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PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,

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joint with the

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COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

6

and the

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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,

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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

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INTERVIEW OF: GORDON SONDLAND

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Thursday, October 17, 2019

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Washington, D.C.

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The interview in the above matter was held in Room

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HVC-304, Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 9:30 a.m.

24

Present: Representatives Schiff, Himes, Sewell, Speier,

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Quigley, Swalwell, Heck, Welch, Maloney, Demings,

1 Krishnamoorthi, Nunes, Turner, Conaway, Stewart, Stefanik,
2 and Hurd.

3 Also Present: Representatives Malinowski, Raskin, Bera,
4 Cicillini, Connolly, Bass, Espaillat, Lieu, Hill, Deutch,
5 Rouda, Deutch, Gibbs, Wasserman Shultz, Wagner, Welch, Mast,
6 Tlaib, Ocasio Cortez, Jordan, McCaul, Meadows, and Roy.

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1 Appearances:

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4 For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:

5 [REDACTED]

6 [REDACTED]

7 [REDACTED]

8 [REDACTED]

9 [REDACTED]

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15 [REDACTED]

16 [REDACTED]

17 [REDACTED]

18 [REDACTED]

19 [REDACTED]

20 [REDACTED]

21 [REDACTED]

22 [REDACTED]

23 [REDACTED]

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1 For the COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM:

2 [REDACTED]

3 [REDACTED]

4

5 For the COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS:

6 [REDACTED]

7 [REDACTED]

8 [REDACTED]

9

10 For GORDON SONDLAND:

11

12 ROBERT D. LUSKIN

13 KWAME J. MANLEY

14 DANIEL ALAN HOLMAN

15 PAUL HASTINGS LLP

16 875 15th Street, NW

17 Washington, D.C. 20005

18 and

19 JAMES T. MCDERMOTT

20 BALL JANIK LLP

21 101 SW Main Street

22 Suite 1100

23 Portland, Oregon 97204

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1 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Let's come to order. At the
2 outset, I want to express -- I know what many of are of
3 feeling this morning over the loss of our colleague, Elijah
4 Cummings. There are few members, I think, that have ever
5 served in this body who enjoyed wider respect and love among
6 their colleagues as Elijah Cummings.

7 He was a dear friend to many of us. He was an
8 inspiration to all of us. I spoke with him repeatedly while
9 he was convalescing, and he was always offering his support
10 and guidance and his superb example. We lost a giant among
11 us. And I wanted to relay something that he -- a poem that
12 he cited in his, as I understand, his first 1-minute as a new
13 member of the House of Representatives more than 20 years ago
14 by Dr. Benjamin E. Mays.

15 I have only just a minute. Only 60 seconds in it.
16 Forced upon me, can't refuse it, didn't seek it, didn't
17 choose it, but it's up to me to use it. I must suffer if I
18 lose it. Give account if I abuse it. Just a tiny little
19 minute, but eternity is in it.

20 That so typifies Elijah Cummings, who I think viewed
21 every minute as a blessing and not to be squandered. And
22 truly lived every minute as if it might be his last, and gave
23 us just an incredible legacy.

24 So with your indulgence, if we could pause for a moment
25 of silence in memory of our colleague, Elijah Cummings.

1 [Pause.]

2 THE CHAIRMAN: I don't know if one of my colleagues in
3 the minority might like to make a statement about Elijah.

4 MR. JORDAN: Thank you, Chairman. And let me just echo
5 what you said. I think the folks in Baltimore, the whole
6 State of Maryland, this town, and frankly the whole country
7 are saddened by the loss of our friend. And he truly was a
8 friend to both sides of the aisle.

9 And I will say, personally, I am, like all of of you,
10 I'm going to miss him, I'm going to miss just debating with
11 him, arguing with him, he was special. And it was funny,
12 because we would debate and go at it in committee and then
13 I'd see him in the gym and we'd be talking about the normal
14 things that folks talk about. He was a good man. He was a
15 good chairman. And, like I said, I think this whole town and
16 the whole country is saddened by the loss of Chairman
17 Cummings. So thank for the moment of silence and your words.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: I thank you, Mr. Jordan, and we did some
19 soul searching about whether we should, or could, go forward
20 today, but I think we felt that he was so dedicated to his
21 work that he would want the work to continue, and so we plow
22 forward.

23 Good morning, Ambassador Sondland, and welcome to the
24 House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which,
25 along with the Foreign Affairs and Oversight Committees, is

1 conducting this investigation as part of the official
2 impeachment inquiry of the House of Representatives. Today's
3 deposition is being conducted as part of the inquiry.

4 In light of attempts by the State Department to direct
5 you not to cooperate with the inquiry, the committee had no
6 choice but to compel your appearance today. We thank you for
7 complying with the duly authorized congressional subpoena.
8 After creating and operating a successful hotel business, the
9 Senate confirmed Ambassador Sondland on June 28, 2019, to
10 serve as Ambassador -- oh, sorry, 2018. If it had been 2019
11 it would be a completely different circumstance -- to serve
12 as the Ambassador to the European Union in Brussels.

13 Ambassador Sondland's appearance today under subpoena,
14 as a result of the State Department's decision, in
15 coordination with the White House to obstruct the impeachment
16 inquiry by directing the Ambassador at the 11th hour not to
17 appear on October 8th for his scheduled deposition. The
18 committee was therefore forced to issue a subpoena for
19 Ambassador Sondland's appearance today.

20 In the intervening week, the committee has collected
21 important evidence and learned a great deal of new
22 information, including through powerful and detailed
23 testimony of Ambassador Yovanovitch, Dr. Fiona Hill, Deputy
24 Assistant Secretary of State George Kent, and Ambassador
25 McKinley. The committee will also hear from Ambassador Bill

1 Taylor, our Charge d'Affaires in Kyiv next week, among
2 others.

3 And, Ambassador Sondland, we look forward to hearing
4 your testimony today about your involvement in Ukraine policy
5 and efforts to secure a White House meeting with President
6 Zelensky, as well as the July 25 call between President Trump
7 and Ukrainian President Zelensky, and the documentary record
8 that has come to light about efforts to get the Ukrainians to
9 announce publicly investigations into two areas President
10 Trump asked President Zelensky to pursue: the Bidens and the
11 conspiracy about Ukraine's purported interference in the 2016
12 U.S. elections.

13 Before I turn to committee counsel to begin the
14 deposition, and I know your counsel has some things to put on
15 the record, I invite the ranking member to make any opening
16 remarks.

17 MR. NUNES: Ambassador, welcome. Thank you for being
18 here today. Before we begin, I'm going to yield to
19 Mr. Jordan for our opening statement, but I just want to
20 raise to the majority that both Foreign Affairs and Oversight
21 were informed of these new meetings next week. I would just
22 state that if we're going to continue this circus, I, at
23 least, would like to know what time the circus begins. I
24 don't know if that was done on purpose to the Intelligence
25 Committee Republicans, but my colleagues from both Foreign

1 Affairs and Oversight were notified. So I hope in the
2 future, that we learn at the same time that other colleagues
3 know about the start times. And with that, I will yield to
4 Mr. Jordan.

5 MR. JORDAN: Thank you. I thank the gentleman for
6 yielding. Ambassador, thank you for being here today. Thank
7 you for your service to our country. On September 24th,
8 Speaker Pelosi unilaterally announced that the House was
9 beginning a so-called impeachment inquiry. On October 2,
10 Speaker Pelosi promised that this so-called inquiry --
11 impeachment inquiry, would treat the President with fairness.

12 However, Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Schiff, and the
13 Democrats are not living up to that basic promise. Instead,
14 Democrats are conducting a rushed, closed-door, and
15 unprecedented inquiry.

16 Democrats are ignoring 45 years of bipartisan
17 procedures, procedures that were designed to provide elements
18 of fundamental fairness and due process in past impeachment
19 inquiries, and the majority and minority had coequal subpoena
20 authority and the right to require a committee vote on
21 subpoenas. The President's counsel had a right to attend all
22 depositions and hearings, including those held in executive
23 session. The President's counsel had the right to
24 cross-examine witnesses, the right to propose witnesses. The
25 President's counsel also had the right to present evidence,

1 object to the admission of evidence, and to review all
2 evidence presented both favorable and unfavorable.

3 Speaker Pelosi and Chairman Schiff's so-company
4 impeachment inquiry has none of these guarantees of
5 fundamental fairness and fundamental due process. Most
6 disappointing. Democrats are conducting this so-called
7 impeachment inquiry behind closed doors. This seems to be
8 nothing more than hiding this work from the American people.
9 The 330 million people who are represented by Members of
10 Congress don't get to see any of it.

11 If Democrats intend to undue the will of the American
12 people, just a year before the next election, they should at
13 least do so as transparently, and be willing to be
14 accountable for their actions. With that, I yield back.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: I thank you, and I will yield to my
16 counsel. I do want to point out that we are following all
17 the deposition notice requirements, and indeed, the same
18 requirements that the now minority observed when they were in
19 the majority. Mr. Goldman.

20 MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is the
21 deposition of Ambassador Gordon Sondland, conducted by the
22 House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, pursuant to
23 the impeachment inquiry announced by the Speaker of the House
24 on September 24th.

25 Ambassador Sondland, could you please state your full

1 name and spell your last name for the record.

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Gordon David Sondland,
3 S-O-N-D-L-A-N-D.

4 MR. GOLDMAN: Along with other proceedings in
5 furtherance of this inquiry, this deposition is part of a
6 joint investigation led by the Intelligence Committee in
7 coordination with the Committees on Foreign Affairs and
8 Oversight and Reform. In the room today are minority staff
9 from the Oversight Committee. The majority staff are
10 mourning together the loss of Chairman Cummings and will not
11 be here today. In addition, there is majority staff and
12 minority staff from both the Foreign Affairs Committee and
13 the House Intelligence Committee.

14 This is a staff-led deposition, but members, of course,
15 as has been the case all along, may ask questions during
16 their allotted time. My name is Daniel Goldman, I'm the
17 director of investigation for the HPSCI majority staff, and I
18 want to thank you for coming in today for this deposition.

19 Let me briefly do some introductions. To my right is
20 Daniel Noble, senior investigative counsel for the
21 Intelligence Committee. Mr. Noble and I will be conducting
22 most of the interview for the majority. Now I will let my
23 counterparts from the minority introduce themselves.

24 MR. CASTOR: Good morning, Steve Castor with the
25 Republican staff of the Oversight Committee.

1 MS. CASULLI: Good morning, Laura Casulli, deputy
2 general counsel, minority, HPSCI.

3 MR. KOREN: Good morning, sir. Michael Koren, House
4 Oversight Republican staff.

5 MR. GOLDMAN: This deposition will be conducted entirely
6 at the unclassified level. However, the deposition is being
7 conducted in HPSCI's secure spaces and in the presence of
8 staff with appropriate security clearances. It is the
9 committee's expectation that neither the questions asked of
10 the witness nor the answers by the witness or witness'
11 counsel, which does not have security clearance, will require
12 discussion of any information that is currently, or at any
13 point, could be properly classified under Executive Order
14 13526.

15 Moreover, EO 13526 states that, quote: In no case shall
16 information be classified and continue to be maintained as
17 classified, or fail to be declassified, unquote, for the
18 purpose of concealing any violations of law or preventing
19 embarrassment of any person or entity. If any of our
20 questions can only be answered with classified information,
21 Ambassador Sondland, we'd ask that you inform us of that
22 before you answer the question and we can adjust accordingly.

23 Today's deposition is not being taken in executive
24 session, but because of the sensitive and confidential nature
25 of some of the topics and materials that will be discussed,

1 as well as the House rules, access to the transcript of the
2 deposition will be limited to the three committees in
3 attendance. And under those House deposition rules, no
4 Member of Congress nor any staff member can discuss the
5 substance of the testimony that you provide today. You and
6 your attorney will also have an opportunity to review the
7 transcript.

8 Before we begin, I'd like to go over some of the ground
9 rules for this deposition. We will be following the House
10 regulations for depositions, and we have previously provided
11 those regulations to your counsel. The deposition will
12 proceed as follows: The majority will be given 1 hour to ask
13 questions, and then the minority will be given 1 hour to ask
14 questions. Thereafter, we will alternate back and forth
15 between majority and minority in 45-minute rounds until
16 questioning is complete. We will take periodic breaks, but
17 if you need a break at any time, please let us know.

18 Under the House deposition rules, counsel for other
19 persons or other government agencies may not attend. You are
20 allowed to have an attorney present during this deposition,
21 and I see that you have brought some. At this time, if
22 counsel could please make their appearances for the record.

23 MR. LUSKIN: Good morning. I'm Robert Luskin from the
24 law firm of Paul Hastings, with me is my partner Kwame
25 Manley, and we are joined by Jim McDermott from the law firm

1 of Ball Janik, and we're here as counsel for Ambassador
2 Sondland.

3 MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you. Ambassador Sondland, there is
4 a stenographer taking down everything that is said here today
5 in order to make a written record of the deposition. For
6 that record to be complete, please wait until I finish or we
7 finish all the questions that are asked of you, and we will
8 do our very best to wait until you finish your answers before
9 moving on to the next question.

10 It's important that you and staff and members not speak
11 over each other. So please do wait until the question is
12 finished. The stenographer cannot record nonverbal answers,
13 such as shaking your head, or an uh-huh, so it's important
14 that you answer each question with an audible verbal answer,
15 particularly if it's a yes or no question.

16 We ask that you give complete replies to questions based
17 on your best recollection. If a question is unclear or you
18 are uncertain in your response, please let us know. And if
19 you do not know the answer to a question or cannot remember,
20 simply say so.

21 You may only refuse to answer a question to preserve a
22 privilege recognized by the Committee. If you refuse to
23 answer a question on the basis of privilege, staff may either
24 proceed with the deposition or seek a ruling from the
25 chairman on any objection, in person or otherwise, during the

1 deposition at a time of the majority staff's choosing. If
2 the chair overrules any such objection, you are required to
3 answer the question.

4 And, finally, you are reminded that it is unlawful to
5 deliberately provide false information to Members of Congress
6 or staff. It is imperative that you not only answer our
7 questions truthfully, but that you give full and complete
8 answers to all questions asked of you. Omissions may also be
9 considered as false statements. As this deposition is under
10 oath, Ambassador Sondland, would you please stand right now
11 and raise your right hand to be sworn.

12 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're about
13 to give is the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do.

15 MR. GORDON: Let the record reflect that the witness has
16 been sworn. And now, Ambassador Sondland, if you have any
17 opening remarks, this is the time.

18 MR. LUSKIN: And, Mr. Goldman, with your permission, a
19 couple of housekeeping matters. Last night, I received a
20 letter from the Department of State, which I guess I would
21 characterize as an admonitory letter directed towards
22 Ambassador Sondland. I'd like to share a copy with the
23 Committee and have it placed in the record.

24 But we'd also want to make clear that we do not
25 understand that letter as asserting or directing that

1 Ambassador Sondland assert any privilege, and therefore, he
2 intends to answer all of your questions today without
3 reservation and without the assertion of any privilege.

4 The second point is that Ambassador Sondland is pleased
5 to be here in response to your subpoena for his testimony,
6 but the Committee also served a subpoena duces tecum on
7 Ambassador Sondland directing him to produce documents. As
8 we have discussed with staff, Ambassador Sondland believes
9 that he is precluded by law from producing official records
10 that are in his possession, all of which have been turned
11 over to the Department of State, and therefore, he
12 respectfully declines to produce those documents this
13 morning.

14 But we also wish to emphasize that it's his belief, and
15 ours, that the Committee should have access to all relevant
16 documents, and he regrets that they have not been provided in
17 advance of his testimony. Having those documents would lead
18 to a more fulsome and accurate inquiry into the matters at
19 hand. Indeed, Ambassador Sondland has not had access to all
20 of the State Department records that would help him refresh
21 his recollection in anticipation of this testimony.

22 And we are also aware of other documents that we think
23 would corroborate his testimony in material respects. So it
24 is with regret, and not out of any disrespect for the
25 committee or any challenge to its legitimacy, that we must

1 decline to produce documents in response to that subpoena.
2 And let me share the letter, which is addressed to the three
3 chairmen this morning, if I may.

4 MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Luskin. We also regret
5 that we do not have the documents. And one thing that I
6 would just say to Mr. Sondland, before your opening
7 statement. Because we don't have the documents that may be
8 relevant to your testimony, you may find that some of our
9 questions seem basic. But because we are in a factfinding
10 effort here, we don't know what we don't know, so we may ask
11 questions that seem basic. We'd still ask that you provide
12 full answers to them.

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Understood.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: You're recognized for your opening
15 statement.

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And
17 thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony
18 today. I was truly disappointed that the State Department
19 prevented me at the last minute from testifying earlier on
20 October 8th, 2019. But your issuance of a subpoena has
21 supported my appearance here today, and I'm pleased to
22 provide the following testimony.

23 First, let me say that it is an honor to serve the
24 people of the United States as their Ambassador to the
25 European Union. The U.S. Mission to the EU is the direct

1 link between the United States and the 28-member EU
2 countries, America's longest standing allies and one of the
3 largest economic blocks in the world. A strong united and
4 peaceful Europe helps to uphold the norms that maintain
5 political stability, and promote economic prosperity around
6 the world.

7 Second, I would like to thank my staff and the many
8 dedicated public servants with whom I have the privilege to
9 work every day. I have benefited immeasurably from their
10 collective wisdom, experience, and hard work, and their
11 patriotism serves as an example to us all.

12 Third, let me note that my goal today is to answer your
13 questions directly and clearly to the best of my knowledge.
14 I have not shared this opening statement in advance with
15 either the White House or the State Department. These are my
16 own words. It is important to emphasize at the outset that I
17 have had limited time to review the relevant facts in order
18 to prepare for my testimony. I will do my utmost to answer
19 the committee's questions fully and truthfully, but the
20 shortness of time is challenging.

21 And let me also say that I have good friends from both
22 sides of the aisle, many of whom have reached out to me to
23 provide support. As we go through this process, I understand
24 that some people may have their own specific agendas. Some
25 want me to say things to protect the President at all costs,

1 Some may want me to provide damning facts to support the
2 other side. But none of that matters to me. I have no
3 interest in pursuing higher office or taking political shots.
4 Simply put, I am not here to push an agenda, I'm here to tell
5 the truth.

6 I am a lifelong Republican. Like all of my political
7 ambassadorial colleagues, I am an appointee of the President,
8 and I serve at the pleasure of the President. I know that
9 party affiliations are set aside when representing the United
10 States. Having served on nonpartisan commissions by the
11 appointment of three Democratic governors, and on the
12 transition team for Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski, another
13 Democrat, I am well-accustomed to working across the aisle.
14 For example, I worked briefly with former Vice President
15 Biden's office in connection with the Vice President's
16 nationwide Anti-Cancer Initiative, and I admire his long
17 record of public service. I had bipartisan support for my
18 ambassadorial nomination. And my successful business
19 background and my results-oriented focus made me, in my view,
20 well-suited to bring the fresh perspective to U.S. foreign
21 policy that the President had sought.

22 As you know, I was confirmed by the Senate in a
23 bipartisan voice vote as Ambassador to the EU on June 28th,
24 2018, and I assumed that role in Brussels on July 9th, 2018.
25 From my very first days as Ambassador, Ukraine has been a

1 part of my broader work pursuing U.S. national interests.
2 Ukraine's political and economic development are critical to
3 the long lasting stability of Europe. Moreover, the conflict
4 in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, which began nearly 5 years
5 ago, continues as one of the most significant security crises
6 for Europe and the United States. As the U.S. Ambassador to
7 the EU, I have always viewed my Ukraine work as central to
8 advancing U.S.-EU foreign policy. Indeed, for decades, under
9 both Republican and Democrat administrations, the United
10 States has viewed Ukraine with strategic importance, in part
11 to counter Russian aggression in Europe and to support
12 Ukraine energy independence.

13 My involvement in issues concerning Ukraine, while a
14 small part of my portfolio, was nevertheless central to my
15 ambassadorial responsibilities. In this sense, Ukraine is
16 similar to other non-EU countries, such as Venezuela, Iran,
17 and Georgia, with respect to which my mission and I
18 coordinate closely with our EU partners to promote policies
19 that reflect our common values and interests.

20 I have always endeavored to keep my State Department and
21 National Security Council colleagues informed of my actions
22 and to seek their input. I understand that all of my actions
23 involving Ukraine had the blessing of Secretary Pompeo, as my
24 work was consistent with longstanding U.S. foreign policy
25 objectives. Indeed, very recently, Secretary Pompeo sent me

1 a congratulatory note that I was doing great work, and he
2 encouraged me to, quote, "keep banging away."

3 While I continue my work in Europe, here in Washington
4 there continues to be inaccurate and unsourced speculation
5 regarding my work in Ukraine. To be helpful as you frame
6 your questions, let me share an outline of the facts.

7 First, as Ambassador to the EU, my Ukraine portfolio
8 began on day one, from the very first briefing materials I
9 received in the summer of 2018. Although it did not
10 consistently occupy a great deal of my time, involvement in
11 Ukraine matters was considered by the career professionals
12 who prepared my briefing materials to be an important part of
13 my portfolio.

14 On July 13th, 2018, just 4 days after assuming my post,
15 I received a delegation from the Government of Ukraine at the
16 U.S. Mission in Brussels. This meeting was sought by
17 then-Ukraine Government, and like most meetings, was proposed
18 and arranged by career EU Mission staff. Following those
19 initial contacts, I attended numerous meetings in Brussels
20 and other locations in Europe during the fall of 2018, to
21 advance U.S. interests in Ukraine. These interests reflect a
22 whole-of-government engagement, not just a narrow focus. We
23 discussed economic development, energy independence, and
24 security concerns regarding Russian aggression in Ukraine.
25 From my position in Brussels, my goal has always been to

1 facilitate and expedite the integration of Ukraine into the
2 broader western norms of Europe and the United States.

3 To be clear, my role has been to support my colleagues
4 in the State Department for whom Ukraine issues are a
5 full-time job and to lend my voice when helpful. These
6 professionals included, first and foremost, the Head of
7 Mission, which at the start of my service was Ambassador
8 Marie Yovanovitch, and more recently, Charge d'Affaires
9 William Taylor and their embassy staff.

10 I worked with Ambassador Yovanovitch personally during
11 my first official visit to Ukraine in February of 2019, and I
12 found her to be an excellent diplomat with a deep command of
13 Ukrainian internal dynamics, the U.S.-Ukraine relationship
14 and associated regional issues. She was a delight to work
15 with during our visit to Odessa, Ukraine. I was never a part
16 of any campaign to disparage or dislodge her, and I regretted
17 her departure.

18 Similarly, in my time working with Ambassador Taylor, I
19 have found him to be an insightful, strategic, and effective
20 representative of U.S. interests. He cares deeply about the
21 future of Ukraine and is a dedicated public servant. The
22 Ukraine Mission worked hand-in-hand with Special Envoy Kurt
23 Volker, another experienced diplomat, with a special remit to
24 address the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea.
25 Mr. Volker was an exemplary professional.

1 I viewed my role as adding value to the broader efforts
2 of the Ukraine team through my engagements with high level
3 leadership in Brussels and Washington. During my first
4 official trip to Ukraine on February 26th, 2019, I traveled
5 to Odessa with Special Envoy Kurt Volker, former EU Deputy
6 Secretary General Jean Christophe-Belliard, a representative
7 of the Romanian EU presidency, and many other officials.
8 Joined by Ambassador Yovanovitch, U.S. Navy Commander Matthew
9 Powell, and many others, we met with then-Ukraine President
10 Poroshenko on the U.S. Navy ship Donald J. Cook. This visit
11 demonstrated the U.S. military's commitment to Ukraine, and
12 furthered our broader agenda of aligning with our EU partners
13 to counterbalance Russian influence in the region. This
14 visit followed on the heels of a congressional delegation to
15 Brussels led by Speaker Pelosi. This delegation met with me
16 and senior EU leadership.

17 In these meetings in Brussels and Odessa, as in nearly
18 every meeting in which Ukraine issues were discussed,
19 corruption and rule of law were central topics of
20 conversation. Corruption poses challenges to the legitimacy
21 and stability of government. Corruption is also an economic
22 issue. Successive Ukrainian governments have sought to
23 attract Western investors as a counterbalance to Russian
24 interference and oligarch control of key Ukrainian companies.
25 Western investment is fully in the strategic interest of the

1 United States and our EU partners. However, efforts to
2 access private markets have been made extremely difficult by
3 the longstanding corruption.

4 As one example, we frequently had conversations with
5 Ukrainian leaders about transparency and corporate governance
6 issues involving Naftogaz. In my experience, those issues
7 have been the constant context in which both my team and our
8 Ukraine counterparts have raised corruption problems for many
9 years. We have received very positive feedback from the NSC
10 regarding our joint efforts to address these challenges in
11 Ukraine.

12 On April 24th, 2019, Volodymyr Zelensky was elected
13 President of Ukraine, beating incumbent President Petro
14 Poroshenko with nearly 73 percent of the vote. This was a
15 momentous event in Ukraine, political history, and for the
16 overall U.S.-Ukraine relationship.

17 On May 20th, 2019, given the significance of this
18 election, I attended the inauguration of President Zelensky
19 as part of the U.S. delegation led by U.S. Energy Secretary
20 Rick Perry, along with Senator Ron Johnson, Special Envoy
21 Volker, and Mr. Alex Vindman from the NSC. During this
22 visit, we developed positive views of the new Ukraine
23 President and his desire to promote a stronger relationship
24 between Kyiv and Washington, to make reforms necessary to
25 attract Western economic investment, and to address Ukraine's

1 well-known and longstanding corruption issues.

2 On May 23rd, 2019, 3 days after the Zelensky
3 inauguration, we were in the -- we, in the U.S. delegation,
4 briefed President Trump and key aides at the White House. We
5 emphasized the strategic importance of Ukraine and the
6 strengthening relationship with President Zelensky, a
7 reformer who received a strong mandate from the Ukrainian
8 people to fight corruption and pursue greater economic
9 prosperity. We asked the White House to arrange a working
10 phone call from President Trump and a working Oval Office
11 visit.

12 However, President Trump was skeptical that Ukraine was
13 serious about reforms and anti-corruption, and he directed
14 those of us present at the meeting to talk to Mr. Giuliani,
15 his personal attorney about his concerns.

16 It was apparent to all of us that the key to changing
17 the President's mind on Ukraine was Mr. Giuliani. It is my
18 understanding that Energy Secretary Perry and Special Envoy
19 Volker took the lead on reaching out to Mr. Giuliani as the
20 President had directed.

21 Indeed, Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, and I were
22 disappointed by our May 23rd, 2019, White House debriefings.
23 We strongly believe that a call and a White House meeting
24 between Presidents Trump and Zelensky was important, and that
25 these should be scheduled promptly and without preconditions.

1 We were also disappointed by the President's direction
2 that we involve Mr. Giuliani. Our view was that the men and
3 women of the State Department, not the President's personal
4 lawyer, should take responsibility for all aspects of U.S.
5 foreign policy towards Ukraine. However, based on the
6 President's direction we were faced with a choice. We could
7 abandon the goal of a White House meeting for President
8 Zelensky, which we all believed was crucial to strengthening
9 U.S.-Ukrainian ties and furthering long-held U.S. foreign
10 policy goals in the region, or we could do as President Trump
11 directed and talk to Mr. Giuliani to address the President's
12 concerns. We chose the later path -- excuse me, we chose the
13 latter path, which seemed to all of us, Secretary Perry,
14 Ambassador Volker, and myself, to be the better alternative.
15 But I did not understand until much later that Mr. Giuliani's
16 agenda might have also included an effort to prompt the
17 Ukrainians to investigate Vice President Biden or his son, or
18 to involve Ukrainians directly or indirectly in the
19 President's 2020 reelection campaign.

20 Following my return to Brussels, and continuing my focus
21 on stronger U.S.-EU ties, my Mission hosted a U.S.
22 Independence Day event on June 4th, 2019, 1 month early.
23 Despite press reports, this event was planned months in
24 advance, and involved approximately 700 guests from
25 government, the diplomatic corps, the media, business, and

1 civil society. The night featured remarks by the Ambassador
2 and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign
3 Affairs. Following the main event, we hosted a smaller
4 separate dinner party for about 30 people. President
5 Zelensky and several other leaders of EU and non-EU member
6 states attended the dinner, along with Secretary Perry,
7 U.S. State Department Counselor Brechbuhl on behalf of
8 Secretary Pompeo, and numerous other key U.S. and EU
9 officials. Though long-planned in advance with the focus on
10 improving Trans-Atlantic relations, we also viewed this event
11 as an opportunity to present President Zelensky to various EU
12 and U.S. officials and to build upon the enhanced government
13 ties. The event was very well received, and contrary to some
14 reporting, Bono did not attend or perform.

