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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 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

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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 he
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 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 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 Q 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.

1 Q But it's your testimony that you didn't say
2 anything close to that --

3 A I don't remember --

4 Q -- during the meeting?

5 A I don't remember saying that. I don't remember
6 saying a lot in the main meeting in Ambassador Bolton's
7 office. There were a lot of people there, and it wasn't my
8 meeting to preside over.

9 Q Did you ever have any conversations with Rick
10 Blair -- I'm sorry, Rob Blair, Mr. Mulvaney's deputy?

11 A Yes, a couple, very innocuous, I believe.

12 Q Anything relating to Ukraine or a White House
13 meeting for President Zelensky?

14 A I may have said when I saw him: We're working on a
15 White House meeting with President Zelensky, do you have any
16 updates? Because he was involved in scheduling, and I don't
17 recall getting any definitive, again, it was we're working on
18 it sort of answer. I'm trying to remember. I don't remember
19 I had a meeting with him or anything like that.

20 Q In those conversations with Mr. Blair, did the
21 subject matter of these investigations ever come up?

22 A Not that I recall.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Just to follow up, in the July 10th
24 meeting -- and there were two meetings, one main meeting and
25 then a followup meeting in the Ward Room.

1 In the first meeting, is it your testimony you have no
2 recollection of saying words to the effect that: No, we have
3 an agreement for a White House meeting as long as Ukraine
4 does the investigations, we already have a meeting, we
5 already have an agreement on the meeting. You have no
6 recollection of saying any words to that effect?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall it.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: And do you have any recollection of
9 making a similar point in the follow-on meeting in the Ward
10 Room?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No. Again, I don't recall that.
12 In the Ward Room, we were talking about a phone call, I
13 think, that still hadn't been made.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: So you don't have any recollection of in
15 either meeting raising the issue of the desire for Ukraine to
16 commit to these investigations?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: In that timeframe, and I think
18 that was even before the press statement, because I don't
19 think the investigation issue began to arise until after the
20 press statement was shelved, as I recall.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: So you don't have any recollection in
22 either of those meetings on July 10th raising the issue of
23 Ukraine conducting an investigation or ever mentioning the
24 word "Burisma"?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't remember that, no. I

1 don't remember that.

2 BY MR. NOBLE:

3 Q Ambassador Sondland, in the Ward meeting do you
4 remember ever mentioning the word "Burisma"?

5 A I can't say that the word "Burisma" wasn't
6 mentioned. I don't know if I mentioned it or if Ambassador
7 Volker did or if Mr. Vindman -- I have no idea.

8 Q So the word "Burisma" may have come up in the Ward
9 Room?

10 A It may have.

11 Q And can you walk us through who was present during
12 the Ward Room meeting?

13 A All I can remember is Mr. McCormack, Dr. Hill,
14 myself, Vindman, Perry. I think Volker was there, too. I
15 don't recall if the Ukrainians were there. I can't remember.
16 And we asked them to wait or if we brought them in, I
17 honestly can't remember.

18 Q Was Ambassador Volker's assistant Katherine Croft
19 present? Do you recall that?

20 A I don't recall. I don't recall.

21 Q You don't recall.

22 What about any assistant of Secretary Perry?

23 A That would have been Brian McCormack --

24 Q Brian McCormack.

25 A -- who was his chief of staff.

1 Q Okay. And he would be the only aide to Secretary
2 Perry that was present in the Ward Room?

3 A Well, there were other aides, but I don't know if
4 they were in the Ward Room or standing outside the door. As
5 I said, it wasn't a formal meeting. It was sort of a stand
6 in the room and talk kind of thing.

7 Q Okay. So I'd like to turn to page 37 of the text
8 messages. And to set the scene, this is around July 19th.

9 Were you aware around that date that Ambassador Volker
10 had introduced Rudy Giuliani to Andrey Yermak?

11 A I believe I was. Is that the meeting in Madrid?

12 Q No, I believe that came later. But were you aware
13 that -- did you have any conversations with Ambassador Volker
14 about his plans to introduce Andrey Yermak to Rudy Giuliani
15 around mid-July?

16 A I thought that the first introduction was when
17 Giuliani and Yermak met in Madrid. That was my recollection,
18 unless you have something to refresh my memory.

