territorial integrity was guaranteed by major powers including the United States was attacked. The attack was undertaken by methods of a most sinister type. The deniable deployment of the so-called little green men who swarmed the area of operations, seized it and changed what was rightly Ukrainian into what was punitively Russian nearly overnight.

Seven decades after the close of the Second World War the rule of the strong over the weak suddenly reappeared in Europe, most of the world did nothing. Oleg Sentsov on the other hand did do something unable to directly resist a Russian military invasion Sentsov an ordinary citizen of ordinary means organised the resupply of encircled Ukrainian garrisons on the Ukrainian peninsula. A filmmaker stepped up where his own country, though not his own nation; did not and supplied the measure of defiance. Defiance becomes hope very, very easily that's why the Russian occupant authorities surprised and stunned to see an ordinary citizen resisting their overwhelming might, quickly arrested him. They knew Oleg Sentsov was an ethnic Russian and therefore they who justified their aggression on the ground over Russian nationalism had to remove him from view. It was not so much that they feared a Russian loyalty to the Ukraine although there was that, what they really dreaded was a Russian loyal to the idea of freedom. Thus Oleg Sentsov spent half a decade in prison in a [unclear 2:32]. He was tortured, he was sentenced to 20 years, he was sent to Siberia, he was sent to the Arctic, he suffered, he was imprisoned for a very long time.

I know a little bit about men who are unjustly imprisoned, their captives try to break them, but they emerge stronger than ever before. That is Oleg Sentsov, he is here tonight still resisting, still defiant, still doing something. Oleg, it is my honour and pleasure to see you and a pleasure you with the Outstanding Human Rights Activist Award because you my friend have earned it. You didn't earn it in a way you may have ever wanted, but what martyr ever seeks their suffering. What is important is this, when confronted with that suffering you endured, you kept faith and you emerged with your dignity completely intact. In that light and in our light tonight it is our privilege to honour you this evening.

O: Hello everybody, I will speak Russian because my English not so perfect, Olga will you help me? [I do hope]. Thank for this invitation, this brilliant evening and this dinner. We had the really worst food in prison. While we are still here eating well and having nice evening somebody is still imprisoned. Thousands of Russians are imprisoned at least 100 of Ukrainians are imprisoned. I speak about them each time when I have a microphone in my hands and I am going to do it. Sergei Magnitsky is not with us for almost 10 years this Saturday. How you listened, how you did it, we can do like that. I will always reply that a human will never know what you really can do and reach before you reach in the same situation. If I can,

Sergei could and a lot of other could so anybody who is on the same situation same place can do that. A human doesn't know really what they can achieve before they will stay there. He was a simple auditor, but he was fighting with the system in his working place and he was imprisoned as well. He never gave up, the system couldn't break him, but they took care of that, but his death was worse. Because we had a huge international reaction especially thanks to his partner. A lot of people are supporting this action and afterward we had the Magnitsky Act. Thank you for this, the Russian can become softer, but at least they are being afraid to kill people openly. Probably that is the reason I am still alive and I am really thankful to Sergei for this. Thank you very much.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**