15 During a trip to Washington on July 10th, 2019, with the
16 express, advance invitation of Ambassador Bolton, I joined
17 White House meetings between representatives of Ukraine
18 National Security and Defense, with U.S. NSC officials,
19 including Ambassador Bolton, along with Secretary Perry, and
20 Ambassador Volker. I understood following the meeting, as
21 reflected in the summary of a phone call the next day between
22 Secretary Perry and Ambassador Bolton, that there was a
23 difference of opinion between Secretary Perry, Ambassador
24 Volker, and myself, on the one hand, and the NSC on the
25 other. We three favored promptly scheduling a call and

1 meeting between Presidents Trump and Zelensky; the NSC did
2 not.

3 But if Ambassador Bolton, Dr. Hill, or others harbored
4 any misgivings about the propriety of what we were doing,
5 they never shared those misgivings with me, then or later.
6 We had regular communications with the NSC about Ukraine,
7 both before and after the July meeting. And neither
8 Ambassador Bolton, Dr. Hill, or anyone else on the NSC staff
9 ever expressed any concerns to me about our efforts, any
10 complaints about coordination between State and the NSC, or
11 most importantly, any concerns that we were acting
12 improperly.

13 Furthermore, my boss, Secretary Pompeo, was very
14 supportive of our Ukraine strategy. After a series of
15 delays, on July 25, 2019, President Trump called President
16 Zelensky to congratulate him on recently concluded Ukraine
17 parliamentary elections, which, in Ukraine, are separate from
18 the presidential elections. This was an important call, and
19 I was pleased to hear that it occurred. But let me
20 emphasize, I was not on that July 25th, 2019, call, and I did
21 not see a transcript of that call until September 25th, 2019,
22 when the White House publicly released it. None of the brief
23 and general call summaries I received contained any mention
24 of Burisma or former Vice President Biden, nor even suggested
25 that President Trump had made any kind of request of

1 President Zelensky. I heard afterwards that the July 25th,
2 2019, call went well in solidifying a relationship between
3 the two leaders.

4 On July 26th, Special Envoy Volker and I, along with
5 others, met with President Zelensky in Kyiv, Ukraine. This
6 was a significant bilateral meeting involving large teams
7 from the United States and Ukraine that had been planned by
8 Special Envoy Volker's team weeks in advance. It was planned
9 weeks in advance, and was not, in any way, tied to the
10 July 25th, 2019, White House call.

11 I was invited to this meeting in early July. Indeed, as
12 we planned the Kyiv meeting, we did not know when or even if
13 the White House call would occur. During this July 26th
14 meeting in Kyiv, we were able to promote further engagement,
15 including discussions about a future Zelensky visit to the
16 White House. I do recall a brief discussion with President
17 Trump before my visit to Kyiv. The call was very short,
18 nonsubstantive, and did not encompass any of the substance of
19 the July 25, 2019 White House call with President Zelensky.

20 Finally, the White House and the NSC invited me to the
21 United Nations for the first face-to-face meetings between
22 Presidents Trump and Zelensky in New York City, which I
23 attended on September 25, 2019. This was a positive meeting,
24 and I'm pleased that the leaders were able to meet for the
25 first time face-to-face.

1 Given the various misstatements in the press, I want to
2 take this time to clarify several issues, including questions
3 involving the Ukraine public statement, the involvement of
4 former Mayor Giuliani, and other alleged issues. First, I
5 knew that a public embrace of anti-corruption reforms by
6 Ukraine was one of the preconditions for securing a White
7 House meeting with President Zelensky. My view was, and has
8 always been, that such Western reforms are consistent with
9 U.S. support for rule of law in Ukraine, going back decades
10 under both Republican and Democrat administrations. Nothing
11 about that request raised any red flags for me, Ambassador
12 Volker, or Ambassador Taylor.

13 Consequently, I supported the efforts of Ambassador
14 Volker to encourage the Ukrainian Government to adopt the
15 public statement setting out its reform priorities. My
16 recollection is that the statement was written primarily by
17 the Ukrainians, with Ambassador Volker's guidance, and I
18 offered my assistance when asked. This was the, quote,
19 "deliverable," closed quote, referenced in some of my
20 messages. A deliverable public statement that President
21 Trump wanted to see or hear before a White House meeting
22 could occur. The fact that we were working on this public
23 statement was no secret.

24 More broadly, such public statements are a common and
25 necessary part of U.S. diplomacy. Requesting that parties

1 align their public messaging in advance of any important
2 leadership meeting is a routine way to leverage the power of
3 a face-to-face exchange.

4 Second, there has been much press speculation about my
5 own interactions with former Mayor Rudy Giuliani. And this
6 is important. To the best of my recollection, I met
7 Mr. Giuliani in person only once, at a reception at which I
8 briefly shook his hand in 2016, almost 2 years before I
9 became an Ambassador. This was before I became Ambassador to
10 the EU.

11 In contrast, during my time as Ambassador, I do not
12 recall ever having met with Mr. Giuliani in person. And I
13 only spoke with him a few times. Ambassador Volker
14 introduced me to Mr. Giuliani electronically. My best
15 recollection is that I spoke with Mr. Giuliani for the first
16 time in early August of 2019, which was after the
17 congratulatory phone call from President Trump on July 25th
18 and after the bilateral meeting with President Zelensky on
19 July 26th. My recollection is that Mr. Giuliani and I spoke
20 no more than 2 or 3 times by phone for about a few minutes
21 each time.

22 As I stated earlier, I understood from President Trump,
23 at the May 23rd White House debriefing, that he wanted the
24 inaugural delegation to talk with Mr. Giuliani concerning our
25 efforts to arrange a White House meeting for President

1 Zelensky. Taking directions from the President, as I must, I
2 spoke with Mr. Giuliani for that limited purpose. In these
3 short conversations, Mr. Giuliani emphasized that the
4 President wanted a public statement from President Zelensky
5 committing Ukraine to look into anti-corruption issues.

6 Mr. Giuliani specifically mentioned the 2016 election,
7 including the DNC server, and Burisma as two anticorruption
8 investigatory topics of importance for the President. Let me
9 be clear. Let me be clear: Mr. Giuliani does not work for
10 me or for my Mission, and I do not know what official or
11 unofficial role, if any, he has with the State Department.
12 To my knowledge, he is one of the President's personal
13 lawyers.

14 However, my understanding was that the President
15 directed Mr. Giuliani's participation, and that Mr. Giuliani
16 was expressing the concerns of the President, and that
17 Mr. Giuliani had already spoken with Secretary Perry and
18 Ambassador Volker. Ten weeks after the President, on
19 May 23rd, directed the inaugural delegation to talk with
20 Mr. Giuliani, I had my first phone conversations with him in
21 early August of 2019. I listened to Mr. Giuliani's concerns.
22 My goal was to keep the focus on Ukraine and the strengthened
23 relationship with the United States.

24 As an aside, please know that I would have not
25 recommended that Mr. Giuliani, or any private citizen for

1 that matter, be involved in these foreign policy matters.
2 However, given the President's explicit direction, as well as
3 the importance we attached to arranging a White House meeting
4 between Presidents Trump and Zelensky, we agreed to do as
5 President Trump directed.

6 Third, given many inaccurate press reports, let me be
7 clear about the following: I do not recall that Mr. Giuliani
8 discussed former Vice President Biden or his son, Hunter
9 Biden, with me. Like many of you, I read the transcript of
10 the Trump-Zelensky call for the first time when it was
11 released publicly by the White House on September 25th, 2019.

12 Although Mr. Giuliani did mention the name Burisma in
13 August of 2019, I understood that Burisma was one of many
14 examples of Ukrainian companies run by oligarchs and lacking
15 the type of corporate governance structures found in Western
16 companies. I did not know until more recent press reports
17 that Hunter Biden was on the board of Burisma. Again, I
18 recall no discussions with any State Department or White
19 House official about former Vice President Biden or his son.
20 Nor do I recall taking part in any effort to encourage an
21 investigation into the Bidens.

22 I worked hard to keep the National Security Council,
23 including Ambassador Bolton and Dr. Hill, apprised of our
24 Ukrainian efforts. In fact, sometime in June of 2019,
25 Secretary Perry organized a conference call with Ambassador

1 Bolton, Ambassador Volker, myself, and others. We went over
2 the entire Ukraine strategy with Ambassador Bolton, who
3 agreed with the strategy and signed off on it. Indeed, over
4 the spring and summer of 2019, I received nothing but cordial
5 responses from Ambassador Bolton and Dr. Hill. Nothing was
6 ever raised to me about any concerns regarding our Ukrainian
7 policy.

8 While I have not seen Dr. Hill's testimony, I am
9 surprised and disappointed by the media reports of her
10 critical comments. To put it clearly, neither she nor
11 Ambassador Bolton shared any critical comments with me, even
12 after our July 10th, 2019 White House meeting. So I have to
13 view her testimony, if the media reports are accurate, as the
14 product of hindsight and in the context of the widely known
15 tensions between the National Security Council on one hand,
16 and the State Department on the other hand, which had
17 ultimate responsibility for executing U.S. policy overseas.

18 Again, I took my direction from Secretary Pompeo and
19 have had his consistent support in dealing with our Nation's
20 most sensitive secrets, even to this very day.

21 Fifth, certainly media outlets have misinterpreted my
22 text messages where I say, stop texting or call me. Any
23 implications that I was trying to avoid making a record of
24 our conversation is completely false. In my view, diplomacy
25 is handled best through back-and-forth conversation. The

1 complexity of international relations cannot be adequately
2 expressed in cryptic text messages. I simply prefer to talk
3 rather than text. I do this all the time with family,
4 friends, and former business associates, that is how I most
5 effectively get things done. My text messages comments were
6 an invitation to talk more, not to conceal the substance of
7 our communications.

8 Sixth, to the best of my recollection. I do not recall
9 any discussions with the White House on withholding U.S.
10 security assistance from Ukraine in return for assistance
11 with the President's 2020 reelection campaign. I recall that
12 in late July 2019, Ambassadors Volker, Taylor, and I
13 exchanged emails in which we all agreed that President
14 Zelensky should have no involvement in 2020 U.S. presidential
15 election politics.

16 At the same time, we believed strongly that U.S.
17 security assistance should not be withheld. Acting Charge
18 William Taylor raised concerns about the possibility that the
19 Ukrainians could perceive a linkage between U.S. security
20 assistance and the President's 2020 reelection campaign.
21 Taking the issue seriously and given the many versions of
22 speculation that have circulated about the security aid, I
23 called President Trump directly. I asked the President, what
24 do you want from Ukraine? The President responded, nothing.
25 There is no quid pro. The President repeated, no quid pro.

1 No quid pro quo multiple times. This was a very short call.
2 And I recall that the President was really in a bad mood.

3 I tried hard to address Ambassador Taylor's concerns
4 because he is valuable and effective diplomat, and I took
5 very seriously the issues he raised. I did not want
6 Ambassador Taylor to leave his post and generate even more
7 turnover in the Ukraine Mission. I further encouraged
8 Ambassador Taylor to contact Secretary Pompeo, as I followed
9 up as far as I could go. As you have seen in the press, my
10 contemporaneous messages support this recollection.

11 Let me state clearly, inviting a foreign government to
12 undertake investigations for the purpose of influencing an
13 upcoming U.S. election would be wrong. Withholding foreign
14 aid in order to pressure a foreign government to take such
15 steps would be wrong. I did not and would not ever
16 participate in such undertakings. In my opinion, security
17 aid to Ukraine was in our vital national interest and should
18 not have been delayed for any reason.

19 Simply put, my goal has always been to advance U.S.
20 interest in securing a strong relationship with Ukraine. I
21 continue to see our relationship with President Zelensky as
22 having great importance to national security, and I continue
23 to work to strengthen our ties, advance our mutual interests,
24 and secure a stable prosperous Ukraine for future
25 generations.

1 I will end my remarks the way I began. Ukraine is not a
2 dirty word. Ukraine is a fragile democracy fighting against
3 a brutal and unscrupulous Russian neighbor. A strong Ukraine
4 helps us to uphold the norms that maintain stability and
5 promote prosperity around the world. It remains an honor to
6 serve to people of the United States as their Ambassador to
7 the European Union. I look forward to going back to work
8 tomorrow to advance the interests of the United States of
9 America. Thank you.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your opening statement.
11 Mr. Goldman, you're recognized to begin an hour of
12 questioning.

13 MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 EXAMINATION

15 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

16 Q Ambassador Sondland, you mentioned, throughout your
17 opening statement, false or misleading press reports. Now,
18 no one would say that Congress is a steel trap when it comes
19 to information that may or may not be leaked, but it's very
20 hard to leak testimony that has not yet been given.

21 So I'm curious as to where you think the numerous press
22 reports about your upcoming testimony came from over the past
23 week?

24 A I don't know.

25 Q You did not speak with the press at all?

1 A I personally did not speak to the press.

2 Q Did you speak to anyone else who you knew would be
3 speaking to the press?

4 A I spoke with my lawyers.

5 Q I understand that, but how about anybody else?

6 A No.

7 Q How about from the date that you received the
8 notice to come and testify before Congress. I want to ask
9 you a few questions in terms of your preparation. Did you
10 speak with President Trump at all about your testimony prior
11 to coming here today?

12 A I saw President Trump at a reception for Finnish
13 President Niinisto. I ran into him in the cross hallway at
14 the White House. I said, I've been asked to come in and
15 testify. And there were a lot of people around. He said,
16 good, go tell the truth. That was the extent of our
17 conversation.

18 Q How about Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney?

19 A No.

20 Q Anyone else in the White House counsel's office?

21 A I had a brief conversation with the White House
22 counsel's office when the whistleblower's report came out
23 mentioning my name, and the White House counsel's office
24 reached me, I was in New York at the United Nation
25 Trans-Atlantic dinner. I stepped out of the meeting to take

1 the call, and I believe we had a short, fairly
2 nonsubstantive, 3-, 4-, 5-minute conversation. They wanted
3 me to come in for an interview, and I declined until I spoke
4 to my counsel, and I never did give that interview.

5 Q Do you know what date that dinner was?

6 A No, but I can --

7 Q It was in New York during the General Assembly?

8 A Yes.

9 Q Do you know if it was before the transcript of the
10 call record had been released?

11 A I don't.

12 Q And how about before the whistleblower complaint
13 was publicly released?

14 A I think the White House counsel, one of the White
15 House counsel said it was about to be released, or it was
16 imminent, and my name was in it.

17 Q Who --

18 A The real purpose of the call was they wanted me to
19 come in and do an interview with them.

20 Q What was the purpose of the interview?

21 A I don't know. They asked for an interview, and I
22 did not agree to an interview until I had spoken with
23 counsel, my own counsel.

24 Q Who did you speak to at the White House counsel's
25 office?

1 A I believe it was Michael Purpura (ph).

2 Q And did he tell you what the purpose of the
3 interview was?

4 A To go over my recollections and testimony.

5 Q Okay. Did you discuss your testimony here today
6 with Secretary Pompeo?

7 A I did not.

8 Q Ulrich Brechbuhl?

9 A No.

10 Q Anyone at the State Department's legal advisor's
11 office?

12 A No.

13 Q How about Ambassador Volker?

14 A I spoke with Ambassador Volker shortly after he
15 resigned and wished him well, and I asked him one question.
16 Have I ever met Rudy Giuliani? And he said, not with me
17 present you haven't. And I said, thank you. That was the
18 only conversation I had with him.

19 Q Why did you ask him if he knew whether you had met
20 someone?

21 A Because that would have been the only context in
22 which I would have met Mr. Giuliani would have been with him.

23 Q It would have been with him?

24 A Correct.

25 Q You never would have tried to organize a meeting on

1 your own with Rudy Giuliani?

2 A No, we never had a meeting.

3 Q I understand that. But you would have never tried
4 to organize a meeting with Rudy Giuliani without Kurt Volker?

5 A Let me see if I understand your question. Would I
6 have had a meeting with Rudy Giuliani one-on-one?

7 Q Yes.

8 A It would have probably served no purpose, since
9 Ambassador Volker and I were working together on this
10 project, although he did have meetings with Rudy Giuliani
11 without me.

12 Q And your testimony is that you never tried to
13 organize a meeting with Rudy Giuliani directly with Mr.
14 Giuliani?

15 A I think I may have texted Mr. Giuliani, and said,
16 can we get together? And we missed, we never were able to
17 organize anything. We never met.

18 Q Okay. Did you speak with Ambassador Taylor about
19 your testimony?

20 A No.

21 Q How about Secretary Perry?

22 A I have spoken with Secretary Perry on several
23 occasions relating to non-Ukraine business, and I did ask
24 Secretary Perry to refresh my memory about a couple of
25 meetings. Yes.

1 Q And can you describe what meetings you asked him to
2 refresh your memory about?

3 A The meeting that was apparently described in the
4 media by Dr. Hill where she said there was a bad meeting at
5 the White House, or something to the effect that the meeting
6 was abruptly terminated, and he said, I don't remember
7 anything of the kind. I thought it was a great meeting and
8 we all left happy.

9 Q So in response media reports about Dr. Hill's
10 testimony, you reached out to Secretary Perry to have a
11 discussion?

12 A I did.

13 Q So when was that, yesterday?

14 A I spoke with him yesterday, and I spoke with him
15 about 3 or 4 days ago.

16 Q What else did you discuss with him yesterday?

17 A We have an upcoming conference. My real reason for
18 talking to him was really about the conference on Sunday in
19 Brussels.

20 Q How about related to your testimony or potential
21 testimony, what else did you discuss with him?

22 A No, I only asked him if he recalled anything about
23 that meeting being abruptly terminated or bad or any bad
24 words, and he said nothing of the kind.

25 Q Are you referring to the July 10th meeting in the

1 White House?

2 A Correct.

3 Q And did you think it was appropriate to call
4 Secretary Perry, who's obviously another potential witness,
5 the day before your testimony to, quote, "refresh your
6 recollection," unquote?

7 A I didn't think it was inappropriate.

8 Q Do you understand that that may have the appearance
9 of trying to line up your testimony with Secretary Perry?

10 A I wanted to refresh my memory.

11 Q Did you consult your lawyer before you called
12 Secretary Perry?

13 A I did.

14 Q And without -- okay. And you told your lawyer
15 before you called Secretary Perry that you were going to call
16 him to refresh your recollection?

17 A I did.

18 Q And I won't ask you about those conversations since
19 I understand that they are protected. Did you ask about any
20 other media reports about Dr. Hill's testimony or Ambassador
21 Volker's testimony to Secretary Perry?

22 A Not that I can recall.

23 Q So it was just that July 10th meeting that you were
24 concerned about?

25 A I believe so, yeah.

1 Q Did you read The Wall Street Journal article
2 yesterday about an extensive interview with Secretary Perry?

3 A I did.

4 Q Did that help refresh your recollection as to what
5 occurred around May 23rd?

6 A It was consistent with my statement that I gave.
7 It really was quite harmonized with my statement, and not
8 because they were harmonized, but because that's what
9 happened.

10 Q So you didn't need to refresh your recollection
11 about the May 23rd meeting, just the July 10th meeting?

12 A Correct. Because Dr. Hill's testimony was so -- at
13 least as it was reported, was so contrary to any recollection
14 I had, I thought I must have slept through something and
15 missed something. If someone said that a meeting was
16 abruptly terminated and that angry words were used, when, in
17 fact, we had a great meeting, we all tweeted about it
18 afterwards, and that was that.

19 Q Was it a perfect meeting?

20 A I wouldn't call it a perfect meeting.

21 Q Are you aware --

22 A I got the joke. It took me a minute.

23 Q Are you aware of any efforts by Secretary Pompeo or
24 others at the State Department to try to stop you from
25 testifying here today?

1 A I think they wanted to discourage my testimony, and
2 I said, first of all, I wanted to testify when it was
3 noncompulsory, and I wanted to get my story out and get it on
4 the record. And they directed me not to appear, which is why
5 I did not appear on the 8th. And once you issued the
6 subpoena, again, they discouraged me from complying with the
7 subpoena, but I decided to come in anyway.

8 Q Did you develop an understanding as to why they
9 were discouraging you from complying with the subpoena?

10 A No clue because I didn't communicate with them, my
11 counsel did.

12 Q And how did -- did you have any conversations where
13 anyone discouraged you from testifying?

14 A All through counsel.

15 Q All through counsel?

16 A Correct.

17 Q Did you have any conversations with anyone else
18 prior to your testimony here today in order to refresh your
19 recollection?

20 A I don't recall any. I don't, other than just press
21 reports and my own recollections.

22 Q No one at the White House -- no one else at the
23 White House?

24 A Counsel has had conversations with the White House,
25 I've had none.

1 Q Were you relayed information from the White House
2 through counsel, not saying what that is?

3 A No. No. No. And I have not met with White House
4 counsel either.

5 Q Did you read an article published yesterday in The
6 Washington Examiner which included extensive excerpts from
7 Ambassador Volker's testimony?

8 A I did not.

9 Q One moment, please. You said you had another
10 conversation with Secretary Perry 3 or 4 days ago. Was that
11 before or after Dr. Hill's testimony?

12 A I think it was before.

13 Q And did you discuss anything with him related to
14 the topics of your testimony here today?

15 A I don't recall, because we talk a lot. We talk a
16 lot about the lot of things. We're friends.

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1 [10:31 a.m.]

2 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

3 Q Okay. But -- so you don't recall whether you
4 discussed your testimony here today?

5 A I don't recall, no, because I've had multiple
6 conversations with him.

7 Q When I asked you whether you had discussed your
8 testimony here today with Secretary Perry, you said 3 or 4
9 days ago. So --

10 A Well, the Dr. Hill testimony is what I'm testifying
11 to, the Dr. Hill piece. I don't recall when I talked to him
12 before.

13 Q Okay. What else did you discuss with Secretary
14 Perry about that July 10th meeting?

15 A It was very cursory. I basically repeated -- I
16 asked him if he had seen the report. He said he hadn't. I
17 said, there's a report out there that Dr. Hill said the
18 meeting blew up and was abruptly terminated and that I had
19 threatened the Ukrainians. And he said: Not any meeting I
20 was in did that occur. And he was there, obviously, along
21 with Ambassador Volker.

22 Q So, just so we understand, there have been a lot of
23 media reports. What specific -- can you recount with as much
24 specificity as possible, since he had not seen the media
25 reports, what you relayed to him about what you had read in

1 the press?

2 A I related to him in a macro sense, bad meeting,
3 blowup, quick termination, threatened Ukrainians. And,
4 again, I had no recollection of that. That was what, 3, 4
5 months ago. And I said, I recalled us all going out in the
6 garden afterwards and all having our picture taken, along
7 with Ambassador Bolton, and then everyone put out a friendly
8 tweet about the meeting.

9 And they were so inconsistent, I said: What did I miss?
10 And Ambassador -- Secretary Perry said: You missed nothing.
11 That's what happened.

12 Q Now, you have said in the past that at some point
13 the President, I think, gave you a special assignment related
14 to Ukraine. What did you mean by that?

15 A I was spinning a little, to be candid.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: If I could, before we get into that.
17 Before we move on from the conversation with Secretary Perry,
18 in your conversation with Secretary Perry, did you or
19 Secretary Perry bring up Burisma, as that was the subject of
20 some of the press accounts of Dr. Hill's testimony?

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't believe we did. I don't
22 recall talking about Burisma.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Did you bring up any of the press
24 coverage concerning the follow-on meeting in the Ward Room?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, I believe we did, because

1 there were two meetings.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: And what did you raise with Secretary
3 Perry about the discussion of the follow-on meeting in the
4 Ward Room on July 10th?

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think we discussed the fact that
6 it was a very short meeting. We agreed to disagree on
7 whether a phone call should be made or not, and we all left.
8 And that was the end of the conversation.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Now, I want to make sure we're talking
10 about the same conversation. So in your call, was it
11 yesterday with Secretary Perry?

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: In preparation for your testimony today,
14 you discussed not only the meeting, the first meeting on July
15 10th, but also the subsequent meeting in the Ward Room?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They were really -- they were
17 really one meeting that adjourned to another, because some
18 people had to go and some people continued the discussion. I
19 think that's what happened.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: As best you can tell us, what did you say
21 to Secretary Perry, what did he say in response vis-a-vis
22 that second meeting in the Ward Room?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think we both recalled that
24 there were two meetings or one meeting that moved location,
25 and I don't remember the rest of the conversation. I mean,

1 again, my goal in calling Secretary Perry was to find out if
2 any of the things that I'd read in the media were -- if I had
3 completely forgotten about bad meeting, bad words. And he
4 said, no, he didn't remember.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: And you don't recall anything else, any
6 of the particulars of your discussion with Secretary Perry
7 about the Ward Room, only that you did discuss it?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That we did discuss it and that it
9 was also a good meeting. That's all I can recall,
10 Congressman.

11 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

12 Q Going back to the special assignment, you said you
13 were spinning. What do you mean by that?

14 A The Ukrainians were very concerned that they
15 weren't getting full support. And one of the reasons that
16 the three of us, Ambassador Volker, Secretary Perry, and
17 myself, sort of took it upon ourselves, along with the
18 blessing of Secretary Pompeo, to help support Ukraine during
19 the ambassadorial transition and so on was in order to keep
20 the Ukrainians happy and engaged with the U.S. They were
21 getting very nervous.

22 So when I said that the President gave me the
23 assignment, it was really the Secretary through the
24 President, said that I could continue to work on the Ukraine
25 matter. And Ambassador Bolton signed off on that sometime in

1 June of 2019.

2 Q When did you understand that you were supposed to
3 take on a leadership role with Ukraine policy?

4 A I was not taking on a leadership role.

5 Q So what role --

6 A I was taking on a support role.

7 Q And who was to take on a leadership role?

8 A The Charge. He's the bilateral Ambassador. It's
9 his full-time job. And then also Ambassador Volker, who's a
10 Special Envoy to Ukraine.

11 Q There was a transition between Ambassador
12 Yovanovitch and Charge Taylor, right?

13 A Correct.

14 Q Okay. So Ambassador Yovanovitch was ultimately
15 recalled at the end of April. Do you recall that?

16 A Yes.

17 Q And left toward the middle of May. And when did
18 Charge Taylor start?

19 A I think he started shortly thereafter. I don't
20 recall the exact date. I wouldn't have been involved in that
21 personnel issue.

22 Q Right. But there was no leadership in the embassy
23 at the time of the May 20th Presidential inauguration in
24 Ukraine, correct?

25 A I believe that is correct. I believe there was a

1 Charge there then.

2 Q So I guess I'm just trying to understand how you,
3 along with Ambassador Volker and Secretary Perry, took on a
4 prominent role in Ukraine policy?

5 A Well, I started with my trip in February to Odessa.
6 The trip was pretty successful. The EU really liked it. The
7 Ukrainians liked it. This was under President Poroshenko.
8 And I kept that file active. I wanted to stay engaged with
9 the Ukrainians through the election.

10 President Zelensky won. We were invited to the
11 inauguration. I was asked to go in the delegation. So I
12 kept engaged with Ukraine as part of a broader team. And we
13 had people from the NSC involved. We had Volker, Taylor,
14 Perry. A lot of people were involved.

15 Q So when you said on Ukrainian television that the
16 President gave you a special assignment, that was not true.

17 A It wasn't untrue. Did the President call me
18 specifically and say, "You are assigned to Ukraine"? No.
19 Secretary Pompeo and Ambassador Bolton did. But I assumed
20 that authority derives from the President.

21 Q What did Secretary Pompeo say to you?

22 A Secretary Pompeo said continue to work on Ukraine.

23 Q When?

24 A I don't remember the date.

25 Q Before or after the inauguration?

1 A Continually. Keep working on Ukraine.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: If I could just follow up on that.

3 Did you ever have a conversation with another U.S.
4 official, either in the National Security Council or the
5 State Department, in which you were challenged on under what
6 authority were you acting as in the special responsibility
7 vis-a-vis Ukraine, in which you responded that on the
8 President's authority?