19 Q Okay. So on page 37, I want to direct your
20 attention to July 19th.

21 A Yes.

22 Q And do you see, it's at 11:31 a.m., you say:
23 "Talked to White House. This is moving but post election."
24 And then Ambassador Taylor says: "If we can get a
25 congratulatory call postelection, that could begin to

1 establish the relationship."

2 A Yeah. I mean, this call for the 20th, I believe,
3 was scheduled like a week before that. I thought we had
4 finally won and gotten this call done. And then, as I
5 recall, the call got pulled down at the last minute, because
6 someone didn't want the call to occur before the
7 parliamentary elections.

8 Q And this ended up being the July 25th call,
9 correct?

10 A Ultimately, yes.

11 Q Ultimately?

12 A Yeah.

13 Q Do you recall who you spoke to at the White House
14 about scheduling the call, here where you say "talked to
15 White House"?

16 A Let's see. It could have been Emma Doyle, the
17 deputy chief of staff. It could have been -- I don't know.
18 It could have been Morgan. I don't know. Someone.

19 And I think the -- I think the NSC was involved in the
20 scheduling. We had gotten an email, I think, because when
21 they do these calls they put it through an NSC scheduling
22 protocol and then there's 50 people on the email.

23 And it was all set for the 20th. And I think they had
24 gotten Zelensky ready for the 20th. And then somebody blew
25 it up at the last minute.

1 Q Okay. And then later on, on July 19th, at 6:50
2 p.m., you write: "It looks like POTUS call tomorrow. I
3 spike" -- I think you met spoke -- "directly to Zelensky and
4 gave him a full briefing. He's got it."

5 A Yeah.

6 Q Do you recall that conversation with President
7 Zelensky?

8 A Vaguely.

9 Q Okay. Tell us what you remember about it.

10 A It was a short call. I think I said: It looks
11 like your call is finally on, and I think it's important that
12 you, you know, give President Trump -- he wanted this -- some
13 kind of a statement about corruption.

14 I think this was when we were at the general statement
15 about corruption. I don't know that the Burisma/2016 issue
16 had entered the conversation. I can't recall. But I think I
17 said, you know: You guys will get along great.

18 And, you know, it was just sort of a "I'm handing it off
19 to you now, we finally got this done." And he was very happy
20 and said: Great, we'll have a good call tomorrow. And then,
21 as I said, it got pulled down and never happened. And I
22 never -- I don't think I spoke to him since after, you know,
23 he had the 25th call.

24 Q At 7:01 p.m. here Kurt Volker writes: "Good. Had
25 breakfast with Rudy this morning."

1 A Right.

2 Q "Teeing up call with Yermak Monday."

3 Does that refresh your recollection about when
4 Ambassador Volker introduced Giuliani to Andrey Yermak?

5 A "Had breakfast" -- he said he had breakfast with
6 Giuliani without -- it doesn't say he had breakfast with
7 Yermak, right?

8 Q But then it says: "Teeing up call with Yermak
9 Monday."

10 A Yeah. I think this was the call that he mentioned
11 where he was going to introduce Yermak and Giuliani so that
12 they could meet independently.

13 Q Okay. And then he writes: "Must have helped.
14 Most important is for Zelensky to say that he will help
15 investigation and address any specific personnel issues if
16 there are any."

17 So here Ambassador Volker is not just talking about
18 general corruption, but he's talking about some particular
19 investigation. Do you know what he was referring to here?

20 A I don't.

21

22

23

24

25

1 [3:38 p.m.]

2 BY MR. NOBLE:

3 Q Do you know what specific personnel issues he was
4 referring to?

5 A Yeah, this had to do with someone in Zelensky's
6 cabinet who was apparently close to Kolomoisky that Volker
7 was concerned about and others were concerned about. They
8 knew this person and didn't think that it would be easy for
9 Zelensky to distance himself from Kolomoisky with this person
10 as a senior role in the Zelensky administration, so I think
11 they were talking about that. I remember that conversation.

12 Q Do you recall whether the investigation that Volker
13 was referring to was either Burisma or 2016?

14 A I -- I don't.

15 Q But then down on July 21st, 2019 -- and Mr. Goldman
16 asked you about this earlier -- you see at 1:45 a.m. Bill
17 Taylor writes, "Gordon, one thing talked about yesterday was
18 Sasha Danylyuk's point" --

19 A Danylyuk.

20 Q "Danylyuk's point that Zelensky is sensitive about
21 Ukraine being taken seriously, not merely as an instrument in
22 Washington domestic reelection politics."