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall a conversation like
10 that, but I think that when we had our conference call with
11 Ambassador Bolton in early June of 2019, we sort of laid out
12 all of the things we were talking about doing vis-a-vis
13 Ukraine until there was a permanent political-appointed
14 Ambassador there. And Ambassador Bolton told the group on
15 the phone he thought that was a good idea.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: So I just want to make sure I understand.
17 Is it your testimony then that, separate and apart from the
18 public statement you made that my colleague referenced about
19 your responsibility for Ukraine, you never told a State
20 Department official, national security official, or other
21 government official that the President had given you a
22 leadership role on Ukraine?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall. I may have; I may
24 not have. Again, I don't recall.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, if you had said that, were you

1 telling the truth when you said that?

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't understand your question.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Did you ever represent to someone that
4 the President of the United States directly had put you in
5 charge in any respect of Ukraine policy?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The President of the United States
7 can put people in charge directly or through his duly
8 authorized subordinates, which in this case is Secretary
9 Pompeo or Ambassador Bolton.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: But my question is, did you ever
11 represent to another government official that the President,
12 not the Secretary but the President, had directed that you
13 play a leadership role in Ukraine?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't remember that.

15 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

16 Q You said that Ambassador Bolton in June signed off
17 on it.

18 A Correct.

19 Q What occurred? What do you recall about that?

20 A Well, this was Secretary Perry's call. He
21 organized it. I participated, along with several others.
22 And Secretary Perry, this was after the May White House
23 meeting with President Trump where President Trump had
24 directed that we speak with Mayor Giuliani, I think Secretary
25 Perry just wanted to take stock of where we were and made a

1 call to Bolton, invited us all to join, and sort of reviewed
2 and laid out what we were planning to do in terms of doing
3 energy work, staying close to the administration in Ukraine,
4 and various and sundry things.

5 And Ambassador Bolton essentially said: That sounds
6 good to me, that sounds great. And I remember, you know,
7 thinking this was a good call, everyone's on the same page.

8 Q But that sounds like what the policy issues were
9 with Ukraine, a policy discussion, a substantive discussion
10 about how to deal with Ukraine.

11 A Well, no, we were talking about who's on first,
12 which persons are on first. And he agreed that the three of
13 us should continue to be engaged.

14 Q And prior to that, had you had any discussions,
15 either with Ambassador Bolton, anyone else on the National
16 Security Council, about your role in Ukraine policy, given
17 the fact that you were the EU Ambassador and Ukraine is not a
18 part of the EU?

19 A Well, as I said in my statement, Ukraine is an
20 important part of my portfolio, as determined by those who
21 put all of my briefing materials together from the NSC, the
22 desk, as well as the State Department.

23 In February, when I went to Odessa, Dr. Hill
24 congratulated and praised me for my effort in helping support
25 Ukraine. So I took that to mean the NSC was supportive along

1 the way.

2 Q Did you ever have any conversations with Chief of
3 Staff Mick -- Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney about your
4 involvement and engagement in Ukraine?

5 A No, other than there was a phone call that was
6 originally scheduled, I believe, for earlier than when the
7 actual call was placed. And there was a lot of
8 back-and-forth about would the call go on, would the call not
9 go on. And Mulvaney was on that stream of emails about
10 whether the call would be placed or not.

11 But I don't believe I've ever even had a formal meeting
12 with Chief Mulvaney. I've seen him in the White House. We
13 say hello, we walk by and wave. But I've never -- I don't
14 believe I've sat down with him for a formal meeting on any
15 subject.

16 Q Did you ever speak to him on the phone?

17 A I may have once or twice. I don't believe it was
18 about Ukraine.

19 Q Just generally, while we're talking about phone
20 conversations, how frequently do you speak with President
21 Trump?

22 A I think I've spoken with President Trump -- and
23 this is a guess -- maybe five or six times since I've been an
24 Ambassador. And one of those I recall was a Christmas, merry
25 Christmas call, and it had zero substance. And I always

1 called him. He never called me.

2 Q Did you ever discuss your -- the nature of your
3 role in Ukraine with Ambassador Taylor?

4 A Ambassador Taylor knew that we were involved,
5 because when he came on board and we were introduced, someone
6 had briefed him to tell him that Secretary Perry, Ambassador
7 Volker, and myself were helping to support the Ukraine
8 effort.

9 In two or three conversations, he was thrilled about
10 that. He was really happy that he had such high-level
11 support. I'm not saying myself, because he and I are
12 essentially peers, but I'm saying a Cabinet member and the
13 Special Envoy. And he mentioned that on those calls.

14 Q We discussed a minute ago Ambassador Yovanovitch's
15 recall at the end of April. Did you have any knowledge or
16 awareness of the possibility, likelihood, or fact of her
17 recall before she was called back to Washington?

18 A I heard a lot of rumors that people were unhappy
19 about her or with her, but beyond that, no.

20 Q What rumors did you hear?

21 A Just that stuff I read in the press and stuff that
22 I heard around my mission and so on.

23 Q Did you speak to anybody at the State Department
24 about her status prior to her recall?

25 A I don't recall ever having a conversation like

1 that.

2 Q Did you speak to her at all about the situation?

3 A I don't think so. No, I think -- I think the only
4 conversations we had were when I was in Odessa and maybe a
5 couple of phone conversations after that. I didn't work with
6 her that much, but I found her to be very delightful to work
7 with.

8 Q Did you -- do you recall that at the end of March
9 there were some articles that came out that included some
10 accusations related to her?

11 A That may have been the press I was referring to.

12 Q Do you know what press you might have read it in?

13 A I have no idea.

14 Q And you don't remember having a conversation with
15 her after those allegations came out?

16 A I don't remember.

17 Q Do you remember giving her any advice on how to
18 handle the situation?

19 A I don't. I don't.

20 Q You don't?

21 A No.

22 Q You don't remember suggesting that she issue a
23 tweet in support of the President?

24 A No, I don't remember that.

25 Q So you said in your opening statement that at that

1 May 23rd meeting in the White House that the President
2 directed you to speak to Rudy Giuliani about his concerns
3 related to Ukraine.

4 A He directed the delegation to speak.

5 Q Prior to that, were you aware of Rudy Giuliani's
6 interest in Ukraine matters?

7 A Just what I had read for several years in the
8 media. I don't know Mr. Giuliani, so whatever -- whatever I
9 read in the media is what would have been my impressions.

10 Q Okay, let's focus on that. You said several years.
11 When -- dating back to when?

12 A I don't know. I mean, things about Rudy Giuliani
13 have been swirling around in the media forever. I don't know
14 when it began or ended or --

15 Q Okay. Well, just --

16 THE CHAIRMAN: If I could just interject. I'm sorry,
17 Mr. Goldman. I just want to get further clarification.

18 Is it your recollection, Ambassador, that you never
19 advised Ambassador Yovanovitch to go big, make a public
20 statement of full-throated support of the President?

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I honestly don't recall. I
22 honestly don't.

23 MR. GOLDMAN: Would it surprise you if someone else said
24 that you did do that?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Probably, yeah.

1 MR. GOLDMAN: Would it surprise you --

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know that we had -- I'm
3 trying to remember that we ever had a career conversation,
4 because I wasn't really involved in her career. I've had
5 career conversations with others. I don't recall having one
6 with her.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Do you think it would have been
8 appropriate for an ambassador to voice personal political
9 support for the President rather than advocate for the issues
10 important to Ukraine?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, no, I think it's always more
12 appropriate to advocate support for the country that you're
13 assigned to, not for -- your political hat is off.

14 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

15 Q Did you ever have a discussion with the former
16 Ukrainian President, Petro Poroshenko, about Ambassador
17 Yovanovitch?

18 A I think we had a discussion in general with others
19 there, and he wasn't high on her and he wasn't low on her.
20 He was just sort of "eh."

21 Q And what did you say to him about her?

22 A I don't remember. I mean, it wasn't a remarkable
23 conversation, as I recall.

24 Q Did you find it appropriate to have a discussion
25 about a fellow State Department diplomat with a foreign

1 leader?

2 A Foreign leaders complain about their ambassadors
3 all the time. That is nothing unusual. Whenever they don't
4 get something that they want from the United States, they
5 always blame the ambassador. I'm sure I've been blamed for
6 many things as well.

7 Q Going back to Rudy Giuliani, and understanding that
8 you had not had any conversations with him prior to May 23rd,
9 and I believe it's your -- was your testimony today in your
10 opening statement that you didn't reach out to him until
11 August, what did you know about his public statements related
12 to Ukraine in the earlier part of this year?

13 A I really didn't pay too much attention to his
14 public statements about Ukraine. I was focused really on
15 getting President Zelensky a phone call and a meeting.
16 That's what I was focused on. That was the sum total of my
17 effort, because I thought that would be beneficial to the
18 United States.

19 Q When President Trump told you to -- you and the
20 others, I understand, everyone at that meeting, and we'll get
21 to that meeting in more detail -- but when he told you to
22 discuss with Rudy Giuliani concerns about Ukraine, did you
23 know at that point what he was referring to?

24 A He didn't even -- he wasn't even specific about
25 what he wanted us to talk to Giuliani about. He just kept

1 saying: Talk to Rudy, talk to Rudy.

2 Q Right, I understand that, and I understand he
3 wasn't specific. But when he said that, did you know what he
4 was talking about?

5 A I didn't, other than he said: Ukraine is a
6 problem.

7 [Majority Exhibit No. 3
8 Was marked for identification.]

9 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

10 Q I'm going to introduce to you now what's marked as
11 exhibit 3, which is a New York Times article from May 9th,
12 2019. Why don't you take a close look at this and let me
13 know if it looks familiar to you.

14 A [Reviewing.]

15 Q Is this article familiar to you?

16 A No.

17 Q You don't recall reading it around this time?

18 A No.

19 Q It says that -- just to quote a couple of passages,
20 it says that: "Mr. Giuliani said he plans to travel to Kiev,
21 the Ukrainian capital" -- and by the way, this is dated May
22 9th.

23 A Right.

24 Q -- "in the coming days and wants to meet with the
25 nation's president-elect to urge him to pursue inquiries that

1 allies of the White House contend could yield new information
2 about two matters of intense interest to Mr. Trump. One is
3 the origin of the special counsel's investigation into
4 Russia's interference in the 2016 election. The other is the
5 involvement of former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.'s
6 son in a gas company owned by a Ukrainian oligarch."

7 Then below there's a quote from Mr. Giuliani which says:
8 "We're not meddling in an election, we're meddling in an
9 investigation, which we have a right to do."

10 He then continues and says: "And this isn't foreign
11 policy -- I'm asking them to do an investigation that they're
12 doing already and that other people are telling them to stop.
13 And I'm going to give them reasons why they shouldn't stop it
14 because the information will be very, very helpful to my
15 client, and may turn out to be helpful to my government."

16 Do you know who he's referring to when he says "my
17 client"?

18 A No idea.

19 Q You have no idea?

20 A I mean, I assume it's the President if he's the
21 President's lawyer, but I have no idea.

22 Q You knew he was the President's lawyer?

23 A I haven't seen this article until you --

24 Q That's not what I asked. You knew he was the
25 President's lawyer?

1 A I knew he was the President's lawyer.

2 Q On the next page, it says that: "He said his
3 efforts in Ukraine have the full support of Mr. Trump. He
4 declined to say specifically whether he had briefed him on
5 the planned meeting with Mr. Zelensky, but added, quote, 'He
6 basically knows what I'm doing, sure, as his lawyer,'"
7 unquote.

8 So you were aware, of course, that Mr. Giuliani was Mr.
9 Trump's personal lawyer, right?

10 A Based on press reports, yes. The President has
11 never told me: Mr. Giuliani is my lawyer.

12 Q Okay.

13 A Okay?

14 Q Have you ever --

15 A And Mr. Giuliani has never told me he was the
16 President's lawyer directly.

17 Q Right. But Mr. Giuliani has a habit of speaking a
18 lot in the media --

19 A Right.

20 Q -- and saying repeatedly that he's the President's
21 lawyer. You've seen -- even if you haven't had a direct
22 conversation, you're aware that --

23 A I'm generally aware that that's what he's been
24 saying, correct.

25 Q Okay. And so you didn't read this article, you

1 said. Is that right?

2 A Correct.

3 Q After Mr. Trump -- and were you aware of any other
4 public statements that Mr. Giuliani had been saying about
5 Ukraine --

6 A No.

7 Q -- in connection to any of these investigations?

8 A No.

9 Q So just so we're clear, Ukraine took on a
10 significant part of your portfolio. Is that right?

11 A No. As I said, I have 28 countries that I'm
12 dealing with in the EU. I'm dealing with Venezuela. I'm
13 dealing with Iran. I'm dealing with Georgia. Ukraine was a
14 small piece of it. But I wanted to stay engaged with Ukraine
15 because I thought it was important.

16 Q All right. I won't characterize it. How would you
17 characterize your role in Ukraine policy for the State
18 Department?

19 A As helpful support to those who are charged with
20 dealing with it on a full-time basis.

21 Q Okay. And as someone who's trying to be helpfully
22 supportive, would you say that it's part of your role to
23 understand what is going on with U.S. policy and the
24 public -- in the public media about Ukraine?

25 A Probably, but I can't read everything. I can't

1 read everything. I've got, as I said, I have 28 countries.

2 Q I think in your opening statement you said that
3 Ukraine was central to your ambassadorial responsibilities,
4 right?

5 A No, I think I said -- let me refer to my statement.

6 Q You can go to page 3. It's the fifth line from the
7 bottom.

8 A "While a small part of my overall portfolio, it was
9 nevertheless central to my ambassadorial responsibilities."
10 Yeah.

11 Q And so, given that it's a central role for your
12 ambassador responsibilities, you didn't think it was
13 important to understand what the United States media was
14 saying about Ukraine?

15 A As I said, my objective was to get President
16 Zelensky a meeting at the White House. That was my
17 objective.

18 Q That wasn't my question. My question was, did you
19 think it was part of your central responsibilities over
20 Ukraine to be aware of what press reports in the United
21 States media were saying about Ukraine policy?

22 A I think it was more the job of the Charge or the
23 Ambassador to Ukraine and the Special Envoy. You had two
24 full-time people on Ukraine.

25 Q Okay. So what was -- so your only objective was to

1 get a meeting. You didn't care about what other people were
2 saying?

3 A My objective was to get a meeting, because I
4 thought that that would begin to solidify the relationship
5 between Ukraine and the United States, which would then help
6 me bring the EU to the table, because my number one
7 responsibility is our relationship with the European Union.

8 Q All right. So let's assume that you didn't know
9 anything about what Rudy Giuliani was saying before May 23rd,
10 when you had the meeting at the White House. After President
11 Trump suggested that you and Ambassador Volker and Secretary
12 Perry speak to Rudy Giuliani about his concerns in Ukraine,
13 did you do anything to figure out what those concerns were?

14 A No. I let the others work on it and I went back
15 and worked on other things, because Volker and Perry were the
16 ones who reached out to Giuliani.

17 Q Okay. That wasn't my question. My question is not
18 whether you reached out to Mr. Giuliani. My question is
19 whether you took it upon yourself in any way to figure out
20 what Rudy Giuliani's concerns about Ukraine were.

21 A I got the information through Ambassador Volker,
22 and he said that Mr. Giuliani was concerned about corruption,
23 which we were also concerned about. So it didn't
24 particularly raise any interesting flags with me. It was
25 consistent with what our concern was.

1 Q So you didn't do a Google search for Rudy Giuliani
2 Ukraine?

3 A No.

4 Q You didn't look at Rudy Giuliani's Twitter feed?

5 A No. I never followed Rudy Giuliani.

6 Q What's that?

7 A I never followed Rudy Giuliani.

8 Q Whether you followed him or not, you never looked
9 to see what he was saying on Twitter?

10 A No.

11 Q You never looked at one of his numerous television
12 appearances where he addressed Ukraine?

13 A I don't recall. I honestly don't recall. I
14 wasn't -- we had our meeting. They went off to deal with
15 Giuliani. I went back to doing my thing.

16 Q Okay. I understand you went back to doing your
17 thing and I understand that you may not have been the point
18 person with Mr. Giuliani, but it seems pretty incredible that
19 given that the President directed you guys, the three of you,
20 to address Mr. Giuliani's concerns, that you did nothing to
21 figure out what those concerns are. Is that your testimony?

22 MR. LUSKIN: No, it's not his testimony.

23 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

24 Q Well, I'm asking the question. Is that accurate?

25 A Repeat your statement again.

1 Q You testified that President Trump -- you testified
2 in your opening statement that President Trump directed you
3 and Secretary Perry and Ambassador Volker at the meeting in
4 the White House on May 23rd to consult with -- I don't
5 remember the exact language, we can find it -- but to consult
6 with Mr. Rudy Giuliani about his concerns related to Ukraine.

7 A That wasn't my testimony. My testimony was he
8 said: Talk to Rudy.

9 Q Let's find it.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: If I could follow up while counsel is
11 looking for that reference, I just want to make sure that I
12 understand the testimony. You've said that Secretary Pompeo
13 gave you this responsibility for Ukraine, not the President
14 but Secretary Pompeo, correct?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct. And Ambassador Bolton.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: And you said that the President asked you
17 to make sure that you satisfied Mr. Giuliani's concerns about
18 Ukraine, or to reach out to Giuliani in the context of your
19 work with Ukraine, or a call or meeting between the two
20 Presidents.

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No. What the President said was
22 the President was railing about Ukraine in the meeting at the
23 White House, and he was going on and on and on about his
24 dissatisfaction with Ukraine. He didn't even want to deal
25 with it anymore. And he basically waved and said: Go talk

1 to Rudy, he knows all about Ukraine.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So the President directs you to
3 talk to Rudy Giuliani. And you have this responsibility of
4 Ukraine. The President directs you to talk to Rudy Giuliani.
5 And it's your testimony here today that you never looked at
6 any of his TV appearances, you never read any of the
7 articles, you never saw any of the media that Rudy Giuliani
8 did in which Rudy Giuliani talked about his interest and the
9 President's interest in an investigation into the Bidens and
10 this energy company that Joe Biden's son worked for. You
11 never saw any of that?

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not then. Very much later, but
13 not then.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: So it's your testimony, I think, from
15 your opening statement and what you said just now, that up
16 until the moment you read the call record in September you
17 were completely oblivious to Rudy Giuliani's interest in
18 Burisma because it involved the Bidens?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I became aware of his interest in
20 Burisma sometime in the intervening period, but I never made
21 the connection between Burisma and the Bidens until the very
22 end. That is my testimony. I heard the word "Burisma," but
23 I didn't understand that Biden and Burisma were connected.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: You just thought that Mr. Giuliani or the
25 President were interested in Burisma because they were

1 interested in a particular energy company having nothing to
2 do with the Bidens?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, Naftogaz was also mentioned,
4 and that was another company that was mentioned.

5 MR. GOLDMAN: Sorry, who mentioned Naftogaz?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think that Naftogaz has been on
7 the table since I started working on Ukraine. People are
8 always talking about the problems with Naftogaz.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, but Mr. Giuliani was talking about
10 Burisma and the Bidens. And it's your testimony today you
11 had no idea of any Biden connection to Burisma, it came as a
12 complete revelation when you read the call record in
13 September?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall when I finally --
15 when the light finally went on that Burisma and the Bidens
16 were connected, but certainly not early on at all. I can't
17 tell you the day that finally I said, oh, Burisma equals
18 Biden. I have no idea when that was.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: But I think you suggested in your opening
20 statement that you didn't know until you read the call
21 record, and it was an epiphany that the President wasn't
22 simply interested in this energy company -- which, by the
23 way, he doesn't mention in the call record -- but he was
24 really interested in an investigation involving the Bidens.

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, I think I said that I didn't

1 know what was in the call until I saw the call record. I had
2 no idea that he had brought up the Bidens in the call until I
3 saw the call report.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: But I think you were also suggesting that
5 until you read that call record -- and correct me if I'm
6 wrong -- until you read that call record, you never put two
7 and two together that actually Burisma involved the Bidens,
8 correct?

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall when I finally put
10 it together. I don't recall what the date was or the place
11 was or the time was. I don't recall.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: But when you were interacting with the
13 Ukrainians and seeking an investigation involving Burisma,
14 did you know then that the real interest was the Bidens?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I was seeking a press statement so
16 that we could get the meeting for Zelensky to the White
17 House. That's all I was seeking. I wasn't seeking any
18 investigation.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: And my question is, at the time you were
20 seeking that, did you know of the connection between the
21 Bidens and Burisma?

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No. Because I would not -- I
23 would not endorse investigating the Bidens. I would not
24 endorse investigating --

25 THE CHAIRMAN: So you completely missed all the Giuliani

1 media appearances and all the public debate about the
2 President's interest and Giuliani's interest in the Bidens,
3 you missed all of that?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. It wasn't of concern to me.

5 MR. GOLDMAN: At some point you did make the connection,
6 though, right?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah.

8 MR. GOLDMAN: And now, in retrospect, you understand
9 that that's what Rudy Giuliani was advocating for?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, I do.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Can I ask you this then. Had you known
12 at the time that the interest in an investigation involving
13 Burisma was really an interest in investigating the Bidens,
14 would you have pressed the Ukrainians to do that
15 investigation?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Your answer was no?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

19 [Majority Exhibit No. 4

20 Was marked for identification.]

21 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

22 Q I just want to enter for the record exhibit 4,
23 which is some tweets. These are some tweets from Rudy
24 Giuliani. There's one on March 22nd where Rudy Giuliani says
25 that should pay attention to somebody for an analysis of some

1 real collusion between Hillary, Kerry, and Biden people
2 colluding with Ukrainian operatives to make money and affect
3 2016 election.

4 April 23rd, quote: "Now Ukraine is investigating
5 Hillary campaign and DNC conspiracy with foreign operatives
6 including Ukrainian and others to affect 2016 election."

7 May 2nd, quote: "Biden conflicts are too apparent to be
8 ignored and should be investigated quickly and
9 expeditiously."

10 May 10th, quote: "Explain to me why Biden shouldn't be
11 investigated if his son got millions from a Russian loving
12 crook Ukrainian oligarch while he was VP and point man in
13 Ukraine." It goes on.

14 Are you aware of any evidence that Ukraine was involved
15 in any way in the 2016 election?

16 A I have no independent basis to know that, no.

17 Q What did President Trump, other than directing you
18 three to speak to Mr. Giuliani about his, Mr. Giuliani's,
19 concerns related to Ukraine, what else did President Trump
20 say at that May 23rd Oval Office meeting about Ukraine?

21 A He sort of went on and on and on about how Ukraine
22 is a disaster and they're bad people. And we were actually
23 quite discouraged with the meeting, because we were quite
24 excited about the new President, the new administration, the
25 new team, and we were excited to share our findings with him.

1 and he didn't want to hear about it. And he sort of cut the
2 meeting short.

3 Q Did he mention anything about Ukraine's involvement
4 in the 2016 election?

5 A I think he said: They tried to take me down. He
6 kept saying that over and over.

7 Q In connection to the 2016 election?

8 A Probably, yeah.

9 Q That was what your understanding was?

10 A That was my understanding, yeah.

11 Q What was the upshot from that meeting other than
12 him telling you to go speak to Giuliani?

13 A I think, as my statement said, it was sort of a bad
14 meeting, inconclusive. We didn't get a clear signal from him
15 that he would invite Zelensky to the White House, that he
16 would call Zelensky. It was just talk to Rudy and I'm busy.
17 And, you know, we had come all the way to brief him about it
18 and it was sort of disappointing.

19 Q So I think you said in your opening statement that
20 you understood that in order to arrange this meeting with the
21 White House you had to somehow satisfy Mr. Giuliani's
22 concerns. Was that your takeaway?

23 A That was the takeaway, yeah.

24 Q And so did -- you said you weren't the point person
25 with Mr. Giuliani, but did Secretary Perry or Ambassador

1 Volker reach out to Mr. Giuliani after that meeting?

2 A I believe they did. I believe Secretary Perry was
3 the first one, because he knew him well.

4 Q How long after that meeting, do you know?

5 A I don't know.

6 Q Did you get a summary of what they discussed?

7 A I just knew in general that they were talking, but,
8 again, I was preoccupied with other matters. I sort of
9 flitted in and flitted out of the Ukraine file as the need,
10 you know, arose.

11 Q Did you read Secretary Perry's summary in The Wall
12 Street Journal yesterday?

13 A Yeah, I did, I think. Yeah.

14 Q And was he -- in that article, he said that Mr.
15 Giuliani specifically mentioned three concerns, that he
16 blames Ukraine for something related to the -- I think he
17 meant the Steele dossier; he said Ukraine had Hillary
18 Clinton's email server; and made up evidence -- and Ukraine
19 made up evidence to use against Paul Manafort.

20 A I saw that in the article.

21 Q You saw that in the article. Did that refresh your
22 recollection as to what Secretary Perry relayed to you about
23 his conversation with Rudy Giuliani?

24 A I believe that the best of my recollection is that,
25 through Ambassador Volker or through Perry -- I don't

1 remember where I got the information -- was that Rudy had
2 some bad issues with Ukraine, and until Rudy was satisfied
3 the President wasn't going to change his mind.

4 Q Did he explain to you what those concerns were
5 related to Ukraine?

6 A Probably the things in the article. I don't recall
7 exactly. There were so many conversations going on by so
8 many people at the time, it was unbelievable.

9 Q Okay. But, Ambassador Sondland, this is not a
10 trivial matter. You said that you were directed -- you said
11 you wanted a White House meeting with President Zelensky,
12 correct?

13 A Correct.

14 Q Because you supported President Zelensky?

15 A Correct.

16 Q And when you broached that topic with the
17 President, he said that, effectively, in order to get that,
18 you need to assuage Rudy Giuliani's concerns.

19 So Secretary Perry spoke to Rudy Giuliani?

20 A Yes.

21 Q Is that a yes?

22 A Oh, I'm sorry. Yes. Thank you.

23 Q So Secretary Perry spoke to Rudy Giuliani about his
24 concerns, right?

25 A Yes.

1 Q And you then had a conversation with Secretary
2 Perry about his conversation with Rudy Giuliani about Rudy
3 Giuliani's concerns, correct?

4 A Well, when I say there were a lot of conversations,
5 there were conversations going on between Secretary Perry and
6 Ambassador Volker, between Ambassador Volker and me, between
7 me and Secretary Perry, and sometimes the three of us. And
8 they were handling the initial outreach and issues with
9 Giuliani.

10 Q I totally understand that. What I'm trying to
11 understand is what information came back to you from either
12 Ambassador Volker or Secretary Perry about Mr. Giuliani's
13 concerns?

14 A That he was concerned about corruption.

15 Q That he was concerned broadly about corruption?

16 A Broadly about corruption. Never heard anything but
17 the word "corruption" initially.

18 Q From Secretary Perry?

19 A From one of them. I don't recall who.

20 Q Okay.

21 A Because, again, I haven't spoken to Giuliani until
22 August of some time.

23 Q So you're then --

24 A So I'm getting it second- or thirdhand.

25 Q I understand that.

1 A Yeah.

2 Q We're just trying to figure out what and when you
3 understood about Rudy Giuliani's concerns which the President
4 directed you to address.

5 So it would seem to me -- and correct me if I'm wrong --
6 that if the President of the United States directs you to do
7 something in order to get something that you want to get done
8 for policy reasons, that you might want to figure out what
9 those concerns are. And so I'm trying to understand to what
10 extent you learned what those concerns are?

11 A The "you" is the collective you. It's the three of
12 us.

13 Q I understand that. You're the one testifying here
14 today, so we are asking what your understanding is.

15 A I wasn't on first in that conversation.

16 Q That's not the question. I'm not saying that you
17 got it directly from Rudy Giuliani. I'm asking you whether
18 you understood from either Secretary Perry or Ambassador
19 Volker what the concerns that the President directed you to
20 address of Mr. Giuliani were, what those concerns were.

21 A I told you, corruption. That's all I heard.

22 Q That's all you heard?

23 A That's all I heard.

24 Q So when Secretary Perry describes these --

25 MR. LUSKIN: Excuse me.

1 [Discussion off the record.]

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sorry, go ahead.

3 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

4 Q So when Secretary Perry describes these three
5 things to The Wall Street Journal, you're saying that he did
6 not relay with any specificity to you, one of the three
7 people that the President asked to look into this?

8 A My counsel has clarified. I didn't understand your
9 question.

10 It started with corruption. Then it was Burisma and
11 2016 election. And then at some point in the continuum, late
12 in the game, I connected Burisma with Biden.

13 Q Okay. So when did you connect -- when did you
14 learn about Burisma and 2016?

15 A I believe that was somewhere in the middle. In
16 other words, well after the May 23rd meeting, but sometime
17 probably in July-August, where it start -- they kept putting
18 more conditions on this meeting, and that's when I began to
19 learn it.

20 Q All right. Right. I guess the question is, who is
21 "they" that put these conditions on --

22 A It must have been Giuliani, because I wasn't
23 talking to the President about it. So I was hearing this all
24 from Volker and Perry and Perry's chief of staff, who was
25 heavily involved in this whole --

1 Q And who's Perry's chief of staff?

2 A Brian McCormack.

3 Q And did you ever have conversations with Mick
4 Mulvaney about this meeting?

5 A I don't believe I did.

6 Q All right. After that May 23rd meeting, did the
7 President ultimately send a letter to President Zelensky?

8 A Yeah. That was the funny part, is that he was
9 railing about the problems with Ukraine in our meeting, but I
10 think shortly after that he sent essentially an unconditional
11 invitation to President Zelensky to come visit him at the
12 White House, subject only to scheduling.

13 Q Did you have any role in drafting that letter?

14 A None. I got a copy of it after it was sent. I was
15 pleased to see it, though.

16 Q And you didn't have any discussions with anyone
17 about pushing for that letter?

18 A I wanted the letter to be sent, but I didn't
19 negotiate it. I just said, let's get a letter out.

20 Q Who did you say that to?

21 A I don't remember.

22 Q Someone at the White House?

23 A Probably Volker or Perry.

24 Q Do you know someone named Kash Patel?

25 A Who?

1 Q Kash Patel.

2 A I don't recall the name.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Can I just for clarification. So you had
4 no hand in drafting, editing the invitation to the Ukraine
5 President for a visit?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not to the best of my
7 recollection, no.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Made no proposed changes to that in any
9 way?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, I don't recall that. I recall
11 seeing it after it had already gone out for the first time.

12 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

13 Q Was a draft of that letter presented to the
14 President at the May 23rd meeting?

15 A I didn't present it. I don't know if anyone else
16 did.

17 Q I didn't ask --

18 A I don't know.

19 Q You don't remember --

20 A I don't remember.

21 Q -- a letter being discussed?

22 A I don't remember, no. I do remember, once the
23 letter came out, then it was -- everyone was fervently trying
24 to negotiate a date, which we never were able to nail down.
25 I don't know if it was sent by mail or how it was delivered.

1 Q Do you recall having a conference call around June
2 28th with Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Taylor, and Secretary
3 Perry, and after you spoke to them you may have patched in
4 President Zelensky?

5 A I'm not saying it didn't occur. I don't remember
6 the call, though.

7 Q You wouldn't remember having a conversation with
8 President Zelensky?

9 A I've had several conversations with him, and I
10 speak with a lot of foreign leaders from a lot of countries.
11 It wasn't something that I can remember.

12 Q So you don't remember that you -- whether you
13 encouraged President Zelensky to initiate any investigations
14 in order to get the White House meeting on that conference
15 call?

16 A I think the only discussion that I had in
17 negotiating a public statement was to get a Burisma, 2016 --
18 this was the language that was being proposed by Giuliani.

19 Q This is in August, right?

20 A I think so. Again, I don't remember, because there
21 were so many things flying around, but when they kept
22 adding -- the initial draft of a press release had no
23 conditions. It just said corruption, per se.

24 Q But we're not talking about August, right? And at
25 that point, you were discussing some sort of statement that

1 President Zelensky would issue?

2 A That he would issue, and then it got shelved. It
3 never happened.

4 Q Okay. And Mr. Giuliani was involved in the
5 drafting of that statement?

6 A I think Mr. Giuliani was the one giving the input
7 as to what the President wanted in the statement.

8 Q And what did Mr. Giuliani add that the President
9 wanted?

10 A He wanted Burisma and 2016 election mentioned in
11 the statement. And I don't believe the Ukrainians were
12 prepared to do that.

13 MR. GOLDMAN: I believe our time is up, so we'll yield
14 to the minority.

15 MR. CASTOR: I'm going to make an exhibit of the May
16 29th letter.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Would you like a short break before?
18 Yes, why don't we take a 5- or 10-minute break.

19 [Recess.]

20 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Let's go back on the record.
21 One hour to the minority.

22 [Minority Exhibit No. 5

23 Was marked for identification.]

24 MR. CASTOR: I'm going to mark exhibit 5. It's the
25 letter May 29th from the President.

1 Do you guys need a copy?

2 MR. GOLDMAN: No, we have copies.

3 BY MR. CASTOR:

4 Q Before I get into this letter, there was some
5 frustration about whether you had seen that New York Times
6 article. I mean, there's a lot of media nowadays. You know,
7 have you seen every article, every story that references Rudy
8 Giuliani since you began your post?

9 A No. I mean, I have so many cables and other things
10 to read, I just don't have time.

11 Q And you're not watching TV, U.S. TV at night when
12 you're in Brussels?

13 A Sometimes.

14 Q Okay. So have you seen Rudy Giuliani on -- you
15 know, discuss these issues on TV?

16 A I watch HBO.

17 Q Okay.

18 Did you see the John Solomon Hill article at the end of
19 March where Giuliani was -- where Lutsenko and so forth was
20 discussed?

21 A I think someone forwarded it to me, but I don't
22 remember the contents.

23 Q This May 29th letter, could you walk us through
24 what happened between the May 23rd meeting with the President
25 and then how we got to this letter, to the extent you've got

1 personal knowledge?

2 A The letter was a little confounding to me, because
3 it was completely inconsistent with the President's attitude
4 at the May 23rd meeting, and then all of a sudden this letter
5 comes out.

6 Q So you didn't have a role in drafting or editing
7 it?

8 A I don't remember having any role other than wanting
9 the letter to happen. But, actually, I remember getting the
10 letter as it was forwarded to me on the White -- on the State
11 Department email.

12 Q Was there a draft at the May 23rd meeting that was
13 shown to the President?

14 A We never had any paperwork that I remember at the
15 May 23rd meeting. It was just an oral meeting. Yeah.

16 Q So you don't remember the President looking at a
17 draft letter?

18 A Not in front of me.

19 Q Or giving feedback about a draft letter?

20 A No, no. He didn't seem to want to do anything with
21 Ukraine at the May 23rd meeting.

22 Q Okay. The penultimate paragraph, the last sentence
23 talks about a White House meeting.

24 A Right.

25 Q So when you saw this letter, you were --

1 A I was happy. We have a meeting.

2 Q Did you have any conversations with any of the
3 relevant players on the staff level about how this letter
4 came to be?

5 A No. All I did was I think tried to get my team at
6 the mission -- and I don't remember who I would have
7 tasked -- to start working on getting the meeting scheduled.

8 Q And stepping back to the May 23rd meeting, how did
9 that come to get scheduled?

10 A I think that either Rick Perry or I reached out to
11 someone at the NSC saying: Doesn't the President want a
12 briefing about the inauguration? And I think -- I think it
13 was Perry, if I recall correctly, that got it nailed down.

14 Q Through NSC?

15 A Probably. They do most of the scheduling. Yeah.

16 Q And you were invited to participate?

17 A I was -- yeah, the whole delegation was, although I
18 don't think Mr. Vindman joined us in the meeting.

19 Q Why not?

20 A I don't know. He wasn't in the room.

21 Q Okay. Who was in the room, to the best of your
22 recollection?

23 A Volker, Perry, myself, Ron Johnson. And then I
24 don't recall if it was Bolton, Mulvaney. There were several
25 people coming and going. The delegation was seated in front

1 of the President's desk, and people were sitting behind us on
2 the couch and people kept coming in and out. So I don't
3 remember who all was --

4 Q It might be good if you just walk us through from
5 beginning to end what you do remember from that meeting, what
6 time of the day it was, how long it lasted, just whatever you
7 can remember.

8 A I mean, all I remember was we were all really
9 excited about how optimistic we were about the future of
10 Ukraine after having met with Zelensky and some of his team
11 in Kyiv. And we wanted to share that excitement with the
12 President, and he didn't want to hear about it. So I was
13 pretty frustrated. I was kind of pissed, actually.

14 Q What time of the day was the meeting?

15 A I don't remember. I don't know.

16 Q And how long did it last?

17 A Pretty short. Fifteen minutes, 20 minutes maybe.

18 Q Who from the NSC was there?

19 A Bolton might have been there. I just don't
20 remember. I know Vindman wasn't there, because I asked
21 where's Vindman, because I had seen him in the White House.
22 But somebody said he's not coming to the meeting. I don't
23 know why.

24 Q Was Vindman cut out of Ukraine policy at any point
25 in time or do you think he may have just had a conflict?

1 A I have no idea. I have no idea.

2 Q Your total communications with the President
3 involving these issues have been limited, correct?

4 A Very.

5 Q So we had the May 23rd meeting. We had the
6 September 9th telephone call. Have there been other --

7 A I think I talked to him just before I left for Kyiv
8 on the 20 -- when was the Kyiv meeting, on the 25th or 6th --

9 Q 26th.

10 A -- of May? I mean of --

11 Q July.

12 A -- July.

13 Q Right.

14 A I think I called him and said: I'm headed to Kyiv
15 to meet with President Zelensky and Ambassador Volker. Is
16 there anything you want me to share? And he just -- he
17 didn't want to discuss it. No, go. I don't why you're
18 going.

19 You know, he was -- he'd just been down on Ukraine. It
20 was like a nonsubstantive call.

21 Q Okay. So on the July 25th call, he didn't ask you
22 to talk about Burisma --

23 A No.

24 Q -- 2016 --

25 A No.

1 Q -- the Bidens, anything?

2 A No. Really a short call.

3 Q Okay. So we have the -- that's three meetings or
4 calls you can remember directly with the President on these
5 issues?

6 A I think that's right. I think that's right.

7 Q At the May 23rd meeting, when the President said go
8 talk to -- what did he say, go talk to Rudy or --

9 A He didn't even say go talk. He just said: Talk to
10 Rudy. It was sort of like I don't want to talk about this.

11 Q So did you take that as -- I mean, it's been
12 described variously as an order or an instruction. Was he
13 giving an order or an instruction or was he just trying to --

14 A My impression was that if we never called Rudy and
15 just left it alone that nothing would happen with Ukraine, in
16 terms of all of the things we wanted to have happen. So I
17 didn't take it as an order as much as an indication that if
18 he was going to have his mind changed, that was the path.
19 That's how I interpreted talk to Rudy.

20 Q Okay. And during that meeting, the President never
21 mentioned any of these controversial topics, such as opening
22 investigations?

23 A He mentioned that they tried to take me down, and
24 he mentioned the 2016 election. That's the only thing he
25 mentioned, yeah.

1 Q Okay. And he didn't mention that he had an
2 interest, a personal interest in Ukraine opening
3 investigations?

4 A At the meeting, no, I don't believe he did. I
5 don't recall him mentioning that he wanted something done.
6 He didn't want to talk about it at all.

7 Q And at that point in time did you have any
8 knowledge that that's what Rudy Giuliani was pushing for?

9 A No, because -- you mean during the meeting?

10 Q During the meeting. Well, you know, subsequent,
11 when the President said go talk to Rudy Giuliani, did you
12 know at that point in time, from Ambassador Volker or some
13 other people, that Rudy Giuliani was pushing investigations,
14 allegedly?

15 A Not -- as of the time of the meeting, no, I didn't.
16 I don't remember. I don't remember that. All I remember was
17 being incredibly frustrated that we couldn't have a dialogue
18 with the President about our findings.

19 Q Did you know if Mr. Giuliani had an agenda at that
20 point?

21 A I didn't.

22 Q So go talk to Rudy, you didn't know what you were
23 going to hear at that point?

24 A Correct.

25 Q When did you first get an inkling of what Mr.

1 Giuliani was interested in?

2 A You know, this whole thing was sort of a continuum,
3 starting at the May 23rd meeting, ending up at the end of the
4 line when the transcript of the call came out. And as I said
5 to counsel, it started as talk to Rudy, then others talk to
6 Rudy. Corruption was mentioned.

7 Then, as time went on -- and, again, I can't nail down
8 the dates -- then let's get the Ukrainians to give a
9 statement about corruption. And then, no, corruption isn't
10 enough, we need to talk about the 2016 election and the
11 Burisma investigations.

12 And it was always described to me as ongoing
13 investigations that had been stopped by the previous
14 administration and they wanted them started up again. That's
15 how it was always described.

16 And then finally at some point I made the Biden-Burisma
17 connection, and then the transcript was released. So I can't
18 tell you on that continuum when, what dates, but that's kind
19 of what happened.

20 Q Okay. Do you know if anybody on the U.S. side of
21 things had communications with the Ukrainians about opening a
22 meritless investigation for political purposes?

23 A I don't recall ever hearing that, no.

24

25

1 [11:46 a.m.]

2 BY MR. CASTOR:

3 Q Okay. So to the extent U.S. officials were
4 communicating with Ukrainian officials, like who would that
5 have been?

6 A It would have been the Charge. It would have been
7 Ambassador Volker. It would have been Mr. Giuliani, I think
8 had some direct communication.

9 Q Well, he wasn't a U.S. official.

10 A Okay. So you're not -- okay. And then I was
11 involved during the negotiations of the press statement.

12 Q Okay. So you never had communications with
13 Ukrainian officials about opening any investigations?

14 A No. My communications with Ukrainian officials had
15 to do with the press statement.

16 Q Okay.

17 A Had to do with the language of the press statement.

18 Q Okay. And to your knowledge, did Ambassador Volker
19 have any communications about opening actual investigations?

20 A I don't -- I don't recall ever hearing about him
21 say that.

22 Q So he never related that to you?

23 A No, not to me that, I remember.

24 Q So what Mr. Volker's involvement in this similar to
25 yours in that it was zeroed in on a statement?

1 A Well, first of all, his involvement was -- this is
2 with 100 percent of his portfolio. He was responsible for
3 Ukraine along with the Ambassador to Ukraine. So he was
4 working on Ukraine, I assume, 5 days a week, 8, 10 hours a
5 day. So I don't know what he was doing day in and day out on
6 Ukraine. I was again popping in and out trying to help when
7 I could.

8 Q Okay. In your discussions with Mr. Volker, did you
9 know if he had a belief that Mr. Giuliani was amplifying a
10 negative narrative, that he believed Mr. Giuliani's views
11 were inaccurate?

12 A Yeah, I don't understand that question. What do
13 you mean by that?

14 Q In your communications with Mr. Volker --

15 A Right.

16 Q -- did he communicate to you --

17 A Yes.

18 Q -- that he did not believe Giuliani's views of
19 these issues was legitimate?

20 A I think -- I can speculate here.

21 Q Okay.

22 A I think he was frustrated by any impediment to
23 getting the meeting for Zelensky, particularly since the
24 President had essentially unconditionally invited Zelensky to
25 come to the White House in that -- in this invitation,

1 subject only to scheduling, so why are we talking about other
2 -- putting more ornaments on the tree. That's my
3 speculation.

4 Q Was Ambassador Volker enthusiastic about
5 communicating with Mr. Giuliani?

6 A I don't think so.

7 Q Okay. So Mr. Giuliani's involvement here was a
8 negative. Is that fair to say?

9 A Well, I think I've said in my statement that we
10 would have all preferred to have the State Department handle
11 this whole matter and not involve people outside of the State
12 Department, because you don't know what they're doing.

13 Q But did you ever commiserate with Ambassador
14 Volker, we've got to talk to Rudy?

15 A I may have.

16 Q And do you know if he related something similar to,
17 we have to talk to Rudy?

18 A I think that was the -- I think that was the
19 general impression of anyone who had to deal with Mayor
20 Giuliani on this matter because it's not consistent with the
21 way business is normally done.

22 Q Okay. So nobody was enthusiastic about partnering
23 with Rudy Giuliani on this issue?

24 A Not that I can recall.

25 Q Okay. And to the extent Mr. Giuliani was pushing

1 some sort of investigation into Ukraine, yourself, Ambassador
2 Volker, and other U.S. officials were not party to that?

3 A Sounds right.

4 Q You were looking towards a statement?

5 A We just wanted a statement to get the meeting.

6 Q And the statement was something along the lines to
7 demonstrate that the Ukrainians were trying to turn the
8 corner on corruption.

9 A Correct.

10 Q And that wasn't good enough at first and apparently
11 it had to involve the Burisma and the further detail of
12 Burisma in 2016.

13 A Correct.

14 Q In your discussions with the Ukrainians did you get
15 a sense that they felt -- in your own personal knowledge --
16 did you get a sense that they felt that they would actually
17 going to be opening up any investigations or were they simply
18 just trying to get you a statement?

19 A I would be speculating. They didn't seem offended
20 by the ask, but I think they wanted their meeting at the
21 White House.

22 Q Okay. And the idea that Ukraine has some struggles
23 with corruption is not a novel concept, right?

24 A No. As I said in my statement, that was raised by
25 the Ukrainians to me 4 days after I became an ambassador in

1 mid-'18, that they have a -- they said: We have a corruption
2 problem.

3 Q And President Zelensky was elected overwhelmingly
4 and he campaigned on cleaning things up, right?

5 A That was one of his, as I understand it, one of his
6 campaign platforms.

7 Q And U.S. officials were encouraged by that. Is
8 that correct?

9 A I certainly was.

10 Q And Ambassador Volker was?

11 A Yes.

12 Q And Secretary Perry was?

13 A I believe he was.

14 Q And Ambassador Taylor?

15 A I don't think I ever discussed it with Ambassador
16 Taylor.

17 Q Okay.

18 A But I would imagine he would have been. I'm
19 speculating.

20 Q But in your communications with Ambassador Taylor,
21 did he seem to you that he was pro-Zelensky, that he was
22 encouraged by his election and --

23 A Yeah, he seemed to like Zelensky, and he sent me a
24 photo of he and Zelensky together standing on a balcony at a
25 meeting together and they seemed to be having a nice

1 conversation.

2 Q And is Zelensky's interest in cleaning things up
3 genuine, to your knowledge?

4 A That was our impression when we met with him right
5 after the inauguration.

6 Q And one of the problems in the Ukraine of course is
7 the oligarchs have a lot of power, they have a lot of
8 government perks that were provided to them either -- under
9 suspicious circumstances. Is that not correct?

10 A That's my understanding.

11 Q And the owner of Burisma is a former, you know,
12 ecology minister. And are you familiar with the allegations
13 that he gave himself some licenses?

14 A I just am generally aware that Burisma's considered
15 a potentially corrupt company. I don't know the specifics.

16 Q And you're aware that it has been under
17 investigation at various points for corruption?

18 A That's what I understood.

19 Q And the president -- the president of Burisma, this
20 Zlochevsky fellow, is -- has been under investigation?

21 A I don't know that person, but I'll take your word
22 for it.

23 Q Okay. And so when the discussion turned to Burisma
24 as an example of corruption, that didn't surprise you or that
25 didn't catch you off guard?

1 A No. It was a new element added. It was another
2 obstacle to getting the meeting I wanted. But it didn't
3 surprise me.

4 Q Did you know of any other companies that were
5 considered corrupt or needed to be part of the --

6 A As I mentioned in my earlier testimony, Naftogaz
7 comes up at every conversation.

8 Q Okay. So Burisma and Naftogaz, they were two
9 representative samples of corruption in Ukraine?

10 A Corruption and lack of transparency.

11 Q Okay.

12 A Yeah.

13 Q When the Biden element was introduced, what was
14 your understanding of -- what exactly did people want Ukraine
15 to investigate the Bidens for?

16 A I don't know.

17 Q Okay.

18 A I honestly don't know.

19 Q And I say the Bidens, but were they referring
20 mostly to Hunter Biden or don't you know?

21 A I didn't even know who Hunter Biden was until I
22 started reading about him in the media. I knew of Beau Biden
23 because of his, you know, untimely passing. But I didn't --
24 I really -- you know, I'm not a follower of the Biden family
25 other than I had worked with the Vice President at one point,

1 his office, on a project.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: If I could just for clarification, are
3 you asking what the Ukrainians wanted the Bidens investigated
4 for or what the President and Giuliani wanted the Bidens
5 investigated for?

6 MR. CASTOR: I'm just asking the witness.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: I know, but what's your question? Are
8 you asking --

9 MR. CASTOR: If the witness doesn't understand a
10 question he can ask me or the witness' counsel can ask me.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Could we have the question read back?

12 [The reporter read back the record as requested.]

13 THE CHAIRMAN: I just want to make sure the witness
14 understood who was referred to by the people.

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did not understand that. Can
16 you clarify the question?

17 BY MR. CASTOR:

18 Q The Giuliani element?

19 A Can you restate the whole question, please?

20 Q When you first learned that there was a component
21 involving the Bidens --

22 A Yes.

23 Q -- and that some element led by or simply Rudy
24 Giuliani, did you have an understanding of what exactly
25 Giuliani was pushing in relation to the Bidens?

1 A No, I did not.

2 Q And did you ever come to understand what that was?

3 A Only very recently.

4 Q And even recently, what is your understanding of
5 exactly what Rudy Giuliani was advocating for?

6 A Not coming from Giuliani, but coming from media
7 reports, now that it's all out, something about Hunter Biden
8 being paid exorbitant board fees for service on a board.

9 Q Okay.

10 A That was my understanding.

11 Q And that's the sum total of the allegations, as you
12 understand them, regarding the Bidens?

13 A Based on what I've read in the press, yeah.

14 Q Did you know whether the Vice President Biden
15 during his tenure had involvement with Ukraine policy?

16 A Again, I learned recently that he apparently was
17 asked to or had asked that a special prosecutor be dismissed.
18 Again, that revelation came out --

19 Q Okay.

20 A -- literally in the last --

21 Q So during his tenure as Vice President he took a
22 number of trips to Ukraine. Did you know that?

23 A I did.

24 Q Okay. And he took an interest in Ukraine policy.
25 And you learned that just recently?

1 A I just learned that recently and I learned that
2 Hunter Biden had traveled with him on Air Force Two.

3 Q Okay. Closing out the May 23rd meeting, you don't
4 really know how it was scheduled. You said that you thought
5 that the National Security Council staff likely put it
6 together.

7 A [Nonverbal response.]

8 MR. GOLDMAN: Sorry, you have to say yes or no.

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh, I'm sorry. Correct, I don't
10 know how exactly how it was scheduled.

11 BY MR. CASTOR:

12 Q How did you get invited to the meeting?

13 A Well, the purpose of the meeting was to have the
14 delegation brief the President about their trip. And I was
15 on the delegation.

16 Q Okay.

17 A Yeah.

18 Q So, like, who invited you? Was it somebody in
19 the --

20 A I probably just got an email saying the meeting is
21 scheduled -- they don't issue engraved invitations, they just
22 send an email.

23 Q And have you told us, to the best of your memory,
24 everything about that meeting?

25 A To the best of my memory. It was a disappointing

1 meeting.

2 Q And then the May 29th letter comes and you can't --
3 you have no idea what happened in the intervening days?

4 A No, because it was inconsistent with the meeting.

5 Q Okay. And you never learned what happened in those
6 intervening days?

7 A Well, we had been pushing for a letter and the
8 letter came out. And I don't know if it was our pushing, if
9 it was the meeting, if the President reconsidered, I have no
10 idea.

11 Q But you never had any -- you didn't call Dr. Hill
12 or Lieutenant Colonel Vindman or --

13 A I don't recall any communication before the letter
14 came out.

15 Q Okay. You were just happy to see it.

16 A I was happy to see it.

17 Q Your September 9th telephone call with the
18 President --

19 A Yes.

20 Q -- there were some text exchanges that have been
21 produced. And you reference in your statement that you
22 decided to telephone the President. Is that correct?

23 A I did.

24 Q Okay. Could you tell us everything you can
25 remember about that?

1 A I remember getting a fairly shocking text from
2 Ambassador Taylor where he had alleged in his text that aid
3 was being withheld from Ukraine in return for a political --
4 I'm trying to remember how he phrased it -- for political
5 purposes. And --

6 Q Let me stop you right there.

7 MR. LUSKIN: Let him finish his answer.

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm finished with my answer.

9 BY MR. CASTOR:

10 Q Okay. Because there's been a discussion about this
11 White House meeting and whether there had to be a statement.
12 But to your knowledge was there any discussion that aid would
13 be withheld?

14 A I never heard about aid being withheld until it had
15 actually been withheld and someone notified me: By the way,
16 the aid has been withheld.

17 Q Okay. But, to the best of your knowledge, do you
18 know about any preconditions on the aid?

19 A No.

20 Q Okay.

21 A I don't.

22 Q So it was U.S. policy to provide financial
23 assistance to Ukraine and also lethal defensive weaponry,
24 right?

25 A Correct.

1 Q And that was a stepped up commitment by the United
2 States --

3 A Correct.

4 Q -- to help Ukraine?

5 A Correct.

6 Q And you're not aware of any -- any allegation --
7 I'm sorry, you're not aware of any fact that that aid was
8 held up for any reason, such as investigations?

9 A I was aware that the aid was held up once it had
10 been held up, that someone -- I either received an email
11 or --

12 Q But you don't know --

13 A You don't know why.

14 MR. MANLEY: Let him finish his answer.

15 MR. LUSKIN: Let him answer, please.

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know why.

17 BY MR. CASTOR:

18 Q Okay. So when you telephoned the President, tell
19 us what happened.

20 A Well, from the time that the aid was held up
21 until I telephoned the President there were a lot of rumors
22 swirling around as to why the aid had been held up, including
23 they wanted a review, they wanted Europe to do more. There
24 were all kinds of rumors.

25 And I know in my few previous conversations with the

1 President he's not big on small talk so I would have one shot
2 to ask him. And rather than asking him, "Are you doing X
3 because of X or because of Y or because of Z?" I asked him
4 one open-ended question: What do you want from Ukraine?

5 And as I recall, he was in a very bad mood. It was a
6 very quick conversation. He said: I want nothing. I want
7 no quid pro quo. I want Zelensky to do the right thing.

8 And I said: What does that mean?

9 And he said: I want him to do what he ran on.

10 And that was the end of the conversation. I wouldn't
11 say he hung up me, but it was almost like he hung up on me.

12 Q Okay. And then you resumed your communication with
13 Ambassador Taylor?

14 A Yeah. I had gotten as far as I could. I had asked
15 the boss what he wanted. He wouldn't tell me, other than: I
16 want nothing. And I sent the note back to Ambassador Taylor
17 once I reached him and suggested that he call Secretary
18 Pompeo.

19 Q So the President didn't tell you what to write in a
20 text?

21 A The President didn't know I was sending a text,
22 because he didn't know that the question came from Ambassador
23 Taylor.

24 Q Okay. When you sent the text back to Ambassador
25 Taylor, how did he -- did he respond?

1 A When I said, you should call Secretary Pompeo or
2 his assistant, he said: I agree. And then I didn't follow
3 up --

4 Q Did you ever close the loop with Ambassador Taylor?

5 A I don't recall.

6 Q Okay. Did --

7 A I believe the aid was released shortly thereafter.
8 I'm not sure it was necessary.

9 When was the text sent, what date?

10 Q September 9th.

11 MR. LUSKIN: September.

12 MR. CASTOR: September.

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: September 9th.

14 And I think the aid was released a day or two after.

15 BY MR. CASTOR:

16 Q The 11th.

17 A Yeah.

18 Q Let me be clear, you've never closed the loop with
19 Ambassador Taylor, like, "I called the President and this is
20 what he said"?

21 A We've had conversations, but I think my text spoke
22 for itself.

23 Q Okay.

24 A And I don't know that he ever followed up with the
25 Secretary or not. I have no idea.

1 Q Your text speaks for itself, but your recounting of
2 the conversation is pretty definitive.

3 A That's what I remember.

4 Q Right. And so -- but you didn't relate the
5 conversation with the President to Ambassador Taylor at any
6 point?

7 A I don't believe I did, no.

8 Q Okay. I want to step back to the July 10th meeting
9 with Ambassador Bolton.

10 A Uh-huh.

11 Q How was that scheduled?

12 A I think the Ukrainians through the mission in -- or
13 through the embassy in Kyiv, set up the meeting through the
14 Ambassador, through Taylor, would have been the normal -- you
15 know, that they're coming to the U.S. and they want a White
16 House meeting. I'm speculating. And it would have been set
17 up that way.

18 And then once we would have been notified, somehow I
19 would have been notified by my staff that there was a meeting
20 going on, and I think the -- I think the idea was Secretary
21 Perry again took the lead and said: It might be a good idea
22 for all of us to sit in for continuity since we've been
23 talking to them. And we were all included. We got a -- I
24 think we got a note from Ambassador Bolton's assistant saying
25 you're all included in the meeting and we met.