23 A Right.

24 Q Does this refresh your recollection that at least
25 around mid-July you and Ambassador Volker were talking with

1 the Ukrainians about particular investigations that Giuliani
2 and President Trump wanted Ukraine to pursue?

3 A I don't recall that I had any conversations. I
4 mean Taylor may have. And I think that when this went from
5 corruption to other things, I think the Ukrainians just
6 didn't want to get involved in our election politics under
7 any circumstances at that point.

8 Q And by making a statement about pursuing particular
9 investigations that would be of political help to President
10 Trump, they would be interfering with our domestic politics?

11 A I think they wanted to stay as far away from our
12 domestic politics as they could. That was my impression.

13 Q And Ambassador Taylor seems to be relaying that
14 concern to you and Ambassador Volker?

15 A I mean he's on the front lines and he's talking to
16 them multiple times a day. I mean, his level of contact with
17 the Ukrainians and mine -- mine is a fraction of his.

18 Q So if we wanted to know what the Ukrainians were
19 thinking and feeling and their concerns about what was being
20 asked of them, Ambassador Taylor would be a good source for
21 them?

22 A I would imagine.

23 Q Let's turn to page 42. At 4:27, July 22nd, near
24 the top?

25 A Uh-huh.

1 Q Volker writes "orchestrated a great phone call with
2 Rudy and Yermak they are going to get together when Rudy goes
3 to Madrid in a couple of weeks. In the meantime, Rudy is now
4 advocating for phone calls. I have called in Fiona's
5 replacement and will call Bolton, if needed. But I can tell
6 Bolton and you can tell Mick that Rudy agrees on a call, if
7 that helps." You replied, "I talked to Tim Morrison, Fiona's
8 replacement, he is pushing but feel free as well."

9 So during this time, did you or Ambassador Volker to
10 your knowledge speak with Andrey Yermak in order to give him
11 and idea of what it was that Giuliani wanted the Ukrainians
12 to do?

13 A I don't remember having any conversations with
14 Yermak about it, but I do remember that when I talked to
15 Morrison, there seemed to be a sea change in the NSC's
16 position on the call. Dr. Hill was, I think, less excited
17 about doing the call, and Mr. Morrison, I think, was more
18 supportive of doing the call. That's what I remember from
19 this exchange.

20 Q And you see where Volker wrote "Rudy is now
21 advocating for the phone call?

22 A Yeah. That was after he met with Yermak?

23 Q I believe so, but you tell us.

24 A Yeah.

25 Q Or after he spoke to him on the phone?

1 A All I remember is once he and Yermak made contact,
2 whether it was the meeting or the phone call, whatever they
3 discussed, Rudy was happier about Ukraine than he was prior
4 to having spoken with Yermak. And I have no idea what they
5 talked about.

6 Q So -- and then, I'm sorry to skip around, but in
7 order to do this chronologically, the text is out a little
8 out of order. If we go back to page 37, and on July 24th,
9 it's going to be near the bottom. Do you see at the very end
10 you wrote, "Call me, just spoke to Danylyuk, I have clarity."

11 A Let's see --

12 Q It's the last line.

13 A Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

14 Q Do you recall that conversation with Danylyuk and
15 whey you -- what you had clarity about?

16 A Hang on just a second.

17 MR. LUSKIN: It will take him a minute to read through
18 the thread.

19 MR. NOBLE: Sure.

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The only thing I can remember is
21 maybe it was the logistics of the call. We thought we had
22 the call nailed down after it was taken down. And then I
23 might have spoken to Danylyuk about how that was going to
24 happen. I don't -- I don't remember exactly.

25 BY MR. NOBLE:

1 Q Okay. So around this time you were involved in
2 trying to help arrange what turned out to be the July 25th
3 call?

4 A I was trying to do whatever I could to use whatever
5 influence I had at NSC and the White House to keep people
6 focused on making the call and getting the meeting. That's
7 what I was trying to do.

8 Q Okay. Let's go back to page 42. Now we're going
9 to be July 25th, the day of the phone call.

10 A Yep.

11 Q You see the first entry July 25th at 7:54, it looks
12 like you tried to called Ambassador Volker and then you wrote
13 him, "call as soon as possible."