1 Q Do you remember who was in the meeting?

2 A Myself, Perry, Volker, I think Yermak. I think
3 Prystaiko was there, the Foreign Minister, and I think
4 Danylyuk was there, the National Security Adviser.

5 Q Any other U.S. folks?

6 A There may have been others taking notes. I don't
7 -- I don't recall.

8 Q Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, was he there?

9 A Was he there? He wasn't in the delegation meeting.
10 He might have been there. I don't know. I don't remember.

11 Q How about Dr. Hill?

12 A I believe she was there.

13 Q And what do you remember from that meeting?

14 A You know, it wasn't really my meeting to run. I
15 sat and listened. And I had a -- some kind of a briefing
16 prior to it and there were a number of subjects being
17 covered, energy, potential White House meeting, all kinds of
18 things. And Ambassador Bolton pretty much ran the meeting.

19 Q Do you remember how long the meeting lasted?

20 A I want to say 30 minutes, my guess.

21 Q And do you remember saying anything during the
22 meeting?

23 A I may have chimed in on a point or two, but I
24 remember it being a very friendly meeting.

25 Q Okay. Did you bring up the prospect of

1 investigations that Ukrainians need to conduct?

2 A Not to the best of my knowledge.

3 Q Do you remember how the meeting ended?

4 A I think his time was up, Ambassador Bolton's time
5 was up. And then I think we moved to -- we moved the meeting
6 downstairs without Ambassador Bolton.

7 Q Where did you move the meeting to?

8 A I believe it was in the Ward Room at the White
9 House.

10 Q Do you know who reserved that room?

11 A No.

12 Q Not you?

13 A No. I have no ability to reserve the Ward Room.

14 Q Okay. And who was in the followup meeting?

15 A I think Dr. Hill, Perry, Volker, myself, Vindman.
16 I don't recall who else.

17 Q So you leave the Ambassador's office --

18 A I think we went out and took a big picture and then
19 went down to the Ward Room.

20 Q Okay. And was Dr. Hill with you the entire time?

21 A I don't know if she was -- she wasn't in the
22 picture, so maybe she left and came back. I don't remember.

23 Q Okay. Did Dr. Hill say anything at the Ward Room
24 component of this meeting?

25 A I think we were talking back and forth about, you

1 know, should there be a call prior to the parliamentary
2 elections or not. And there was a difference of opinion
3 between Brian McCormack, Secretary Perry, Volker, myself,
4 Vindman, and Fiona. Everyone sort of had a different take on
5 it. And it was sort of a, you know, typical discussion where
6 not everyone is in 100 percent agreement. We were sort of
7 going back and forth.

8 Q Okay. What were the two positions, to either do
9 the call before or after the parliamentary --

10 A Well, I think were three positions. One was do it
11 before, one was do it after, and the third was don't do it at
12 all, there's no reason for one. And I don't remember whose
13 position that was. It might have been Vindman's.

14 Q Don't do the call?

15 A Don't do the call, there's nothing to talk about.

16 Q Do you remember Dr. Hill's position?

17 A I don't. She might have been the -- she might have
18 been on the don't do the call, but I don't remember.

19 Q Okay. Do you remember if Dr. Hill was in favor of
20 the 7/10 meeting?

21 A The 7/10 meeting, I believe, had already been
22 scheduled. I don't know if she was in favor of it or not.

23 Q Okay.

24 A The only action I think our group took was to make
25 sure that we were included.

1 Q Did you ever have any heated discussions with Dr.
2 Hill?

3 A No, not that I remember. Never had -- I don't ever
4 remember having a heated discussion with Dr. Hill.

5 Q Okay. And how often did you talk to her?

6 A You know, maybe once or twice a month. I remember
7 we were in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and I had texted her, and
8 she coincidentally happened to be there. We met for coffee.
9 I think her family was there and my wife and I, had a nice
10 drink or coffee or something. And she sent me a nice note
11 about Ukraine in February when we went to the Odessa thing,
12 that that was great and it worked really well and thanks for
13 helping. Our relationship has always been very cordial.

14 Q So she never expressed dismay about the scheduling
15 of the 7/10 meeting?

16 A Not to me, that I recall.

17 Q And she never expressed to you dismay about how the
18 meeting -- what occurred in the meeting in Ambassador
19 Bolton's office?

20 A Not to -- not to my recollection.

21 Q And when you decamped to the Ward Room she didn't
22 express any dismay about what was discussed?

23 A No. It was a typical policy discussion where
24 people disagree on policy.

25 Q Was she in the Ward Room meeting the whole time or

1 did she leave early?

2 A I don't -- I don't remember.

3 Q Okay.

4 A It wasn't even -- it wasn't even like a sit-down
5 meeting. We were all standing up. We were just looking for
6 a place to talk.

7 Q Okay. And do you remember how long that lasted?

8 A A few minutes.

9 Q Okay. So much shorter than --

10 A 10, 10 minutes maybe, 15 minutes. It wasn't a --
11 it wasn't a long meeting.

12 Q Okay. So you never even sat down?

13 A I don't think so.

14 Q So the folks that were in the Ward Room was the
15 same bunch that was in Ambassador Bolton's office minus
16 Ambassador --

17 A I don't believe the Ukrainians were there.

18 Q Oh, they were not? Okay.

19 A I don't think so. I'm trying to remember.

20 Q Okay.

21 A I don't recall --

22 Q Okay.

23 A -- if the Ukrainians were there --

24 Q Okay.

25 A -- or if a couple of them came. You know, we

1 were -- we were sort of on the move. It wasn't a formally
2 set meeting that I remember. It was sort of like let's find
3 a place to talk --

4 Q Okay.

5 A -- once Bolton had had to leave.

6 Q Okay. And Dr. Hill never, even after that meeting,
7 never expressed any discomfort or dismay?

8 A No. I communicated with her on another subject a
9 week or 2 later and it was just great. I mean, again, I've
10 never had an unpleasant conversation with her that I can
11 remember, of any kind.

12 Q How frequently did you speak with Lieutenant
13 Colonel Vindman?

14 A Really only about the Odessa -- I'm sorry, about
15 the inaugural trip, because he was on the delegation. And
16 then I think a few times thereafter. And then he sort of
17 dropped away.

18 Q Okay. So he never expressed any dismay about any
19 of these?

20 A No, not that I remember. Again, I don't remember
21 anybody being upset, dismayed, alarmed, concerned at any
22 point in this whole -- in this whole process about -- about
23 the July 10th meeting.

24 Q Okay. The next key event is the telephone call on
25 July 25th.

1 A Correct.

2 Q Do you remember anything about how that call was
3 scheduled?

4 A No. I remember it was the NSC -- and this was what
5 was so funny about it, the NSC had originally scheduled,
6 after I read all of this stuff in the press about how they
7 were alarmed and didn't want to call -- didn't want to have a
8 call, they had actually scheduled a call for July 20th.

9 And there was a whole -- there was a whole string from
10 the scheduling office at the NSC that the call was set and
11 they were going to do a test call. And then somehow at the
12 last minute someone on that stream said no call on the 20th,
13 it's too close to the election.

14 And we were disappointed because I think Volker or
15 someone had communicated to the Ukrainians that there would
16 be a call on the 20th, and I think they were getting Zelensky
17 ready for it, and he was having to drive in to a phone. I
18 don't remember all the details, but our credibility was
19 sinking quickly because the call got pulled down at the last
20 minute, and then the call never really occurred, I believe,
21 until the 25th, so 5 days later.

22 Q So first the call was scheduled before the
23 election?

24 A Yes.

25 Q Then the call was scheduled after the election?

1 A Correct.

2 Q But you had no role in scheduling the call or
3 advocating to --

4 A I had a role in -- I was constantly pushing folks
5 at the White House, probably Vindman, probably Hill, probably
6 others, let's get a call.

7 Q But did they respond to you, like, okay we'll do it
8 --

9 A We're working on it. It was always the same, we're
10 working on it.

11 Q Okay. Did you get a readout from the call?

12 A No. What I got was I got a summary from one of my
13 staff I think a day or two later, and the summary was very
14 sort of innocuous. It was, you know, had a good call, talked
15 about closer relations. That was it. I never got a
16 transcript until it was released.

17 Q Did you hear Ambassador Volker or Ambassador Taylor
18 or anybody else talk about the call?

19 A No.

20 Q They didn't give you any --

21 A No one said the call was anything but, quote, "a
22 good call." That was it.

23 Q Okay. So you didn't know anything else other than
24 that?

25 A No. I was happy to hear they had a good call.

1 Q Did you hear from the Ukrainians, because you meet
2 the very next day? Did you hear from them about the call?

3 A I think they were -- everyone was happy about the
4 call.

5 Q Okay. And that was the extent of your
6 information --

7 A Correct.

8 Q -- even after the end of the very next day, your
9 meetings with the Ukrainians?

10 A Correct. Everyone said it was a good call.

11 Q Did you have any discussions with Ambassador Volker
12 during your trip about the call? Did he give you any
13 additional information?

14 A I don't know that Ambassador Volker was on the
15 call.

16 Q Okay. Okay. But did he get a readout from
17 anybody?

18 A I think he got the same -- I'm speculating -- he
19 got the same summary that I did.

20 Q Okay. When did you first realize that there might
21 be some controversy with regard to the call?

22 A When the transcript was released.

23 Q Okay. And you were surprised?

24 A Quite.

25 Q And could you tell us how you learned that the

1 transcript was coming? Did you get an advanced copy?

2 A I don't think I did get an advanced copy. I think
3 I saw it when everyone saw it for the first time.

4 Q Prior to the transcript release, I think the news
5 of the complaint had surfaced. Do you remember when you
6 first heard that somebody had raised a complaint?

7 A I believe that was when, as I testified earlier,
8 when someone from the White House called and said: Your name
9 is mentioned in the complaint.

10 Q Okay.

11 A Along with Ambassador Volker.

12 Q Okay.

13 A So that would have been just before the complaint
14 was made public.

15 Q Okay. When did you first read the transcript?

16 A Of the call?

17 Q Of the call. Yeah.

18 A Probably when it became public.

19 Q Okay. So you just read it on the internet like
20 everybody else?

21 A I think so. I think -- or maybe someone on my
22 staff stuck it on my desk. I don't know.

23 Q Okay. But you were in New York at the time, right?

24 A Yeah. So my control officer might have put it in
25 my folder. I don't remember. I remember reading it pretty

1 much contemporaneously with everyone else.

2 Q Okay. And what was your reaction to the
3 transcript?

4 A Well, it wasn't consistent with what, you know, I
5 had understood the ask was.

6 Q Were you surprised that 2016 was mentioned or --

7 A Not 2016, because, as I said, during this continuum
8 2016 and Burisma had been mentioned. As I recall the
9 transcript, it specifically mentioned the Bidens, and I had
10 never heard the Bidens mentioned specifically until, you know
11 -- and obviously it had occurred long before because that
12 call was made on July 25th.

13 Q And did you realize there was going to be a lot of
14 questions about that part of the transcript?

15 A Yeah, because before the transcript was even out,
16 you know, all of the press was making a big hullabaloo about
17 it.

18 Q Okay. And did you speak with anybody such as
19 Ambassador Volker or any other people?

20 A I don't -- I don't remember. I mean it -- no, I
21 don't remember if I did or didn't.

22 Q Okay. So you hear the news reports, and then you
23 get a copy of it, and then the White House calls you, and
24 that's pretty much the sum total of the --

25 A I think so, yeah.

1 Q Okay.

2 A They wanted me to come in and I said: I need to
3 talk to my counsel.

4 Q Okay.

5 A And I never came in.

6 Q The President's deep-rooted view, skeptical view of
7 Ukraine and their anti-corruption system, what do you, to the
8 extent you know, what was the basis for his -- basis for his
9 views?

10 A You mean aside from his, you know, comment about
11 they tried to take me down?

12 Q Yes.

13 A Just a general?

14 Q Yes.

15 A I think generally he was frustrated that they would
16 always promise things and never deliver. That's one of the
17 reasons he was so adamant about seeing something put out by
18 President Zelensky either in the form of a press release or
19 an interview on network television or something where
20 President Zelensky would publicly commit to whatever he was
21 going to commit to. I think that was my understanding from
22 Volker as dictated by Giuliani. He wanted somebody to go on
23 the record.

24 Q The President was an advocate for the U.S. military
25 aid and additional aid. Is that correct?

1 A I don't know.

2 Q Okay. Did you ever have any discussions with
3 National Security Council staff about the 7/18 hold? On July
4 18th, that's when the aid was held up.

5 A I don't believe I talked to the NSC staff. I
6 believe I was told by Ambassador Taylor through a text that
7 there was a hold. He had participated in a SVTC and he had
8 found out about a hold. And that was frustrating to me
9 because it just put another obstacle in the way of getting a
10 meeting.

11 Q What facts or what firsthand accounts can you
12 provide about the aid holdup?

13 A None.

14 Q Okay.

15 A Other than I was aware of it, I didn't know why I
16 kept getting different answers from different people.

17 Q Okay.

18 A There was never any clear -- any clear articulation
19 by anyone of, is there even a hold, is it a review, is it an
20 audit, is it the Europeans? I could never get a straight
21 answer out of anyone.

22 Q So you never tried to contact OMB or National
23 Security Council to find out more?

24 A I think I -- I think I made a couple of calls. I
25 may have asked a couple of my folks in the mission. And I

1 just -- it just kept getting to be a dead end. I just could
2 not get a straight answer.

3 Q So you didn't lobby anybody to lift the aid, you
4 were just trying to find out had what was going on?

5 A Yeah, I was trying to find out what was going on.
6 And I think there was an email that went around saying we
7 can't, you know, cut off aid under any circumstances. And I
8 think I had added to it, I agree, you know, because I thought
9 it was -- it was not a good idea for any reason to cut that
10 aid off.

11 Q So you were not an actor in that set of facts?

12 A If I was, it was unwitting. I don't remember
13 having any role whatsoever in that.

14 MR. CASTOR: Mr. Jordan, we've got about 15 minutes
15 left. Does it make sense to?

16 Mr. Nunes.

17 MR. NUNES: Thank you, Ambassador.

18 I just want to go back to something Mr. Castor referred
19 to about the skepticism the President has with Ukraine. I
20 don't know how closely you followed what this committee went
21 through in the last 3 years, but also the Mueller
22 investigation, special counsel. A lot of it was centered on
23 a product called the Steele dossier. You've heard of that, I
24 assume.

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I have.

1 MR. NUNES: Were you aware that the origins of the
2 Steele dossier were from Ukraine, many of the origins in the
3 original Steele dossier were from Ukraine, the politicians
4 within Ukraine?

5 THE CHAIRMAN: I would just posit that this the ranking
6 member's view. We cannot accept that as an actual or factual
7 representation. So if you're asking --

8 MR. NUNES: I don't want to get into a tit for tat with
9 you, but what's factual? The Steele dossier didn't origin --
10 parts of it didn't originate in Ukraine?

11 THE CHAIRMAN: You can certainly ask the witness whether
12 he's aware of any allegations.

13 MR. NUNES: I'll ask the witness whatever I'd like to
14 ask the witness.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. And the witness will not assume
16 that the predicate of my colleague's question is an accurate
17 recitation of the fact.

18 MR. MEADOWS: But, Mr. Chairman, with all due respect,
19 you lead the witness all the time, all the time, Mr.
20 Chairman. Come on. It is our hour, let him ask the
21 questions.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: I understand that. I want to make sure
23 the witness understands, though, that --

24 MR. MEADOWS: Would you mind if we clarified your
25 questions when it's your hour?

1 THE CHAIRMAN: When you're chairing a committee, should
2 that day ever come, you're more than welcome to do so.

3 MR. MEADOWS: To my knowledge, this is an equal 1 hour
4 versus 1 hour.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, it is.

6 MR. MEADOWS: And to my knowledge, you may be a
7 chairman, but this is not a committee hearing. It's a
8 deposition.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: I thank you for your input,
10 Representative Meadows.

11 And you may continue, you may respond, Mr. Sondland, if
12 you wish, to the question.

13 MR. NUNES: So let me just restate the question for you.
14 The Democrats disagree that the Steele dossier, I'm assuming,
15 has anything to do with Ukraine or originations in Ukraine.
16 However, in the Steele dossier itself it does source
17 information from Ukraine. Were you aware of that,
18 Ambassador?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Only recently, based on media
20 reports.

21 MR. NUNES: Okay. So you can under -- let me ask you
22 another thing. Are you aware of who paid for the dossier?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not.

24 MR. NUNES: Would it surprise you to learn that the
25 Clinton campaign and the Democrat National Committee paid for

1 the dossier?

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know anything about it.

3 MR. NUNES: And the dossier was -- was gleaned from
4 foreign sources. It was from a former MI6 spy that was paid
5 by -- through a contractor to get information, dirt,
6 opposition research, what have you, from Ukrainians and
7 Russians and others.

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't -- I don't know anything
9 about that, Congressman. I'm sorry.

10 MR. NUNES: So this -- the dossier, you do remember it
11 was fed, I think you would recall this, it was fed to the
12 FBI?

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, I haven't been following
14 the Steele dossier, I mean other than just generally knowing
15 about its existence.

16 MR. NUNES: Sure. But you know that it led to Special
17 Counsel Bob Mueller and it went on for --

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I assume that was one of the --

19 MR. NUNES: -- for a year and a half.

20 So the point of this is, is that when the President says
21 take -- they tried to take me down, there were politicians
22 that were quoted as spreading this dirt onto the Trump
23 campaign. Could that be what the President was referring to
24 when he said they tried to take me down?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know what he meant. He

1 kept repeating it, though, they tried to take me down, they
2 tried to take me down. He was not a fan of Ukraine, per se.

3 MR. NUNES: And you can understand why, from his
4 perspective, if --

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I understand what you're saying.

6 MR. NUNES: I'm sure he read the Steele dossier many,
7 many times.

8 That's all I have, Mr. Castor.

9 MR. JORDAN: Ambassador, tell me what you thought of
10 President Zelensky.

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, one of the --

12 MR. JORDAN: And now as the leader of Ukraine.

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: One of the reasons I was pushing
14 so hard for the meeting after the inauguration, I thought
15 that he and President Trump would get along very well. He's
16 very articulate, he's funny, he's charming, and he's pretty
17 smart, and he's got a lot of energy. And I thought the two
18 gentlemen would have good chemistry together and that good
19 things would happen between the U.S. and Ukraine.

20 MR. JORDAN: You thought they'd hit it off.

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did.

22 MR. JORDAN: And your focus -- and you weren't the only
23 one. We've heard testimony. It's in her opening statement.
24 Ambassador -- former Ambassador to Ukraine, she thought the
25 same thing. Ambassador Volker thought that. It seemed like

1 everyone thought you get these two guys together, they're
2 going to hit it off. And that was your focus. Is that
3 accurate? Is that fair?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, it is.

5 MR. JORDAN: And the Ukrainian people thought this guy
6 was the real deal.

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, I think he won by a fairly
8 healthy margin.

9 MR. JORDAN: 73 percent. I don't know if anyone in the
10 room's won with that margin.

11 So your whole goal was to get these two together and
12 that was your focus. And you thought, if you could, that was
13 good for the country, good for our country and good for
14 theirs.

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

16 MR. JORDAN: Okay.

17 The gentleman from New York.

18 MR. ZELDIN: Mr. Ambassador, earlier referenced
19 Ambassador Taylor, and later you were answering questions
20 with regards to your effort to find out why there was a hold
21 on aid. Did Ambassador Taylor ever mention to you a --
22 anything about a quid pro quo prior to that text that you
23 responded to?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: To which text do you refer?

25 MR. ZELDIN: Do you recall receiving a text from

1 Ambassador Taylor suggesting that there was a linkage between
2 U.S. aid to Ukraine and opening an investigation into the
3 Bidens?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know that that's what the
5 text said. I recall --

6 MR. ZELDIN: What do you recall?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I recall there was some kind of a
8 text that aid was connected to some political agenda of the
9 President's. That's what Ambassador Taylor articulated and
10 that's what prompted my phone call to President Trump to ask
11 him what he wanted.

12 MR. ZELDIN: And in your conversation with President
13 Trump he was -- he was clear to you that there was no quid
14 pro quo, correct?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, I didn't -- I didn't frame
16 the question about the aid and the link. I did not frame the
17 question that way. I asked the question open ended: What do
18 you want?

19 MR. ZELDIN: But the President was clear about in his
20 response to you, what was he clear --

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: He said: I want nothing. I don't
22 want to give them anything and I don't want anything from
23 them. I want Zelensky to do the right thing. That's what he
24 -- and he kept repeating no quid pro quo over and over again.

25 MR. ZELDIN: And then you told Ambassador Taylor that?

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Then I sent him the text that
2 said: No quid pro quo. Please call the Secretary if you
3 have any further concerns.

4 MR. ZELDIN: Do you know what source of information
5 prompted Ambassador Taylor to send you that text?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't. I was quite shocked when
7 I got it, though.

8 MR. ZELDIN: You're not -- are you aware at all of any
9 firsthand knowledge Ambassador Taylor had to inform him of
10 what led him to send that text?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know where he got it and I
12 don't recall him telling me how he heard it. I just got the
13 text.

14 MR. ZELDIN: Is it possible that he -- are you familiar
15 with a Politico story that came out around that time?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

17 MR. ZELDIN: Then you had a conversation with Ambassador
18 Taylor?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: After I sent my text back to him?
20 I don't believe I did. I think I testified earlier that I
21 sent the text, I suggested he call the Secretary. He said he
22 agreed. I don't know if he ever called the Secretary
23 because, as I said, the hold was lifted within a day or two
24 after that text.

25 MR. ZELDIN: At no time -- at no time you received any

1 information that there was a linkage between a hold on aid
2 and opening an investigation into the Bidens?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You mean prior to his text?

4 MR. ZELDIN: At any time, I'm asking you.

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall.

6 MR. ZELDIN: You don't have -- at no time did you
7 receive any information that there was a linkage between a
8 hold on aid to Ukraine and opening an investigation into the
9 Bidens?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I recall hearing multiple reasons
11 why the aid was being held from various people. I never
12 heard that it was being held specifically to investigate the
13 Bidens. I never heard the word "Biden" mentioned with aid.

14 MR. ZELDIN: And you're not aware of Ambassador Taylor
15 ever receiving any firsthand information that would back up
16 that allegation either?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I can't testify to what Ambassador
18 Taylor received. I don't know.

19 MR. ZELDIN: You're just -- you're not aware.

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not aware.

21 MR. ZELDIN: And if I understand correctly, President
22 Trump did in fact meet with President Zelensky at the U.N.
23 General Assembly, correct?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

25 MR. ZELDIN: And you were present at that meeting?

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I was, along with many others.

2 MR. ZELDIN: And has President Trump and President
3 Zelensky hit it off in their engagements where you have been
4 present?

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think that was the only
6 engagement where they were together that I was present.

7 MR. ZELDIN: So the meeting -- a meeting between
8 President Trump and President Zelensky did in fact take place
9 in September?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

11 MR. MCCAUL: Thank you.

12 Thank you, Ambassador, for being here today. I'm
13 ranking member on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

14 I just had a couple of questions about the freeze on the
15 foreign assistance. You stated you learned about that
16 through Bill Taylor. Is that correct?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

18 MR. MCCAUL: What about Ambassador Volker?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sure we discussed it as well
20 once I -- I think I first learned it from Taylor where he had
21 participated in some SVTC video conference and he was told
22 that there was a hold put on. He didn't know why. And then
23 we probably talked about it. But again, I'm speculating. I
24 don't remember exactly.

25 MR. MCCAUL: And then what was your response to that?

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I didn't think much of it when it
2 was initially put on other than I was just frustrated because
3 it was one more obstacle to my meeting that I was trying to
4 get scheduled.

5 MR. MCCAUL: Right. Did you have any conversations with
6 President Zelensky about that?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't remember discussing that
8 with President Zelensky.

9 MR. MCCAUL: Do you know if President Zelensky had any
10 knowledge about that?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't. I don't know if he did
12 or didn't.

13 MR. MCCAUL: Would it surprise you that Ambassador
14 Volker testified that he had no knowledge about that freeze
15 on the foreign assistance?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know if he got the same
17 text from Ambassador Taylor that I did, which was the text
18 after the SVTC. I can't remember if that was a group text or
19 just directly to me.

20 MR. MCCAUL: Right. And so from all testimony we've
21 heard, including yours today, President Zelensky had no idea
22 about the hold on this foreign --

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know when he became aware
24 of the hold.

25 MR. MCCAUL: Right.

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know when he --

2 MR. MCCAUL: And that's probably why you said there was
3 no quid pro quo. How could there be if he didn't -- if the
4 other -- the person who had received that for which,
5 translated from Latin, would be -- had no knowledge --

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Right.

7 MR. MCCAUL: -- about the foreign assistance, correct?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Can you restate your question?
9 I'm sorry.

10 MR. MCCAUL: In other words, that's probably why you
11 said there was no quid pro quo, because if the person that
12 would be receiving something had no knowledge that the
13 foreign assistance is being held up.

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I would assume that by September,
15 just before the hold was lifted, when I was getting this
16 alarming text from Ambassador Taylor, that at that point I
17 would assume that Zelensky would have known that there was a
18 hold. I don't know that he knew about the hold when the hold
19 was put on.

20 MR. MCCAUL: Right. But he -- to your knowledge, you
21 had no conversation with him about this.

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall any conversation
23 about this.

24 MR. MCCAUL: And your speculation is he may have learned
25 later, correct? But that's speculation.

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, it's totally speculation.

2 MR. MCCAUL: And that would have been certainly after
3 the July 25th phone call.

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm speculating.

5 MR. MCCAUL: And that's all speculation.

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: All speculation.

7 MR. MCCAUL: Okay. I yield back.

8 Let me ask you one more thing. So you're an ambassador.
9 Just real quickly. Don't you have a legal obligation to
10 certify anti-corruption before foreign assistance is given to
11 a foreign country?

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: But I'm not the ambassador to
13 Ukraine.

14 MR. MCCAUL: Correct. But isn't that the practice of
15 the State Department?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I am not aware. I'm not a
17 bilateral ambassador. I wouldn't make those certifications
18 with respect to the European Union.

19 MR. MCCAUL: Well, I guess it wouldn't surprise you that
20 that is the policy and obligation under the appropriation
21 that was --

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't have any -- I don't have
23 any knowledge of that.

24 MR. MCCAUL: There is a legal requirement.

25 Yes, thank you.

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't have any knowledge.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: The time of the minority has expired.

3 Why don't we take a 30 minutes break for lunch, and

4 we'll resume, let's say, at 1:10 p.m.

5 Counsel has asked for 45 minutes, so let's resume

6 then -- what would that be? Let's resume at 1:20.

7 [Recess.]

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1 [1:25 p.m.]

2 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Should we go back on the
3 record? Okay. Back on the record. Ambassador Sondland,
4 during our lunch break Chief of Staff Mulvaney gave a rather
5 remarkable press conference. Did you have an opportunity to
6 watch it?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, I did not see it. I haven't
8 been receiving any news.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we're getting a transcript of it
10 and we may make reference to it later when we do. But I want
11 to go back to something you said in your opening statement.
12 You said withholding foreign aid in order to pressure a
13 foreign government to take such steps -- well, let me begin
14 the paragraph on page 17.

15 Let me state clearly, you said, "inviting a foreign
16 government to undertake investigations for the purpose of
17 influencing an upcoming U.S. election would be wrong.
18 Withholding foreign aid in order to pressure foreign
19 government to take such steps would be wrong. I did not and
20 would not ever participate in such undertakings. In my
21 opinion, security aid to Ukraine was in our vital national
22 interest and should not have been delayed for any reason."
23 You stand by that testimony?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: During Mr. Mulvaney's press conference,

1 he acknowledged, for the first time, that the military aid
2 was being withheld, at least in part, over a desire to get
3 Ukraine to investigate the DNC. I take it you were not aware
4 of that?

5 MR. CASTOR: Do you have a copy of the transcript, Mr.
6 Chairman, to pass around?

7 THE CHAIRMAN: We don't have the transcript, but we hope
8 to have one soon. So we'll have exact language, but it was
9 words to that effect. I take it that --

10 MR. JORDAN: We'd like to see that before you proceed.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I would like to see that as well.
12 But my question, Ambassador Sondland, is if the Chief of
13 Staff Mulvaney acknowledged that military aid was being
14 withheld in any part to secure Ukraine's investigation of the
15 DNC, I take it that's not something that you were aware of
16 until now?

17 MR. ZELDIN: Mr. Chair, what exactly did Mick Mulvaney
18 say?

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Counsel, I'm not going to entertain any
20 other interruptions.

21 MR. ZELDIN: You're asking the question, Mr. Ambassador.

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I heard the question.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Please respond to the question.

24 MR. ZELDIN: I don't know if the witness would like to
25 read the transcript.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Zeldin, no further interruptions,
2 please. The witness is instructed to answer the question.

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sorry, Chairman, would you
4 repeat the question one more time?

5 THE CHAIRMAN: If the Chief of Staff acknowledged today
6 that the military aid was being withheld in part over desire
7 to get Ukraine to investigate the DNC, do I understand your
8 testimony that this would be the first you would be learning
9 of that?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, that's speculative. You're
11 saying if he said that, would it be the first time I have
12 learned about it?

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, it is.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: And would you ever have countenance, the
16 withholding of aid, to secure Ukraine's commitment to
17 investigate the DNC?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I believe I testified, or my
19 statement indicates, I would not have withheld aid for any
20 reason.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: And you, in particular, wouldn't withhold
22 aid to secure help in a U.S. election, correct?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: For any reason.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm asking about this particular
25 reason. Would you ever countenance withholding aid from

1 Ukraine to secure an investigation of the DNC that might be
2 in the President's interest in the 2016 election -- in the
3 2020 election?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I would not.

5 MR. ZELDIN: Mr. Chair, this entire line of questioning,
6 why don't you just wait for the transcript?

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Zeldin -- Mr. Zeldin, you're not
8 recognized.

9 MR. MEADOWS: But, Mr. Chairman, you clarified on the
10 other, and let's make sure we clarify it. You said 2020
11 election. That's not necessarily accurate.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. --

13 MR. MEADOWS: You've characterized it in a way that is
14 not necessarily consistent with what I just heard.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Meadows, I think the witness
16 understood my question.

17 MR. MEADOWS: Well, he didn't understand the 2020 part
18 that you added in at the last part. He made a comment that
19 he wasn't aware of it.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: I appreciate your representing what the
21 witness understood or not, but the witness can speak for
22 himself. Let me move on to another question, Ambassador.

23 I think you said in answer to my colleague's questions
24 that you really wanted the President of the United States to
25 meet with the President of Ukraine and thought it was the

1 interest of both countries. Is that right?

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: But it became clear to you in your
4 conversation with the President that that meeting wasn't
5 going to take place unless the President's lawyer's interests
6 or concerns were met. Is that right?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: When the President suggested that
8 we speak to Mayor Giuliani, that was, I believe, on May 23rd,
9 and only a few days later, he did, in fact, issue an
10 unconditional invitation. So at that point, we thought
11 whatever the logjam was, it had been broken.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I think you testified earlier,
13 didn't you, Mr. Sondland, that when the President told you to
14 talk to Mr. Giuliani, you understood that unless the
15 President's lawyer's interests were satisfied, there was
16 going to be no meeting?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: But then the invitation was
18 issued.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: We'll get to one thing at a time. Before
20 the invitation was extended, you understood from the
21 President that unless Mr. Giuliani's interests or concerns
22 were met there was going to be no meeting. Isn't that
23 correct?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I understood that walking out of
25 the door on the 23rd.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Now, one of the other things that -- and
2 we should have a transcript, I hope soon, Mr. Mulvaney
3 expressed during the conference just now, was that letter
4 invitation was a courtesy, and that scheduling may or may not
5 allow it, but they extend that courtesy of a kind of an open
6 generic invitation to many world leaders. Do you disagree
7 with that?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I wasn't aware of that.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: You weren't aware that the Chief of Staff
10 of the President took a different view of how committed the
11 President was in that letter to an actual meeting?

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sorry. Repeat the question
13 again, please.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: The question is, Mr. Mulvaney just
15 expressed that the letter invitation was essentially a
16 courtesy, and the same courtesy that is extended to other
17 world leaders, it wasn't a binding commitment to a meeting.

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, when I saw the letter I took
19 it seriously. But then we never got a meeting scheduled and
20 we kept working on trying to get a meeting scheduled and
21 could never get it nailed down.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: You testified also that the President
23 expressed a concern to you that the Ukrainians would promise
24 but not deliver, and that the President wanted Ukrainians on
25 the record. Is that right?

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did. Yes.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: And in this context, the "promise but not
3 deliver," and on the record, that involved getting a
4 commitment from Ukraine to conduct these investigations that
5 the President and his lawyer wanted? Is that correct?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I believe that what Mayor Giuliani
7 passed on, or I believe what I heard from Ambassador Volker,
8 likely coming from Mayor Giuliani, because the President
9 never made that statement directly to me or to anyone, to the
10 best of my knowledge, was that whatever the Ukrainians were
11 going to promise in any context, he wanted it public.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: You also mentioned that in going through
13 the chronology with the minority counsel, that over time, you
14 learned more and more about what the President and his lawyer
15 truly wanted from Ukraine. And there was an evolution from
16 generic interest in fighting corruption to an interest in
17 Burisma, to finally the realization that what they were
18 interested in was investigation of the Bidens. Is that a
19 fair summary?

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: And I think you suggested that you
22 learned about the connection to the Bidens, that the interest
23 in Burisma wasn't generic. In fact, it was because of the
24 Bidens, at some point before the telephone call transcript
25 was released. Is that accurate?

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall exactly when I
2 learned that. I don't know the date.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, let me ask you this: Do you recall
4 how you learned that the President and his lawyer's interest
5 in Burisma was not a generic interest in the company or in
6 corruption, but was, in fact, an interest in the Bidens. Do
7 you remember how you learned that?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall what made the light
9 go on during that continuum, no.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, when the light did go on, because
11 you've said that you didn't think that meetings or other
12 government action should be conditioned on helping a
13 political campaign, when the light did go on, did you take
14 any steps to say, Hey, we have to stop this conditioning of
15 this meeting because this is not appropriate?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I believe when the light went on,
17 the phone call had already occurred, and meetings were being
18 discussed, but, again, never scheduled. So it became
19 irrelevant.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: And you can't tell us how the light came
21 on? That is, how you came to learn that Burisma was really
22 the Bidens?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I can't. I don't recall.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Goldman.

25 MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you.

1 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

2 Q You understood that -- you said you were happy to
3 see that May 29th letter of invitation, right?

4 A Yes.

5 Q And how many countries are in the EU?

6 A 28, soon to be 27.

7 Q And you've seen these types of invitations to the
8 White House without specific dates related to other
9 countries, too, right?

10 A No, those letters would go to the bilateral
11 ambassadors of those countries, not to me.

12 Q So you don't even see them?

13 A No.

14 Q But you did see them for Ukraine?

15 A Yes, because someone sent it to me because they
16 knew I was helping on the file.

17 Q Okay. Because it was a central part of your
18 ambassadorship, right?

19 A Because I was helping on the file.

20 Q Those are your words, central part of your
21 ambassadorship, not mine. That's what you said in your
22 opening statement. Are you staying that's not the case now?

23 MR. LUSKIN: We've gone over this ground. We read that
24 portion --

25 MR. GOLDMAN: Mr. Luskin, I didn't expect a dispute

1 about this, it was in his opening statement. I just want to
2 understand if it's now not a part of his -- the central part
3 of his ambassadorship.

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I stand by my previous testimony.

5 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

6 Q Okay. You hosted an Independence Day celebration
7 in Brussels on June 4th of this year. Is that right?

8 A I did.

9 Q And Secretary Perry came?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Ulrich Brechbuhl came?

12 A Correct.

13 Q Was Secretary Pompeo there?

14 A He was not.

15 Q But President Zelensky came as well, right?

16 A President Zelensky came.

17 Q Did you personally invite President Zelensky?

18 A I invited a number of leaders.

19 Q Including President Zelensky?

20 A Including President Zelensky.

21 Q And did you have any substantive conversations with
22 President Zelensky at that gathering?

23 A I think it was all social. There were several
24 people at the dinner. It was a very casual social evening.
25 It wasn't designed to do business, it was designed for people

1 to get to know one another.

2 Q Did he mention the White House meeting to you?

3 A I don't recall him mentioning that. I don't -- I
4 didn't even sit next to him, he sat across the table from me
5 and it was a big table.

6 Q So you didn't speak to him one-on-one at all?

7 A I spoke to him, but I don't recall talking about
8 the White House meeting there.

9 Q By that point you knew that President Zelensky
10 desperately wanted a White House meeting, right?

11 A Oh, I think President Zelensky wanted a White House
12 meeting from the day he was inaugurated.

13 Q Right. Because that's a very important sign for
14 legitimacy in Ukraine. Is that right?

15 A Every country that I encounter wants a White House
16 meeting.

17 Q Particularly, if you're sort of a new leader, it
18 helps to cement your legitimacy to have a White House
19 meeting, right?

20 A Among other things, yes.

21 Q And you know from your engagement in Ukraine that
22 Ukraine is very dependent on the United States, right?

23 A They are.

24 Q And we discussed a little bit the security
25 assistance that the United States provides, that's part of

1 it. Is that right?

2 A I think they're dependent on us for a number of
3 things.

4 Q Such as what?

5 A Well, first of all, moral support. That's the most
6 important. Clearly, some defense issues, some security
7 issues, Western capital. All kind of things.

8 Q Now, we're going to sort of try to move through the
9 summer months to the best of your recollection. And, you
10 know, just to be very clear, Ambassador Sondland, you have
11 made it very clear today that your -- at least to us as we
12 perceive it -- that your objective was to promote Ukraine --
13 democracy in Ukraine, and the Zelensky presidency, which you
14 thought was a very positive step for the country. And I
15 think we all recognize and appreciate that. And, obviously,
16 you've been caught up in some events that are the subject of
17 this investigation, but I don't think anyone doubts your good
18 faith desire to help Ukraine.

19 What we're trying to understand is the factual
20 development, the evolution of what happened really from that
21 May 23rd meeting, you know, up until today. So, you know, to
22 the best of your ability, we appreciate anything that you can
23 remember.

24 Did you have any conversations with Secretary Perry in
25 Brussels around that Independence Day celebration related to

1 Ukraine?

2 A I don't recall any. And, counsel, the dinner was
3 really a social dinner. The subject of the dinner was not
4 Ukraine and was not President Zelensky. The Prime Minister
5 of Romania was there. The President of Poland was there.
6 Jay Leno was there. Mr. Kushner was there. There were a lot
7 of celebrities, guests, and it was a very sort of
8 light-hearted evening. It was not a business dinner.

9 Q Did President Zelensky, as a comedian, get along
10 well with Jay Leno?

11 A He was honored to meet him. Apparently, Jay Leno
12 was his hero.

13 Q So fully understanding that this was not the
14 purpose of the meeting, I'm just wondering if you had any
15 conversations with Secretary Perry what would have been, I
16 guess, 2 weeks after the White House meeting where you
17 were -- you and Secretary Perry and Ambassador Volker, were
18 given more responsibility over Ukraine. Do you recall?

19 A I don't, because again, I probably -- I don't
20 believe I sat next to Secretary Perry at the dinner. I may
21 have said hello, chatted. Everyone was making small talk.
22 The biggest thing, frankly, that came out of the meeting from
23 a business standpoint was that the President of Poland and
24 President Zelensky seemed to really hit it off, and they
25 began working on some Poland-Ukraine issues together, which I

1 was very pleased that that happened.

2 Q And just to be clear, you know, we're trying to
3 stay on message here, or on focus. We understand there's a
4 lot of other things that go into Ukraine policy. So when we
5 try to narrow down the focus, the point is not at all to say
6 that this is the only thing you were talking about, and we
7 understand you had a wide-ranging portfolio.

8 So without necessarily putting a date on it, do you
9 remember whether you had a conversation -- the conversation
10 that you referenced with Secretary Perry about his
11 conversation with Rudy Giuliani after that May 23rd meeting.
12 Do you remember if that was before or after that May 29th
13 letter?

14 A All I can recall, Counsel, is that when the three
15 of us agreed that we needed to somehow contact Mr. Giuliani
16 in order to move the process forward, that Secretary Perry
17 volunteered to make the first outreach, because he was the
18 most familiar with Rudy. I think when he ran for -- when
19 Rudy ran for President --

20 Q Sorry to interrupt you. Do you remember when that
21 was?

22 A I don't. I know that I think we all agreed that he
23 would make the outreach. And then he and Volker, as I
24 testified before lunch, kind of took it from there.

25 [Majority Exhibit No. 6

1 was marked for identification.]

2 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

3 Q Okay. Now, I'm going to give you what's marked as
4 exhibit 6, which is a number of text messages, and I'll point
5 you to the specific pages. Can we give the minority a copy?
6 So let's go to Bates number 26, if we could. I don't think
7 we have it here. Okay. We must be missing this one.

8 There's a text message, perhaps you're not on it,
9 between Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Taylor, that refers
10 to a call that you had with Secretary Perry and Ambassador
11 Bolton on June 10th. Is that the call that you reference
12 where you spoke with Ambassador Bolton and Secretary Perry
13 about Ukraine matters?

14 A I believe so, but where is this?

15 MR. LUSKIN: Can you refer us to --

16 MR. GOLDMAN: You know, I apologize, we don't have it in
17 here.

18 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

19 Q But it doesn't necessarily matter because you
20 already did testify that in June you had a call.

21 A We had a conference call. Yeah.

22 Q A conference call. Describe what was discussed on
23 that conference call?

24 A To the best of my recollection, I believe Secretary
25 Perry laid out for Ambassador Bolton the notion that the

1 three of us would assist Ambassador Taylor on Ukraine and be
2 there to support as the, you know, relationship was moving
3 forward, I think Giuliani was mentioned. I can't remember
4 exactly that, you know, the President had wanted us to
5 somehow involve Giuliani in the discussions.

6 Again, I'm speculating Bolton might have said, you know,
7 whatever, he wasn't a fan of involving other people. As I
8 testified, I wasn't either. And the end result of the call
9 was, we all felt, and I assume this includes Ambassador
10 Bolton as well, we all felt very comfortable with the
11 strategy moving forward, that we would all help on Ukraine,
12 to be defined.

13 Q Did you and Ambassador Volker and Secretary Perry
14 ever develop a nickname for the three of you?

15 A I think you're referring to the three amigos.

16 Q Yeah, who coined that?

17 A I think we were all in Kyiv together, and someone
18 walked up to us, and said, you look like the three amigos, we
19 were all standing together, and I think that's where it came
20 from.

21 Q You kind of liked that nickname, right?

22 A I don't --

23 MR. LUSKIN: We've all heard worse.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: I can attest to that.

25 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

1 Q So on -- was there any discussion of a White House
2 meeting on that conference call that you recall with
3 Ambassador Bolton?

4 A That would have been on July -- June 10th. I think
5 the notion of a White House meeting was probably raised every
6 time we had a conversation with anybody about Ukraine,
7 because we were, you know, this was after this supposed
8 boilerplate invitation was issued, as you kind of described
9 it. And, again, I took it as a serious invitation, you
10 described it as sort of a boilerplate invitation. We were
11 trying to get a meeting scheduled, back to my original
12 testimony, which I thought was important, for the two
13 Presidents to meet.

14 Q And I didn't characterize it, and I think -- but
15 you would agree that there was no date on that invitation?

16 A No, but that's, I would assume, typical when, you
17 know, you don't -- you have to coordinate a date.

18 Q Right.

19 A Two busy people.

20 Q And you had said you were surprised to see that
21 letter coming out of that May 23rd meeting?

22 A I was surprised given the conversation on May 23rd.
23 Yes.

24 Q Right. Understood. Now, did you, in the middle of
25 June, have a Ukraine coordination meeting in Secretary

1 Perry's office in Washington?

2 A We might have. I've been to Secretary Perry's
3 office on a number of occasions for a number of matters
4 related to Ukraine and unrelated to Ukraine because we work
5 very closely on European energy together.

6 Q Uh-huh. And you don't remember anything about that
7 meeting?

8 A I don't. I would have to see some stuff to refresh
9 my memory.

10 Q Now, at this point had you -- so let's say we're
11 now in mid-June. Are you aware of what Rudy Giuliani's views
12 on Ukraine are at this point?

13 A I'm only aware of what I hear through Volker,
14 primarily, because I'm not talking to Giuliani.

15 Q Did you, after the May 23rd meeting, did you pay a
16 little bit more attention to any public statements that Rudy
17 Giuliani might have made?

18 A No, I have not been following Mr. Giuliani in the
19 press. I know you were excoriating me about that earlier,
20 but I'm not.

21 Q If you go to page 5 of Exhibit 3, the tweets.

22 MR. LUSKIN: We don't have those exhibits up here.

23 MR. GOLDMAN: The tweets? If you don't have it, we can
24 get it. Oh, here. All right.

25 MR. LUSKIN: Which page?

1 MR. GOLDMAN: Page 5. It's a tweet on June 21st of this
2 year by Rudy Giuliani where -- I'll just read it for the
3 record. He says: New Pres of Ukraine still silent on
4 investigation of Ukrainian interference in 2016 election, and
5 alleged Biden bribery of President -- Pres Poroshenko. Time
6 for leadership and investigate both if you want to purge how
7 Ukraine was abused by Hillary and Obama people.

8 So this is one example of Rudy Giuliani speaking out.
9 Were you aware of these views by this time?

10 A No.

11 Q So, again, not to belabor the point, but this is
12 now after you were directed by President Trump to assume some
13 leadership with Volker and Perry for Ukraine policy, and to
14 consult with Rudy Giuliani. Is that right?

15 A That's not right. If it were up to President
16 Trump, we would have all walked out of there and done nothing
17 on Ukraine. He wasn't interested in Ukraine. He said, talk
18 to Rudy. And as I testified earlier, first, Secretary Perry
19 I believe, reached out to Giuliani, and secondly, Volker then
20 took it from there.

21 Q In your opening statement, you said, on the bottom
22 of page 7, that "President Trump directed those of us present
23 at the meeting to talk to Mr. Giuliani, his personal
24 attorney, about his concerns. It was apparent to all of us
25 that the key to changing the President's mind on Ukraine was

1 Mr. Giuliani." Is that -- that was your testimony earlier
2 today. Do you stand by that?

3 A Hold on just a second. I stand by that statement.

4 Q Okay. And you did -- given what you testified
5 earlier today, you did want to change the President's mind
6 about Ukraine, right?

7 A We wanted the President to meet with President
8 Zelensky.

9 Q Right. And so, well, you just said the key to
10 changing the President's mind on Ukraine. So when you say
11 "changing the President's mind on Ukraine," I take it what
12 you're saying is you wanted him to be open to President
13 Zelensky, and to agree to meet with him. Is that right?

14 A That's right.

15 Q Okay. And the key to that meeting, as you
16 testified, is Mr. Giuliani?

17 A That's correct.

18 Q But you didn't make any extra efforts to figure out
19 what Mr. Giuliani's concerns, as referenced by the President
20 in the May 23rd meeting, might have been?

21 MR. LUSKIN: That's not his testimony.

22 MR. GOLDMAN: I'm asking a question.

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: My testimony was that Ambassador
24 Volker and Secretary Perry took the lead with Mr. Giuliani.

25 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

1 Q Understood. But did you make any efforts to
2 ascertain what Mr. Giuliani's concerns were after this
3 May 23rd meeting?

4 A I don't recall making any efforts. I can't say for
5 100 percent certain, but I don't recall that I did anything
6 other than wait for Perry and Volker to get back.

7 Q How frequently in the weeks after that meeting did
8 you speak with -- let's just do it one at a time, Ambassador
9 Volker about Mr. Giuliani?

10 A I don't remember.

11 Q Did you speak to him at all about Mr. Giuliani in
12 the month of June?

13 A I think he generally kept me informed that he was
14 trying to get to the bottom of what Mr. Giuliani wanted, and
15 I never heard anything definitive until later.

16 Q When later?

17 A I don't remember the day. I told you it was sort
18 of a continuum.

19 Q We'll try to pin a time on it as we refresh your
20 recollection. And is that similar to the conversations you
21 had with Secretary Perry?

22 A I think I was spending more of my time with
23 Secretary Perry on unrelated -- matters unrelated to Ukraine.

24 Q Secretary Perry was focused on some of the energy
25 considerations in Ukraine, right?

1 A He was focused on energy considerations all over
2 Europe, yeah.

3 Q And that's a very significant issue in Ukraine,
4 energy --

5 A It is.

6 Q -- right?

7 A Yes.

8 Q And so Naftogaz, for example, is the state-run
9 energy company, correct?

10 A Yes.

11 Q So that was a focus of Secretary Perry's, right?

12 A One of many.

13 Q But you never heard Rudy Giuliani express any
14 concerns about Naftogaz, did you?

15 MR. LUSKIN: Are you talking about in the period of
16 June?

17 MR. GOLDMAN: I'm talking about at all.

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall.

19 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

20 Q So if you can turn to page 36 -- if we have that
21 one, yes, we do -- of the text messages. So if you look at
22 6/26/19 at 3:48 p.m., Ambassador Taylor writes -- and this is
23 a group that, at the top, you see that you created a group,
24 Gordon and Bill.

25 A Uh-huh.

1 Q But this is Kurt Volker's text messages. So it's
2 you, Volker and Bill Taylor. Is that right?

3 A Must be, yeah.

4 Q Okay. So Bill Taylor writes: Gordon, you might
5 not have seen the message from George Kent on the high side
6 that tells us that senior levels at the White House said that
7 that the visit is not happening any time soon. Very
8 discouraging. Any chance you can turn this around? If not,
9 I don't think a senior call with the Ukrainians on Friday, as
10 your staff is suggesting, makes sense. Your thoughts.

11 And then two lines on down, you write back: This is
12 Vindman, and is being fixed. Do you recall -- this is
13 June 26th, what you meant by or what you did after receiving
14 this in order to fix it?

15 A I don't recall exactly, but I do recall that
16 Lieutenant Colonel Vindman was against a call per se. He was
17 never specific about why. And I'm speculating, I might have
18 called Dr. Hill, I might have called the State Department and
19 asked for someone to look into the matter, but I don't
20 remember exactly.

21 Q Okay. And if you go to 42 at the top, you just
22 say: "Please call. Urgent. Thanks." This is a text
23 exchange with Kurt Volker. This is around a possible
24 conference call that you had with Ambassador Volker,
25 Ambassador Taylor, and Secretary Perry, that I asked you

1 about earlier. Do you recall that conference call, again,
2 where you --

3 MR. LUSKIN: Around the --

4 MR. GOLDMAN: Around the time, yeah. Sorry.

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh, you mean the one with
6 Ambassador Bolton?

7 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

8 Q No, this is later in the month.

9 A This is -- oh, I'm sorry, that's July 10th. Okay.

10 Q No, it's at the top. It's June 28.

11 A Oh, June 28th.

12 Q I'm trying to refresh your recollection as to
13 whether or not you remember anything more about a conference
14 call that you might have had with the Ambassador Volker,
15 Ambassador Taylor, and Secretary Perry on June 28th?

16 A I don't. I do not recall.

17 Q And whether you would have patched in President
18 Zelensky?

19 A I might have, but I don't -- again, I don't
20 remember the contents of that call.

21 Q Are you aware of a Ukraine-related conference in
22 Toronto at the beginning of July?

23 A Is that the one that Ambassador Volker attended? I
24 think he attended something in Toronto.

25 Q Do you know if George Kent attended?

1 A I don't. I don't know.

2 Q Did you have any conversations -- do you know
3 whether Ambassador Volker met with President Zelensky there?

4 A I believe he reported back that they had a meeting,
5 yes.

6 Q What did he report back to you?

7 A I think he reported that it was a good meeting.

8 Q Did you speak to him before that?

9 A Well, I spoke to him before he went to Toronto at
10 some point, I don't know when.

11 Q Did you know when he intended to speak to President
12 Zelensky about?

13 A I think they were just going to get together and
14 keep the relationship going.

15 Q Well, you said at every meeting you discussed the
16 White House visit?

17 A Always.

18 Q Right.

19 A I'm sure they talked about that, too, because the
20 Ukrainians would bring it up.

21 Q And did you know by this point whether or not there
22 was any discussion with the Ukrainians, whether it's
23 President Zelensky or his senior officials, about any
24 conditions for a White House meeting by the early July?

25 A Early July. So let's see -- so I'm looking here at

1 the texts.

2 Q So they are a little out of order because --

3 A This is now when Giuliani and Yermak met in Madrid.

4 Q No, no. Don't look at the texts because it's not
5 related -- I didn't ask you to look at the text. I'm just
6 asking about this July 2nd or 3rd meeting in Toronto between
7 Volker and Zelensky, and whether you, by that point, whether
8 you recall having any conversations with Ambassador Volker,
9 or others, but specifically Ambassador Volker, about any
10 conditions for the White House meeting?

11 A Well, at some point, and again, I don't remember
12 the timeframe. At some point this press statement was a
13 condition of the White House meeting.

14 Q Right. That was in August, and we'll get to that.
15 But I'm just trying to understand the time line, because you
16 have said that you remember, at some point, the
17 investigations became linked to the White House meeting. Is
18 that correct?

19 A The press statement, yeah, the press statement was
20 linked to the White House meeting. And the press
21 statement included -- the most laden press statement was the
22 one that mentioned the 2016 and the Burisma investigations
23 continuum.

24 Q Okay.

25 A You know, but there were many versions of it.

1 Q And other than the press statement, you don't
2 remember whether -- is it your testimony here today that
3 prior to the press statement, and I want to be very clear
4 about this.

5 A Okay.

6 Q That prior to the press statement you had no
7 awareness that the White House visit was conditioned at all
8 on whether or not Ukraine pursued any investigations?

9 A I don't recall that at all. Again, I viewed an
10 unconditional invitation, so I thought we were done. We
11 couldn't get a meeting scheduled. Then the press statement,
12 which was an innocuous press statement that said, pursuing
13 corruption. Then the press statement began to have ornaments
14 hung on it. That was the continuum as I recall it.

15 Q All right. Let's keep going through the texts. Go
16 back to page 36.

17 A Which page? I'm sorry.

18 Q Page 36. If you look near the bottom, starting
19 with 7/7 at 2:15.

20 A 7/7. Okay.

21 Q Sorry, the 2:34.

22 A Yeah.

23 Q Ambassador Volker writes: "Gordon, maybe we can
24 talk E. Mulvaney on Monday by phone, Kurt." Do you know what
25 that was in relation to?

1 A I'm speculating it might have been trying to get
2 Mulvaney to help with the meeting.

3 Q Which meeting?

4 A The Zelensky White House meeting.

5 Q Okay. And what did you recall speaking?

6 A Or a call. I mean, again, I don't remember exactly
7 what -- I think we were, you know, we were trying to push at
8 every possible place we could push to get this done, because
9 we were losing credibility with the Ukrainians.

10 Q I understand, and it's clear --

11 A After the invitation came out, because they took it
12 seriously.

13 Q Right. And now we're 6 weeks later --

14 A Yes.

15 Q And there's been no date set.

16 A No. There hadn't even been a phone call. The
17 phone call never occurred until July 25th.

18 Q And explain the importance of the phone call at
19 this point?

20 A With every country that I deal with, every country
21 with which I deal, direct calls from the President of the
22 United States to the leader of the country and Oval visits
23 are always valued, especially with, as you described it, a
24 new fledgling President, who just got elected, wants to
25 establish legitimacy. So having President Trump call him,

1 even if it was for no purpose other than to say hello, was
2 valued. But then they go to the press, they say, I just
3 spoke to the President of the United States, and it gives
4 them legitimacy. And the Oval is the sine qua non.

5 Q Right. And so whether it was on this date or
6 otherwise, obviously, you reference a conversation with
7 Mulvaney. Did you have a conversation with Mr. Mulvaney
8 about a White House visit for President Zelensky?

9 A I don't recall. All I can tell you is Mulvaney was
10 almost impossible to get a hold of. He rarely responded to
11 emails and almost never returned phone calls.

12 Q So why would Ambassador Volker be asking you to
13 talk about Mulvaney?

14 A Because he figured I'd have a better chance of
15 getting him than he would.

16 Q You don't have a recollection of --

17 A We may have connected. I don't recall.

18 Q You don't recall?

19 A I don't recall.

20 Q And you don't recall the substance of any
21 conversation with Mr. Mulvaney that you may have had about a
22 White House visit?

23 A I don't know the date, but I'm sure at some point,
24 I had a phone conversation, or I may have run into
25 Mr. Mulvaney in the White House, having been there for

1 another reason, and asking, you know, why don't we have the
2 meeting yet? Why don't we have the phone call? And I don't
3 think I got a definitive answer, other than, we're working on
4 it.

5 Q He didn't tell you at any point that the President
6 needs these investigations in order to have a White House
7 visit?

8 A That was never linked. That was only specifically
9 brought into the press statement for a brief period of time
10 through Mr. Giuliani when we were negotiating a press
11 statement.

12 Q So if another witness were to testify that you
13 relayed the substance of a conversation that you had with
14 Mr. Mulvaney, where you indicated that you had an agreement
15 on a White House visit as long as you got an investigation in
16 early July, are you saying that that witness would not be
17 telling the truth?

18 A That I do not recall at all.

19 Q And if there was a memorialization of that witness'
20 perspective and corroborates their testimony, are you saying
21 that that testimony would be inaccurate?

22 A I'm saying I don't have any recollection about an
23 investigation. The only thing that I have testified to is
24 that the two items were to be mentioned in the press
25 statement at one point during the press statement

1 negotiations, which were conducted between Volker, Giuliani,
2 and, as I said, I gave input.

3 Q Can you go to page 37, please. Let me go to
4 July 21st at 1:45 a.m. And I'll read it, Bill Taylor writes:
5 "Gordon, one thing Kurt and I talked about yesterday was
6 Sasha Danylyuk's point that President Zelensky is sensitive
7 about Ukraine being taken seriously, not merely as an
8 instrument in Washington domestic reelection politics." And
9 you respond. "Absolutely, but we need to get to conversation
10 started and the relationship built irrespective of the
11 pretext. I am worried about the alternative."

12 Now, let me ask you something. What do you think
13 President Zelensky's sensitivity about being an instrument in
14 Washington domestic reelection politics, as relayed to you on
15 July 21st, references?

16 A Well, I think President Zelensky, as a general
17 prospect, did not want to get involved in U.S. election
18 politics, which makes sense.

19 Q Of course. What do you think he's referencing?

20 A I don't know what he's referencing.

21 Q You have no idea, as you sit here, what he might be
22 referencing?

23 A When I said irrespective of the pretext, I wanted
24 to keep the conversation going because at this point, we had
25 already almost lost all credibility with the Ukrainians.

1 Q Right. And isn't the pretext the investigations
2 that the President wanted?

3 A I think the pretext was the -- it was never the
4 investigations, I heard it was the press statement. I've
5 always said this was about a press statement.

6 Q I understand what you've said, Ambassador Sondland.
7 And I don't know whether you reviewed these text messages
8 before or not, but your testimony today that the press
9 statement was the first that you heard about the
10 investigation is entirely inconsistent with the text messages
11 that you were on. So why I'm showing you these text messages
12 is that it may refresh your recollection that you actually
13 did have conversations about this before the press statement.
14 And I will ask you once again, what could President Zelensky
15 possibly mean when he references Washington domestic
16 reelection politics?

17 A I can't speculate what Bill Taylor was doing. I
18 wanted to keep the conversation going.

19 MR. LUSKIN: Can we have a minute?

20 MR. GOLDMAN: Yeah.

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: So repeat your question again,
22 please.

23 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

24 Q Let me take a step back. You said you've been
25 focused on the press statement, and ultimately, what

1 Mr. Giuliani wanted in that press statement was a specific
2 mention of the investigations into Burisma and the 2016
3 elections. Is that right?

4 A That's what I understood through Volker because,
5 remember, I hadn't met Giuliani at this point.

6 Q Right, and we'll get to that. But you understand
7 that the press statement was something tangible, but what --
8 the substance that they wanted were these investigations?

9 A What I understood was that breaking the logjam with
10 getting the President to finally approve a White House visit
11 was a public utterance by Zelensky, either through the press
12 statement or through an interview or some other public means,
13 that he was going to pursue transparency, corruption, and so
14 on. It was later that the Burisma and the 2016 were added,
15 by, apparently, Mr. Giuliani.

16 Q To the press statement itself?

17 A To the press statement itself.

18 Q Okay. So we can agree, you will agree, I think,
19 that Mr. Giuliani -- the condition -- by the time of the
20 press statement discussion, the condition for a White House
21 meeting was a press statement that included the initiation of
22 these investigations?

23 A That was, I believe, the most -- if I may use the
24 word "egregious," version of the press statement, which was
25 then never delivered.

1 Q I understand it wasn't delivered. But that
2 addition was provided by Mr. Giuliani?

3 A It must have been because that's the only source it
4 could have come from.

5 MR. LUSKIN: Just for clarification, I think what he's
6 trying to say is the press statement was iterative, and that
7 he doesn't recall at what point during that interview process
8 the specific references to investigations, including Burisma
9 and 2016, were added to the --

10 MR. GOLDMAN: We'll get to that. Well get to that.

11 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

12 Q But my last question, because our time is up, is
13 did you or did you not know before the discussion about this
14 press statement whether Mr. Giuliani, as the representative
15 of the President, per the President's instructions,
16 conditioned a White House meeting on investigations related
17 to domestic reelection politics?

18 A That was Mr. Taylor's characterization. My only
19 recollection is that the White House visit was conditioned on
20 the press statement involving the 2016 and Burisma. That was
21 the only condition.

22 MR. GOLDMAN: I think our time is up. We'll yield to
23 the minority.

24 BY MR. CASTOR:

25 Q And there's a difference between a press statement

1 and actual investigations, correct?

2 A Thank you. That's what I'm -- the point I'm trying
3 to make, not very eloquently.

4 Q So if anybody was trying to get the Ukrainians to
5 make this statement, that's different from getting the
6 Ukrainians to make this statement and initiate an
7 investigation. Is that correct?

8 A That would be my assumption, yes. They are two
9 different things.

10 Q Were any other vehicles for this anti-corruption,
11 you know, the priority they had on anti-corruption discussed,
12 other than a statement? Excuse me.

13 A Explain your question.

14 Q Like was there another way to do this? Could they
15 have maybe given an interview?

16 A Yes, exactly. One of the other alternatives, I
17 believe suggested by Mr. Giuliani through either Ambassador
18 Volker or Secretary Perry, was just go on TV and say what
19 you're going to do.

20 Q Okay. And from Giuliani or Volker, did you hear at
21 any point in time that they really wanted an investigations
22 or they just wanted the statement so they could move forward
23 with the White House meeting?

24 A I really don't know.

25 Q Okay.

1 A I was told shortly after the inauguration by
2 someone in Zelensky's team is that he was going to open up
3 all of the things that were shut down under Poroshenko, and
4 as the person put it, let the light shine in or something to
5 that effect.

6 Q He had issues with Lutsenko, who is the prosecutor
7 general, correct?

8 A Who had issues with Lutsenko?

9 Q The new President, Zelensky.

10 A I believe he considered him part of Poroshenko's
11 team. Right. Yes.

12 Q And so opening up many of the matters that Lutsenko
13 had been looking into, that was far broader than just these
14 two narrow issues, correct?

15 A I'm speculating, but I think that's true.

16 Q In July 26th, when you were meeting with President
17 Zelensky, did the topic of aid come up and the delay or the
18 hold on the aid?

19 A I don't believe it did. I don't recall that. That
20 would have been a pretty touchy subject, and I don't remember
21 that being brought up.

22 Q And to the best of your knowledge, when did
23 Ukrainians realize that the aid was being held up?

24 A I don't know. But as I understood it from
25 Ambassador Volker, or Ambassador Taylor, it was quite a while

1 between when the aid was instructed to be held up, and when
2 the Ukrainians actually discovered it had been held up.

3 Q Okay. And at some point, it became a news story,
4 do you remember that?

5 A At some point.

6 Q Okay. So I'm going to make as exhibit -- are we up
7 to 6? Seven. Lucky number 7. Do you guys have it? Do you
8 want it?

9 A Okay.

10 [Minority Exhibit No. 7
11 was marked for identification.]

12 BY MR. CASTOR:

13 Q I should probably put a sticker on it.

14 A This was on August 29th?

15 Q This is on August 28th, a Politico story with the
16 headline: Trump holds up Ukraine military aid meant to
17 confront Russia. Do you know if the holdup in the aid was
18 reported prior to this?

19 A I don't know when I learned about it. I didn't see
20 this article until just now.

21 Q Do you know if -- did Volker communicate to you at
22 some point that the Ukrainians learned about --

23 A I think the first time I heard that the aid was
24 being held up was when Taylor, I believe, sent a text saying
25 he had heard that aid was going to be held up. And I don't

1 recall the date of that text.

2 Q I think it's in a text pack, a text package, which
3 is exhibit 6. I think it's the last page, if I'm correct.

4 A Okay.

5 Q So on September 8th at 12:37 p.m. Taylor -- do you
6 need more time to read it or are you with me?

7 A I'm sorry. Go ahead.

8 Q Are you with me on --

9 A What is it that you want me to read?

10 Q I'm referring you to these texts.

11 A What page are they on?

12 Q Fifty-three. The last page of the pack, I think I
13 said.

14 A Okay. These are September.

15 Q Right.

16 A Okay. Got it. Okay.

17 Q Okay. So at 12:37 p.m. Bill Taylor texted: The
18 nightmare is they give the interview and don't get the
19 security assistance. The Russians love it. And then, you
20 know, you request that they initiate, you know, a call. And
21 then Bill Taylor says at 12:31, the message to the
22 Ukrainians, and of course, the Russians, we send with the
23 decision on security assistance is key, with the hold we
24 already shaken their faith in us.

25 MR. LUSKIN: Where is the already shaken the faith --

1 MR. CASTOR: 12:31.

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Got it. Got it. Okay.

3 MR. GOLDMAN: Sorry, what page are you on?

4 MR. CASTOR: The last page of the pack, 53.

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Okay. Got it.

6 BY MR. CASTOR:

7 Q Okay. And then Bill Taylor says, counting on you
8 to be right about this.

9 A Got it. Right.

10 Q Is this the time when Ambassador Taylor becomes
11 zeroed in on the question?

12 A I mean, I believe what this --

13 MR. LUSKIN: Wait, can you clarify what question you're
14 talking about here.

15 MR. CASTOR: The hold in the aid.

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The hold in the aid. Yeah, I
17 mean, I think we knew that the aid was held up earlier than
18 that, sometime in July.

19 BY MR. CASTOR:

20 Q You knew the aid was held up?

21 A Right.

22 Q The Ambassador knew the aid was held up, but at
23 some point the Ukrainians became aware that the aid was held
24 up?

25 A Right.

1 Q And then Ambassador Taylor became aware, and I
2 think he communicated that, as I understand. At some point
3 the Ambassador communicated --

4 A I think the Ambassador communicated that the aid
5 was held up in July, but he didn't know why.

6 Q Correct. But at some point, the Ambassador learned
7 the Ukrainians learned.

8 A I see. Okay.

9 MR. GOLDMAN: Is that a question? Sorry.

10 MR. CASTOR: What's that?

11 MR. GOLDMAN: Is that a question?

12 MR. CASTOR: This is the backdrop of what we're
13 discussing here.

14 MR. GOLDMAN: Well, do you know that? You just made a
15 statement and he said okay.

16 BY MR. CASTOR:

17 Q Well, we started this out by saying, when you met
18 on July 26th with President Zelensky, the aid had been on
19 hold for a couple week by that point in time. You testified,
20 correct me if I'm wrong, that it didn't appear that the
21 Ukrainians knew the aid was being held at that point,
22 correct?

23 A I wasn't aware that they knew.

24 Q Okay. And then I asked you, when did they become
25 aware to the best of your knowledge, and I think you said

1 that Ambassador Taylor notified you?

2 A Ambassador Taylor notified me. I don't know if the
3 Ukrainians were aware of it at that point.

4 Q Oh, okay. My question is, when did you learn that
5 the Ukrainians learned? Is that fair? I mean, is that --

6 A No, that's --

7 Q Sorry.

8 A I understand the question. The question is when
9 did I learn that the Ukrainians learned?

10 Q Yes.

11 A I don't recall exactly when I learned that the
12 Ukrainians learned.

13 Q I think we can all agree by the time there was a
14 Politico report --

15 A Everyone --

16 Q -- everyone would have known?

17 A Yeah.

18 Q Getting back to Taylor's concerns on the 9th, which
19 you know, he references in the interview. Do you know what
20 interview he was referencing?

21 A I think this was the press statement had now
22 morphed into some kind of an interview that President
23 Zelensky would give to a TV station.

24 Q Okay.

25 A And that that would replace the press statement.

1 Q Okay. And do you know where that interview would
2 have occurred?

3 A I don't.

4 Q Or on what network?

5 A I don't know, but something President Trump would
6 obviously see.

7 Q Okay.

8 A FOX. On Tucker.

9 MR. BITAR: I want to make sure the reporters got all
10 that.

11 MR. MCDERMOTT: Let the record reflect there's lots of
12 laughing in the room.

13 MR. CASTOR: But not by Mr. Castor.

14 BY MR. CASTOR:

15 Q The 12:34 a.m. text.

16 A Yes.

17 Q Where Taylor says: Counting on you to be right
18 about this interview, Gordon?

19 A Yes.

20 Q Do you remember, had you been -- had you been
21 advocating to the Ambassador like, look, we'll go from the
22 statement to the interview and we'll be all good?

23 A I think what that refers to, and I'm trying to
24 recall as best I can, that someone had to move first before
25 the other moved. So the question was, would the White House

1 invitation be forthcoming before the interview or after the
2 interview? And I think what I was saying there was, give the
3 interview, and I'm sure the White House will then respond
4 with an invitation. And I think what Ambassador Taylor was
5 saying was, are you sure? And I'm saying, no, I'm not sure.
6 I just assume.

7 Q Okay.

8 A I don't know if I'm right.

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1 [2:25 p.m.]

2 BY MR. CASTOR:

3 Q And then Taylor at 12:47 --

4 A 12:47.

5 Q -- says: "I think it's crazy to withhold security
6 assistance for help with a political campaign."

7 So just a couple texts ago it was a discussion of the
8 interview.

9 A That was the alarming text.

10 Q Okay. And so is that why you -- did you feel that
11 maybe there was a disconnect?

12 A No. That is -- that is the first time that I
13 speculated that now this aid was actually being held up in
14 order to do this political thing, and that's when I called
15 President Trump and got the answer I got.

16 Q And you got the definitive answer from him that he
17 didn't want anything?

18 A I got what he told me, yes.

19 Q He wanted nothing, I think is --

20 A I want nothing.

21 Q Okay. And then it seems to me, and maybe I missed
22 this, but it seems to me then there isn't a clear next
23 communication with you and the Ambassador. You send this
24 relatively long text and it sort of sounds like it's
25 well-thought-out. Did that end it?

1 A Well -- no. What ended it was I said: I suggest
2 you call the Secretary --

3 Q Right.

4 A -- because this is your portfolio. Call the
5 Secretary. And he said: I agree. And I never heard
6 anything further.

7 Q Do you know if he called the Secretary?

8 A I don't.

9 Q And then it became moot, because the aid was
10 lifted?

11 A Correct.

12 Q Okay. Subsequent to that difficult period, did you
13 ever have any communications with the Ambassador about what
14 happened there?

15 A I -- my best recollection is that once the aid hold
16 was lifted we were out of the woods and we were back to
17 what's it going to take to get the White House meeting.

18 Q Okay. Between the 9th and all this news breaking,
19 which happened around the 22nd or 23rd of September, did you
20 have any further discussions with the Ambassador about a
21 statement or a news interview?

22 A I think -- I believe -- and, again, best of my
23 recollection, was that was when the meeting morphed into the
24 United Nations meeting.

25 Q Okay.

1 A So I was disappointed, because I thought the White
2 House meeting would have been far more impactful and
3 important for President Zelensky, but the decision was made
4 above my pay grade to do this at the United Nations sometime
5 in late September.

6 Q Okay. And that took the place of the White House
7 meeting?

8 A Well, there still has -- as you recall, the two
9 Presidents joked at that meeting: You invited me to the
10 White House, I still don't have a date. This was President
11 Zelensky saying to President Trump.

12 Q Right.

13 A Which was in the media. The press was in the room
14 at the time. President Trump said, I'm working on it, and
15 smiled, was the end of that. There still hasn't been an Oval
16 meeting, to the best of my knowledge.

17 Q Right. I think we would know.

18 Have you had, since this story broke, have you had any
19 communications with Ambassador Taylor about this topic?

20 A I don't recall talking to Ambassador Taylor after
21 the -- I got the phone call from the White House about the
22 whistleblower complaint. I'm not -- I won't swear to it, but
23 I don't believe I've had any communications with him.

24 Q I want to turn to the text pack again, the Bates
25 number 37, and refer you to July 21st at 1:45 a.m.

1 Bill Taylor writes: "Gordon, one thing Kurt and I
2 talked about yesterday was Danylyuk's point Zelensky is
3 sensitive about Ukraine being taken seriously, not merely as
4 an instrument in Washington politics."

5 And then your response is what I want to ask you about,
6 7/21 at 4:45 a.m.: "Absolutely. But we need to get the
7 conversation started and the relationship built, irrespective
8 of pretext."

9 A Uh-huh.

10 Q "I'm worried about the alternative."

11 Could you just tell us what you meant by pretext?

12 A Well, the pretext being the agreed-upon interview
13 or the agreed-upon press statement. We just need to get by
14 it so that the two can meet, because, again, it was back to
15 once they meet, all of this will be fixed.

16 Q Okay.

17 A So let's not argue over the form of what the
18 condition is as long as it's -- you know, the press statement
19 or the interview, let's just get it done so they can meet.
20 That was my point.

21 Q Okay. And then you said: "I'm worried about the
22 alternative."

23 A The alternative is no engagement and lack of
24 credibility with the Ukrainians, because now it's 2 months
25 past when the invitation. Again, they took that invitation

1 very seriously. Even though we may throw those around like
2 candy, they didn't read it as that. They read a personal
3 letter from the President of the United States saying: I'm
4 inviting you to the White House, let's set a date. And the
5 call hadn't even occurred yet. So --

6 Q Then Taylor says: "So the call tomorrow can be a
7 positive step."

8 A That, I believe, was when the call was set for the
9 20th, which was then taken down.

10 Q Okay. I see. Okay.

11 Among the U.S. officials communicating with the Ukraine
12 on a regular basis, whether that be yourself or Ambassador
13 Volker or Secretary Perry, Ambassador Taylor, who on these
14 issues was doing most of the talking for the United States?

15 A Taylor, number one, and then Volker, number two.

16 Q On these issues, about the statement and the White
17 House meeting?

18 A I assume that all of the -- and I think this was
19 Ambassador Volker's habit, that whenever he communicated with
20 the Ukrainians he did it in coordination with Ambassador
21 Taylor, since he's the ambassador on the ground.

22 Q Do you think the Ukrainians trusted Ambassador
23 Volker?

24 A I believe they did.

25 Q And he had developed a rapport with some of them.

1 such as Yermak?

2 A Yes, I think they liked him.

3 Q And he was doing an effective job?

4 A From my perspective, he was.

5 Q And he's someone that's acted with integrity, as
6 far as you know?

7 A Yes.

8 Q Both personal and professional?

9 A Yes.

10 Q And you have acted with integrity, both personal
11 and professional, with these matters?

12 A I have.

13 Q And in the best interests of the United States?

14 A I have.

15 Q And to the extent that non-U.S. Government actors
16 such as Mr. Giuliani inserted themselves into this, you've
17 tried to do your best to push for the best outcome for the
18 United States?

19 A Correct, which I thought was a meeting between the
20 Presidents.

21 Q And Mr. Volker was doing the same thing?

22 A Correct.

23 Q And Ambassador Taylor was doing the same thing?

24 A Yes.

25 Q Do you know if Ambassador Taylor ever tried to talk

1 to the Secretary about getting Giuliani out of this mix?

2 A I don't know.

3 Q Okay. Did you ever ask the Ambassador or did
4 Ambassador --

5 A I didn't. The only time I suggested that
6 Mr. Taylor talk to the Secretary was in my text to him.

7 Q Because Rudy Giuliani has a good rapport with the
8 President, but so does the Secretary.

9 A Correct.

10 Q And so going to the Secretary about this, was that
11 ever considered an alternative? Maybe the Secretary should
12 talk to the President and say, "Let us handle this"?

13 A It would have been an alternative. I don't know if
14 it ever occurred.

15 Q Okay. It never --

16 A I don't know if it ever occurred.

17 Q How frequently did you talk with -- or do you talk
18 with the Secretary?

19 A I communicate with him fairly regularly, either
20 through Lisa Kenna or directly.

21 Q Okay. And by fairly regularly, is that weekly or
22 monthly?

23 A Probably weekly.

24 Q Okay. And he's usually responsive to your --

25 A Either directly or through Lisa, yeah.

1 Q Okay. And Ambassador Taylor has a pretty good
2 ability --

3 A I don't know. He certainly could get through to
4 the Secretary if he needed to, but I don't know what their --

5 Q In the wake of Ambassador Yovanovitch being called
6 home, were you a part of the discussion about having
7 Ambassador Taylor go out to be the Charge?

8 A I didn't know Ambassador Taylor until he was there.

9 Q Okay. So you were not part of the discussion of --

10 A Not that I remember.

11 Q What can you tell us about the -- when you first
12 learned that there was an effort afoot to remove Ambassador
13 Yovanovitch or recall her early?

14 A What's the question? When did I learn it?

15 Q Yeah, when did you learn that there was a movement
16 to oust her?

17 A I don't remember. I just remember that there were
18 a lot of rumors swirling around in my mission that she was
19 being given a hard time and --

20 Q Okay.

21 A Yeah.

22 Q Was that after March of 2019 or before?

23 A Well, it was probably -- the first time I really
24 met Ambassador Yovanovitch was when I went to Odessa, which
25 would have been in February of '19. So it probably was after

1 that.

2 Q Okay. And before the removal of or the recall of
3 the Ambassador, did anyone consult you, given your role with
4 Ukraine?

5 A No.

6 Q Do you know if anyone consulted Ambassador Volker?

7 A I don't know.

8 Q Did you have any communication with Ambassador
9 Volker about Ambassador Yovanovitch's situation?

10 A I think Ambassador Volker anecdotally said he's
11 very supportive of Ambassador Yovanovitch and, you know,
12 liked her.

13 Q Okay. So he was disappointed, too, as far as you
14 know, that she was recalled?

15 A I mean, if -- he never expressed disappointment to
16 me, but if he said he liked her and was supportive of her, I
17 assume he would have been disappointed.

18 Q Okay. I think you testified this morning about a
19 conversation -- did you have any conversations with
20 Ambassador Yovanovitch while she was going through this, the
21 period between March and her recall, which was about --

22 A You know, counsel mentioned that I did. I don't
23 recall it. I could have, but I don't remember it. I seem to
24 be the one people call when they have career problems. I
25 don't know why.

1 Q Did Ambassador --

2 A I do a lot of counseling with a lot of people, both
3 in the public and private sector, about their careers.

4 Q Okay. Did Ambassador Yovanovitch lean on you for
5 career counseling?

6 A We may have -- I don't remember. I honestly don't
7 remember the conversation. I'm not denying it occurred. I
8 just don't remember.

9 Q Okay. So to the best of your recollection, you
10 never --

11 A It wasn't, you know, a momentous enough
12 conversation that I would have remembered it.

13 Q Okay. You never encouraged her, to the best of
14 your recollection, to tweet or something to that effect,
15 support of the President?

16 A Again, I don't -- would I swear 100 percent I
17 didn't, no, but I don't -- I just don't remember it.

18 Q That's all we're asking you, is your best
19 recollection as you sit here today.

20 A Yeah, I don't -- I don't -- I don't remember it. I
21 think I was writing reviews for all my employees at the time,
22 so I was a little preoccupied.

23 Q Turning back to the question of whether any
24 Ukrainian official ever told you about the suggestion that
25 they need to investigate Biden, did that ever occur?

1 A No. I believe, again, to the best of my
2 recollection, I go back to the only thing that I recall was
3 the press statement or a live interview of some kind. And,
4 as you described it earlier, if the implication was an
5 investigation, that that would actually happen, I wasn't
6 aware of that. I was aware that Giuliani apparently wanted
7 Burisma and 2016 mentioned in one of those formats. That's
8 what I remember.

9 Q I'd like to go through what you can remember of
10 your communications with Giuliani.

11 A Okay.

12 Q You said the first one occurred in August?

13 A Yeah. I believe I was introduced to him
14 electronically by Ambassador Volker around the very beginning
15 of August, August 1st or 2nd or something like that.

16 Q And you raised the prospect of potentially getting
17 together, but that never occurred?

18 A Yeah. I think Ambassador Volker, you know,
19 introduced us like, this is Gordon Sondland, our Ambassador
20 to the EU, he's helping me on Ukraine, something to that
21 effect. And Giuliani texted back: Great, would love to meet
22 some time. And I think I threw out a couple of dates that I
23 was in Washington or -- we just never connected. I think we
24 tried once or twice to meet personally, and it never
25 happened.

1 Q Did you ever talk on the phone?

2 A Yes. I think I participated in one or two
3 conference calls with Volker and Giuliani, and then I think I
4 may have had one or two direct calls with him, and that was
5 it.

6 Q And do you remember the dates of those calls?

7 A Well, they would have been likely in August.

8 Q Okay. So potential of five?

9 A Something like that.

10 Q Five calls?

11 A Something like that.

12 Q Okay. And do you recall the specifics of any of
13 the calls?

14 A All I can recall is the gist of every call was what
15 was going to go in the press statement.

16 Q Okay.

17 A It was solely relating to negotiating the press
18 statement, where, you know, Volker had taken the lead on it,
19 and then I poked my nose into it to see if I could broker
20 some kind of a compromise so we could get moving on the White
21 House visit.

22 Q And do you recall what words Rudy Giuliani used on
23 those calls?

24 A Again, he kept repeating Burisma and 2016 election.
25 He never mentioned Biden to me on any call that I was on.

1 Q Okay. If at all possible, I'd like to break down
2 each of the calls to the extent you can remember them. Is
3 that something you can do, or do they all mush together?

4 A They all mush together, because they were like
5 Groundhog Day. They were the same subject matter in each
6 call.

7 Q Okay. And did these calls last a long time or were
8 they short?

9 A A couple of minutes.

10 Q All of them?

11 A Yeah. Well, maybe -- I don't know about the
12 conference calls, but the individual calls were a couple of
13 minutes at the most.

14 Q Okay. And who was leading the discussion?

15 A Volker.

16 Q Okay. And maybe just describe what you can of any
17 parts of these calls that you can remember.

18 A I think Volker was trying to get to the bottom of
19 what was it that the President wanted to see from the
20 Ukrainians in order to get the White House visit scheduled.
21 And I think Giuliani kept saying it needs to be some kind of
22 a public utterance.

23 I do recall that after he met with Yermak, apparently,
24 in Madrid, he was far more sanguine about Ukraine than prior
25 to that meeting. Volker reported back to me that Giuliani

1 was happy with that meeting. But I don't know what they
2 talked about.

3 Q When was the meeting with Yermak in Madrid? Was it
4 the beginning of August?

5 A I don't know. I'd have to look it up.

6 MR. NOBLE: Steve, I believe that was August 2nd.

7 BY MR. CASTOR:

8 Q Beginning of August, 2nd of August?

9 A In Madrid?

10 Q Yes.

11 A Yeah.

12 Q Okay. And did you get a readout from that meeting?
13 Was anybody with Giuliani?

14 A I don't know. All I do know is that Volker
15 reported back that Rudy and Yermak had a great meeting and it
16 looks like things are turning around.

17 Q Okay.

18 A That's what I heard.

19 Q Okay. So then these calls that you describe, the
20 four or five, happened subsequent to that meeting?

21 A Yeah, because I don't -- I didn't meet Giuliani
22 until at least August 1, maybe August 2 or 3, by text. By
23 text.

24 Q By text and then telephone?

25 A Right.

1 Q And I know I asked you this before and I'll ask it
2 again. Do you remember any words that Rudy Giuliani said
3 other than Burisma and 2016? Did he use the name Bidens?

4 A I never heard Biden.

5 Q Okay. You never heard Rudy Giuliani mention the
6 word "Biden"?

7 A I never heard him mention Biden. I'm not saying he
8 didn't use it. I never heard him say it.

9 Q Okay. So in the -- you used the word "evolution,"
10 I think, of this story.

11 A Continuum, yeah.

12 Q Continuum. In the early part of August, the Bidens
13 hadn't entered the timeline yet, in your mind?

14 A I don't think so. I don't think the Bidens had
15 entered the timeline while we were negotiating the press
16 statement.

17 Q Okay.

18 A Which was in the middle of August, I believe.

19 Q Okay. Did Volker ever tell you about meetings he
20 had with Giuliani?

21 A He might have, again, in a very sort of good
22 meeting, Rudy's happy, Rudy's unhappy. Nothing definitive.
23 Again, I was focused on the White House meeting. That's all
24 I cared about at that point.

25 Q Right.

1 A I had one mission, and that was my mission.

2 Q Okay. Did you ever hear Volker talk about
3 investigating the Bidens?

4 A Never, that I can recall.

5 Q In these four or five conversations with Giuliani
6 was there ever a resolution or was it sort of always touching
7 base, Burisma, 2016, and then --

8 A We just could never get a press statement agreed
9 to, and then the whole idea got dropped.

10 Q Okay. And do you remember when in the month of
11 August?

12 A Probably mid- to late August would be my guess.

13 Q And was that the last time you spoke with Mr.
14 Giuliani?

15 A I believe so.

16 Q Senator Johnson attended the Zelensky inauguration.

17 A I'm sorry?

18 Q Senator Ron Johnson --

19 A Yes.

20 Q -- attended the Zelensky inauguration. Was that
21 the first time you had met the Senator?

22 A No, I think I met him during my confirmation.

23 Q Okay. After your confirmation but before the
24 inauguration, did you have any particular relationship with
25 him or --

1 A We might have gotten together. I can't remember if
2 he was on one of the codels in Brussels or I may have seen
3 him on the Hill. He was very friendly and helpful during my
4 confirmation, so I stayed in touch.

5 Q Did you ever have a discussion with Senator Johnson
6 about any of these issues, such as investigating --

7 A Well, I --

8 Q -- Burisma or 2016?

9 A Yeah, I noticed in the media he had come out and
10 said that he and I had a conversation on the phone about it.
11 And he had said that I told him -- this is the media report,
12 and I haven't discussed this with him since that media report
13 -- that I had said there was a quid pro quo.

14 And I don't remember telling him that, because I'm not
15 sure I knew that at that point. I think what I might have
16 done is I might have been speculating -- I hope there's no, I
17 hope this isn't being held up for nefarious reasons.

18 I think we were having sort of a freeform discussion
19 about what was going on, because he was very frustrated that
20 Zelensky still hadn't been to the White House. I was
21 referring to my conversation with Senator Johnson on the
22 phone. I believe it was the end of August sometime.

23 Q Okay.

24 [Discussion off the record.]

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh, yes, thank you.

1 The quid pro quo referring to the aid, not a press
2 statement.

3 BY MR. CASTOR:

4 Q And you had never thought there was a precondition
5 to the aid. Is that correct?

6 A Never, no. I mean, I was dismayed when it was held
7 up, but I didn't know why.

8 Q So to the extent there were any preconditions to
9 anything, it was perhaps with the White House meeting, but
10 not the aid?

11 A I wasn't aware of it or I wasn't -- I don't recall
12 being aware of it.

13 Q So your conversation with Senator Johnson was at
14 the end of August, you think?

15 A I believe it was the end of August. And then I
16 believe he told me he was going to be calling the President
17 to find out why things weren't moving forward.

18 Q And did you talk to him as a followup after he did
19 that?

20 A I don't think I did, no.

21 Q Are you familiar with the Wall Street Journal story
22 that came out Friday, October 4th, where Senator Johnson
23 raised this issue?

24 A Yeah. I think that's what flagged it for me.
25 Someone brought it to my attention.

1 Q And did you ever do anything about that article,
2 such as call the reporter or --

3 A No.

4 Q -- call Senator Johnson, or did you just --

5 A There's so many stories out there about what I
6 allegedly did or didn't do. I can't chase every newspaper.
7 I mean, this has been a very bad experience for me.

8 Q Fair enough.

9 Did you put out a statement yourself?

10 A No. I -- you know, there were implications that I
11 was cooking all of this up with Rudy Giuliani throughout the
12 year when I only met him for the first time in August. I
13 don't know how I could cook something up with someone I had
14 never met.

15 Q Have you talked to Senator Johnson since?

16 A I have not. But our relationship was always very
17 cordial and friendly.

18 Q Okay. So you think Senator Johnson just misspoke?

19 A I don't know. I'm not accusing him of misspeaking.
20 I'm saying I don't know what basis I would have had to assert
21 on that date that there was aid being held up in return for a
22 White House meeting. I don't know why I would know that at
23 that point. I don't recall having been told that by then.

24 Q So you hadn't -- did you ever, in the course of
25 this, ever make a statement to the effect of, you know, we're

1 cutting a big check to the Ukraine, you know, what should we
2 get for this?

3 A That's not something I would have said. I don't
4 remember that at all.

5 Q Okay. So you've never made a statement relating
6 the aid to conditions that the Ukraine ought to comply with?

7 A I don't remember that, no.

8 Q But if someone suggested that you made that
9 statement, that would be out of your own character, you're
10 saying?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Okay. Have you had any communications with
13 President Zelensky since September 25th?

14 A The last time I spoke to him was in person.

15 Q In New York?

16 A In New York, when he was with the President of the
17 United States.

18 Q How about any other Ukrainian official?

19 A I think I may have chatted with Mr. Yermak right
20 after that meeting, at the meeting after Zelensky left, and I
21 think that was about the end of it.

22 Q Okay. So you haven't had any further
23 communications with Ukrainians?

24 A I think Mr. Yermak reached out to me by text, and I
25 don't think I responded.

1 Q Okay. Do you remember what he said to you?

2 A Hello, how are you? Something like that.

3 Q Okay. And why didn't you respond?

4 A I just didn't want to respond once the matter had
5 become contentious.

6 Q Okay. Contentious with Yermak or contentious here?

7 A No, no, contentious with the White House. Because
8 remember, I got the call from the White House about the
9 whistleblower report at the United Nations. So it was all
10 within a day or two of that meeting with Zelensky. So then I
11 got the call from the White House saying: Your name is in a
12 whistleblower -- and I just said, I'm not going to engage any
13 further.

14 Q Do you still have a role in Ukraine policy?

15 A At this very second, no, but I would like to
16 continue it, because I think it's critical.

17 Q Okay. So is it fair to say since the September
18 25th and subsequent events, you've pushed the pause button
19 for yourself on your involvement?

20 A For myself, because, first of all, I've been
21 consumed with preparing for these depositions and dealing
22 with all of this other stuff.

23 Q Zelensky is reportedly close with an oligarch with
24 the name of --

25 A Kolomoisky.

1 Q Kolomoisky. What do you know about his
2 relationship with him?

3 A I only know of Mr. Kolomoisky anecdotally, and the
4 rap on him is that he's a bad guy and that I think I heard he
5 had helped Zelensky at some point during his business career
6 or with his campaign, but Zelensky was trying to distance
7 himself from Kolomoisky because he knew that that was the
8 best pathway forward for the country. That's what I had
9 heard anecdotally.

10 Q Okay. In your discussion with State Department
11 officials, National Security Council officials, did anyone
12 raise concerns that we have to evaluate whether Zelensky will
13 be himself caught up with some of these oligarchs that are --
14 you know, have corrupt reputations?

15 A Yeah. I mean, to stay in an unclassified answer, I
16 think there's always concern about any leader of any country
17 where there are oligarchs.

18 Q Okay. We are certainly in an unclassified setting
19 and we don't want you to go into a classified setting.

20 MR. LUSKIN: I just was a little concerned that --

21 MR. CASTOR: Absolutely.

22 MR. LUSKIN: -- the way you framed the question might
23 implicate his sharing information that shouldn't be shared in
24 this setting.

25 MR. CASTOR: Thank you.

1 BY MR. CASTOR:

2 Q With the draft statement that Yermak and Ambassador
3 Volker were kicking around, do you know if Giuliani ever
4 inserted himself into that communication where he was talking
5 directly to Yermak about it?

6 A I don't know if he was talking to Yermak about it,
7 but I assume that Volker was getting his guidance from
8 Giuliani, because Giuliani was the one that had to be
9 satisfied.

10 Q Did Volker ever tell you his feelings on the
11 statement before he drafted that one-liner at the end?

12 A I mean, the only conversation I have had with
13 Volker -- I can't tell you when or where -- was that there
14 shouldn't be any preconditions, that, you know, we were
15 having to negotiate this statement or interview to get a
16 meeting that should have occurred without any preconditions.

17 Q That was your view?

18 A I think that was Volker's view, Taylor's. I think
19 it was everyone's view.

20 Q So that was your view, too?

21 A My view.

22 Q And Ambassador Taylor's and Volker's?

23 A Correct.

24 Q And so we're going through this exercise with
25 Yermak and kicking around a possible statement or a TV

1 interview solely because of the Giuliani involvement?

2 A Apparently so.

3 Q Other than the May 23rd meeting with the President
4 where he said talk to Giuliani, have you ever heard the
5 President refer to go talk to Giuliani?

6 A Not to me.

7 Q Okay. So that's the only time in your firsthand
8 knowledge that the President referred people to Giuliani on
9 this issue?

10 A That's, the best of my recollection, was the only
11 time.

12 Q And do you know if the President referred Volker
13 outside of your presence --

14 A I don't know.

15 Q -- to Giuliani? Was he speaking with the
16 President, do you know?

17 A I don't believe he's ever met alone with the
18 President.

19 Q Okay. Did any State Department officials ever
20 express their concern to you about Ambassador Yovanovitch's
21 recall?

22 A I think there are a couple of people in my mission
23 in Brussels who knew her well, had served with her in some
24 capacity, and had heard that she was in jeopardy or something
25 to that effect, and were very disappointed and expressed, you

1 know, she's a great person and she doesn't deserve this,
2 something to that effect. I don't remember who it was. It
3 could have been my DCM, but I don't remember.

4 Q Anybody back in Washington?

5 A Not that I can recall.

6 Q Were you aware that after the call transcript came
7 out September 25th that there was an effort inside the State
8 Department to put out a statement of support for Yovanovitch?

9 A Let me see if I get that straight. You said after
10 the transcript of the President's call with Zelensky was
11 released there was an effort to do what?

12 Q Inside the State Department there were some career
13 Foreign Service folks --

14 A Oh.

15 Q -- that were advocating the Secretary put a
16 statement of support out.

17 A I didn't know. I think I read that in the
18 newspaper, but I wouldn't have gotten that, because I'm not a
19 career --

20 Q Okay.

21 A -- I'm not a career Foreign Service officer.

22 Q Okay. So you weren't aware of any initiative
23 inside the State Department to do something to signal that --

24 A I vaguely recall reading it in the paper or seeing
25 it somewhere, but no one sent me anything internally.

1 Q Okay. Did the State Department do anything to
2 signal support of Ambassador Yovanovitch?

3 A Not to the best of my knowledge.

4 Q So they didn't have an internal email or they
5 didn't have a --

6 A They may have. Again, I wasn't privy to it.

7 Q Okay.

8 A I didn't see it. If you're telling me it's on my
9 email, I didn't read it. I don't remember that.

10 MR. CASTOR: I'm sorry, my time is expired.

11 Mr. Goldman.

12 MR. GOLDMAN: Let's take a 5-minute break.

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you.

14 [Recess.]

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, let's go back on the record. The
16 time is with the majority.

17 Mr. Noble, you are recognized.

18 MR. NOBLE: Thank you, Chairman.

19 BY MR. NOBLE:

20 Q Ambassador Sondland, I want to direct your
21 attention to the end of August. And my colleague Mr. Castor
22 was asking you about the Politico article that came out
23 around August 28th which made public the freeze that the
24 administration had put in place on the Ukrainian security
25 assistance. Do you recall that?

1 A Yes, I recall him describing it.

2 Q Around that time, I believe you testified that you
3 and Ambassador Volker and the Ukrainians had dropped the idea
4 of doing a statement announcing the investigations that Rudy
5 Giuliani wanted, specifically Burisma and 2016. Is that
6 right?

7 A Yeah, I believe the Ukrainians didn't want to go
8 forward.

9 Q But you were still discussing the possibility of
10 President Zelensky doing a public interview, possibly with a
11 news outlet, in which he would announce those investigations?

12 A I think the Ukrainians mentioned to Volker that
13 they were planning to do one and that they might incorporate
14 some of those things in that interview.

15 Q Okay. So at the time when the freeze became public
16 on August 28th and Ukraine presumably learned about that
17 freeze, they knew that the Americans were still pushing for
18 an announcement of these investigations. Is that right?

19 A I don't know when the Ukrainians found out. I
20 mean, I don't know when they would have made the connection.
21 They might have learned before. They might have learned
22 after the Politico article. I have no idea.

23 Q Well, on August 28th it became public in the
24 Politico article, correct?

25 A Yeah. I see this Politico article, yeah.

1 Q Okay. And then I believe in Mr. Volker's text
2 messages, on August 29th Andrey Yermak actually sends the
3 Politico article to Mr. Volker and asks to speak with him.

4 A Was that a text I was on?

5 Q I don't know if that was a text that you were on.

6 A Okay.

7 Q But did you have any conversations with the
8 Ukrainians or with Mr. Volker, Ambassador Volker, about the
9 fact that this freeze had been put in place around this time?

10 A I don't recall having any. I'm not saying it
11 didn't occur, but I don't recall having any. I think Volker
12 was handling those conversations.

13 Q So I'll direct your attention to -- let's go to
14 page 20 of the text messages, and it's near the bottom on
15 August 29th, 2019, at 3:06 a.m.

16 A 3:06?

17 Q Yeah. In the line above it, Andrey Yermak says,
18 "need to talk to you," and then he sends a link to the
19 Politico article from August 28th --

20 A Yeah.

21 Q -- to Ambassador Volker. So presumably at that
22 point the Ukrainians knew about the freeze, correct?

23 A Apparently.

24 Q Did you have any conversations with Ambassador
25 Volker about that at that time?

1 A I don't remember when I was brought in on the
2 conversations relating to the freeze, you know, until close
3 to, I believe, the Johnson conversation, the conversation
4 with Senator Johnson. I don't know exactly what day.

5 Q That was August 30th, correct?

6 A Yeah, I think so.

7 Q So -- but you learned about the freeze on July
8 18th, when Bill Taylor texted you about the SVTC announcing
9 the freeze?

10 A Right.

11 Q Okay. So between July 18th and August 28th, did
12 you have any -- you never had any conversations with the
13 Ukrainians about the fact that the aid was frozen?

14 A I don't recall having conversations with the
15 Ukrainians. What I recall was trying to chase down the
16 reason for the freeze, and I could never get a straight
17 answer and I sort of gave up.

18 Q But you don't recall any conversations with the
19 Ukrainians about the freeze?

20 A I won't swear to it, but I don't recall, I honestly
21 don't.

22 Q So let's go to page 39 of the text messages. And I
23 want to use the text messages, because I think they might be
24 useful in helping refresh your recollection --

25 A Okay.

1 Q -- and kind of locking down certain dates.

2 Do you see up here at the top. This is a conversation
3 between Bill Taylor and Kurt Volker. On August 30th, 2019,
4 at 12:14, Bill Taylor says: "Trip canceled."

5 And then Volker says: "Hope VPOTUS keeps the bilat" --

6 A Right.

7 Q -- "and tees up White House visit."

8 And then Volker says: "And hope Gordon and Perry still
9 going."

10 And you respond: "I am going. Pompeo is speaking to
11 POTUS today to see if he can go."

12 Is that the meeting in Warsaw for the World War II
13 commemoration?

14 A Yeah. This is refreshing my memory. Yes, correct,
15 it is.

16 Q Okay. Do you know why President Trump did not
17 attend the Warsaw commemoration?

18 A The reason that I had heard was the hurricane. He
19 wanted to stay behind to oversee the hurricane issues.

20 Q President Trump was scheduled to meet with
21 President Zelensky at that Warsaw meeting, right?

22 A I believe so, yes.

23 Q And did you attend?

24 A I did.

25 Q And who else was there?

1 A A lot of people.

2 Q I mean, for -- with any meetings with President
3 Zelensky during that --

4 A Huge bilat with Vice President Pence and a whole
5 cast of people.

6 Q Were you present for any conversations between
7 President Pence and President -- Vice President Pence and
8 President Zelensky?

9 A Only the one in the big bilat. I don't believe
10 there was any pull-aside or any private conversation other
11 than the big bilateral meeting.

12 Q Okay. Do you recall any discussions around that
13 time about the link between the White House visit and the
14 push for a public announcement by the Ukrainians of the
15 investigations Giuliani wanted?

16 A I don't. I was focused more during that trip on a
17 meeting that Pompeo and I had scheduled with the big four
18 leaders of -- the new leaders of the EU. And when Pompeo
19 couldn't go to Warsaw, I was worried that I had already set
20 those meetings up for him and I to meet with the four new
21 leaders.

22 So I wound up going with Vice President Pence. I sat in
23 on the bilat. And then I came back to Brussels, I believe,
24 and Pompeo came just for the meetings with the big four from
25 Washington to Brussels.

1 Q And Senator Johnson, was he part of the U.S.
2 delegation to Warsaw?

3 A I don't think so, no.

4 Q So it was around this time, though, it was reported
5 that you had the conversation with Senator Johnson in which
6 he, at least, claimed that you told him there was a quid pro
7 quo.

8 A Well, that was his recollection, that wasn't mine,
9 because I don't know that I would have known that then.

10 Q Do you recall the circumstances under which you
11 spoke with Senator Johnson around this time, though?

12 A I think he reached out to me and said: Can we
13 talk? And I called him, and he told me he was talking to the
14 President the next day. And I think we were just having sort
15 of a freeform conversation as to what was going on with
16 Ukraine. He seemed to have a continuing interest in the same
17 issues that I did. After we left Ukraine, you know, the
18 Ukraine inauguration, he'd stayed in touch.

19 Q Do you recall whether you and Senator Johnson
20 discussed the freeze on Ukrainian assistance?

21 A On that August 30th call?

22 Q Yes.

23 A We probably did.

24 Q Do you recall what he said to you and you said to
25 him about it?

1 A No, other than I do remember he said that he was
2 going to call the President to see if he could get to the
3 bottom of it.

4 Q So it's been reported that he said that when, at
5 least, you allegedly linked the assistance with the
6 announcement by the Ukrainians of these investigations that
7 the President and Rudy Giuliani wanted, Senator Johnson said
8 he winced and his reaction was: Oh, God, I don't want to see
9 those two things combined.

10 Do you have any reason to doubt that that was Senator
11 Johnson's reaction to your phone call?

12 A I don't recall -- I don't recall the call going
13 that way, because, again, I was trying to think of why would
14 I have the basis to know that they were linked at that point.
15 I'm not sure I did have the basis to know that.

16 I think we were both pipe dreaming or speculating as to
17 why the aid still hadn't been released, because I think
18 Senator Johnson was a strong advocate of having the aid
19 released immediately, without any further ado.

20 Q Okay. So that conversation with Senator Johnson
21 was August 30th. I want to direct your attention to page 39
22 again of your text messages.

23 A Okay.

24 Q And let's go to September 1st. And the very --
25 September 1st at 12:08 p.m., Bill Taylor writes: "Are we now

1 saying that security assistance and White House meeting are
2 conditioned on investigations?"

3 You're on this chain, aren't you?

4 A Yes.

5 Q Does that refresh your recollection, that around
6 this time you're aware of a possible linkage between the
7 security assistance and the White House meeting being
8 conditioned on the investigations that Rudy Giuliani and the
9 President wanted the Ukrainians to announce?

10 A I think that was the beginning of when that
11 allegation began to be made, because, again, I said, call me.
12 I didn't want to do this by text. I wanted to have a
13 conversation.

14 Q Did you not want to do it by text because there
15 would then be a written record of your discussion about the
16 quid pro quo?

17 A No. I already said that in my opening statement.
18 I do that all the time.

19 Q Does this refresh your recollection, though, that
20 at least around this time, you and Ambassador Volker and
21 Ambassador Taylor were discussing at least the possibility of
22 a linkage between the White House meeting and the assistance
23 and the investigations that the Ukrainians were supposed to
24 announce?

25 A I don't know that we were discussing it. I think

1 that it really came to the fore when I got the text from
2 Ambassador Taylor a few days later.

3 Q Well, it was over a week later, correct?

4 A Or a week later.

5 Q So you said earlier in your testimony that you were
6 shocked when you got the later text messages from Ambassador
7 Taylor where he linked the security assistance and the
8 investigations, but you were aware at least for over a week
9 that, at least from Ambassador Taylor's perspective, this is
10 exactly what was going on.

11 A Well, as I testified earlier, every time I would
12 ask various people, whether it was at the State Department or
13 elsewhere, what's going on, no one could give me a straight
14 answer. I mean, I heard it has to do with the fact that
15 Europe isn't putting up their share, it has to do with the
16 fact that they think there's an audit that needs to be done.
17 I heard all kinds of reasons why.

18 I never got -- until Taylor sent me that text saying, I
19 hope this isn't what's going on, when I made the phone call
20 to the President, that's when the red light really went on
21 for me.

22 Q Okay. Well, back here on September 1st, though,
23 when Bill Taylor said: "Are we now saying security
24 assistance and White House meeting are conditioned on
25 investigations?"

1 You said: "Call me."

2 Did you guys have a phone call?

3 A We probably did.

4 Q Do you recall what was discussed during that phone
5 call?

6 A I mean, if I had had a conversation the previous
7 day -- I'm speculating now -- if I had had a conversation the
8 previous day with Senator Johnson and we discussed the same
9 issue, I might have continued that conversation: I hope this
10 isn't going on.

11 Again, I'm speculating, because I don't really recall
12 exactly.

13 And then, like you said, a week went by, and then all of
14 a sudden I get this panicked text from Ambassador Taylor, and
15 that's when I did my thing.

16 Should I have done something earlier? Maybe. I didn't.

17 Q I'm not asking you that. But around that time,
18 though, this week, September 1st to September 9th, did you
19 have your own concerns that there might be a linkage between
20 the security assistance and the White House meeting? Which I
21 believe you said there already, in your mind, was a linkage
22 between getting a White House meeting in exchange for a
23 Ukrainian announcement on the investigation.

24 A No, in exchange for the press statement.

25 Q For the press statement?

1 A For the press statement.

2 Q But the press statement was about the
3 investigations, correct?

4 A Well, all I can do is repeat to you what I heard
5 through Ambassador Volker from Giuliani. That's the only
6 source this would have come from, because the President never
7 discussed it with any of us.

8 Q And we're going to go through some of those text
9 messages about the drafting of the statement and the
10 evolution later on.

11 A But right now my question is, did you personally have
12 concerns that there were these -- that the aid was being held
13 up, the White House meeting was being withheld, until the
14 Ukrainians did something that Giuliani and the President
15 wanted, specifically to announce these investigations?

16 A As I said earlier, the continuum --

17 Q Grew?

18 A -- grew and culminated in the text from Ambassador
19 Taylor on I think it was the 9th of September.

20 Q Okay. And then in response to that, there was like
21 a 5-hour gap between when you wrote back to Ambassador
22 Taylor. We can turn to the last page. It's page 53.

23 A And so Ambassador Taylor sends you this text message at,
24 at least marked here, 12:47 a.m.: "As I said on the phone, I
25 think it's crazy to withhold security assistance for help

1 with a political campaign."

2 That suggests that either you and he had had a telephone
3 conversation about the linkage. Do you recall that telephone
4 conversation?

5 A Either he and I had one or he and Volker had one.
6 He had one with somebody, because he was, you know, clearly
7 coming to that conclusion.

8 Q Do you recall if you had a telephone conversation
9 --

10 A I don't recall.

11 Q -- with him?

12 A I don't recall.

13 Q Okay. So -- and then you said in response to that,
14 you telephoned President Trump. Is that right?

15 A That is correct.

16 Q Okay. During that telephone conversation with
17 President Trump, you didn't ask the President directly if
18 there was a quid pro quo, correct?

19 A No. As I testified, I asked the question open
20 ended, what do you want from Ukraine?

21 Q President Trump was the first person to use the
22 word "quid pro quo," correct?

23 A That is correct.

24 Q And I believe you testified that President Trump
25 said he didn't want anything from Ukraine. Is that correct?

1 A That's what he said.

2 Q Okay. But that wasn't true, correct?

3 A I'm just telling you what he said.

4 Q But you knew that wasn't true?

5 A What I had heard were multiple rumors about what he
6 did or didn't want. That's why I wanted to ask the question
7 the way I did.

8 Q Well, you heard that from Rudy Giuliani, that the
9 President wanted Ukraine to announce investigations into 2016
10 and Burisma, right? We've been over this a number of times.

11 A I heard that from Rudy Giuliani. I never heard it
12 from the President. I am assuming Rudy Giuliani heard it
13 from the President, but I don't know that. So I asked the
14 President: What do you want?

15 Q And you assumed that, because Rudy Giuliani has
16 been going around saying, I'm working for the President, I'm
17 his personal lawyer, I'm doing this on behalf of the
18 President of the United States, correct?

19 A That's why I went to the principal.

20 Q Okay. Fair enough. But I believe -- so President
21 Trump said during that call: I don't want anything from
22 Ukraine. But you also know that isn't true, because you've
23 now read the July 25th call readout, correct, where President
24 Trump specifically asks President Zelensky for, quote, "a
25 favor." Is that right?

1 A Yes, but President Trump changes his mind on what
2 he wants on a daily basis. I have no idea what he wanted on
3 the day I called him. That's why I asked him the question.

4 Q Okay. But on July 25th, at least, President Trump
5 said: I want a favor, and specifically I want you to look
6 into the Bidens and I want you to look into 2016 election
7 interference, correct?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Hold on just a second.

9 [Discussion off the record.]

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. Counsel, I didn't know what
11 the President had discussed with President Zelensky, because
12 I never saw the transcript of the call. I testified to that.

13 BY MR. NOBLE:

14 Q Right. But you learned it, I believe, September
15 25th, when the call record was released by the White House at
16 that point?

17 A In September, right.

18 Q As you sit here today, you know what President
19 Trump --

20 A Today I --

21 Q -- said to President Zelensky.

22 A Today I know.

23 Q Right.

24 A Today I know. I didn't know then.

25 Q And today you know that President Trump asked

1 President Zelensky for a favor.

2 A Correct.

3 Q Specifically, to look into the Bidens and to look
4 into 2016 election interference.

5 A That is correct. I do know that today.

6 Q And that's what Rudy Giuliani had essentially been
7 pushing the Ukrainians to include in either a public
8 statement or a media appearance by President Zelensky?

9 A He may or may not have, but not to me.

10 Q He used the word "Burisma" instead of --

11 A He always used the word "Burisma" and he always
12 used the word "2016 election." Those are the only two things
13 I heard from him.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Ambassador, I want to ask a further
15 question about the conversation you had with the President,
16 where I think you've testified you asked him what he wanted
17 and on his own he repeatedly brought up no quid pro quo, no
18 quid pro quo. Is that right?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: You have been not quoted in the paper in
21 the last 24 to 48 hours, but it has been represented by
22 multiple press outlets that you have told people that when
23 the President told you no quid pro quo, you didn't know
24 whether he was telling you the truth. Is that accurate?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: My goal in asking the question,

1 Congressman, was to respond to Ambassador Taylor.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: No, I understand that. But my question
3 is, it has been represented in the newspaper by someone who
4 purportedly has information from you that when the President
5 told you, no quid pro quo, no quid pro quo, that you couldn't
6 verify that what he was telling you was the truth. Is that
7 correct?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: All I could verify is that's what
9 he said. I don't know if it was the truth or it wasn't the
10 truth. That's what he told me.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

12 BY MR. NOBLE:

13 Q So, Ambassador Sondland, we're skipping around a
14 little bit, but I want to go back to the July 10th White
15 House meeting, and I just want to make sure we understand
16 your testimony.

17 Is it your recollection that you didn't say anything
18 during the first part of the meeting to the effect that you
19 had an agreement with Mick Mulvaney that if the Ukrainians
20 committed to the investigations that Trump and Giuliani
21 wanted then Zelensky would get a White House meeting?

22 A I don't recall ever having a conversation with
23 Mr. Mulvaney about that. I honestly don't. I've had very,
24 very few conversations with Mr. Mulvaney. I wanted to have
25 more, but he was never available.