14 A Yep.

15 Q Do you recall what you were trying to reach
16 Ambassador Volker about?

17 A I don't know was that -- was this on the 25th?
18 Yeah, I don't know if that might have been the day I made the
19 call to President Trump when I was on my way to Kyiv and
20 again, it was a -- kind of a nothing call. He didn't
21 really -- he wasn't really interested in -- and then I found
22 out he had made the call later that day. I don't even think
23 he told me he was making the call. Maybe he didn't know that
24 it had been scheduled.

25 Q In advance of the call between President Trump and

1 President Zelensky were you and Ambassador Volker trying to,
2 so to speak, prime the Ukrainians and President Zelensky as
3 to what to expect and how to respond to the President's
4 request during the phone call?

5 A Well, again, the only request I think we had heard
6 at that point that I recall was that they wanted a strong
7 public statement about anticorruption. That's what I had
8 recalled knowing. And if we would have primed him, it would
9 have been to that -- to that degree.

10 Q So if you turn to page 19, and we're still on July
11 25th, this is at 8:36, I believe.

12 A Yep.

13 Q Do see that? Ambassador Volker, and this is east
14 coast time, and I believe the phone call with President Trump
15 was at 9:00 a.m.?

16 A Uh-huh.

17 Q Is that right? So a little before, less than a
18 half hour before President Trump and President Zelensky
19 speak, Volker writes "good lunch, thanks. Heard from White
20 House. Assuming President Z convinces Trump he will
21 investigate slash 'get to the bottom of what happened' in
22 2016. We will nail down date for a visit to Washington.
23 Good luck, see you tomorrow, Kurt." So he's writing that to
24 Andrey Yermak, Correct?

25 A Uh-huh.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Is that a yes or no?

2 MR. NOBLE: Is that a yes?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes. I'm sorry. Yes.

4 BY MR. NOBLE:

5 Q Is Kurt Volker telling Andrey Yermak that President
6 Zelensky just needs to talk about corruption, or is he
7 telling him that President Zelensky needs to commit to
8 investigating the things that President Trump wanted him to
9 investigate?

10 A I don't know. Am I -- is this one of my texts?
11 I'm not on this text, am I?

12 Q No. I'm just asking -- well, let me ask it like
13 this. Does this refresh your recollection that around the
14 time right before the July 25th call you and Ambassador
15 Volker were priming President Zelensky and Andrey Yermak that
16 President Trump was going to be asking President Zelensky to
17 investigate the two things that he and Rudy Giuliani had been
18 pushing, 2016 and Burisma?

19 A I don't know that the Burisma in 2016 came up then.
20 And the call I think by President Trump was made when I was
21 in the air. I think I was on my way to Kyiv.

22 Q But doesn't this suggest that at least Ambassador
23 Volker was aware that President Trump was going to ask
24 President Zelensky to commit to investigating 2016? I mean,
25 this text message is in advance of the July 25th call.

1 Correct?

2 A It appears to say that, but again, I wasn't -- I
3 don't recall that.

4 Q So is it your testimony you had no knowledge that
5 Kurt Volker was priming President Zelensky and Andrey Yermak
6 to expect President Trump to make these requests and that in
7 order to get the White House meeting, President Zelensky
8 would have to, quote, convince Trump he will investigate/get
9 to the bottom of what happened in 2016?

10 A I don't recall it happening that early. I thought
11 it happened in August when we were negotiating the press
12 statement.

13 Q But now that you see this, it seems pretty obvious
14 that Volker, at least, was telling Andrey Yermak what
15 President Zelensky was going to have it do to get a White
16 House meeting, correct?

17 A Well, he says get to the bottom of what happened.
18 I don't know whether that means an investigation, or -- I
19 don't know what it means.

20 Q Well, get to the bottom, isn't that another way of
21 saying look into, which are the words that President Trump
22 used?

23 A Where did President Trump use the words look into?

24 Q In the July 25th call, at least according to the
25 call readout.

1 A Oh, you mean the transcript of the call?

2 Q Yes.

3 A Yeah, I -- if that's what he said, that's what he
4 said.

5 Q And in this text message itself it says Trump wants
6 Zelensky to investigate. Doesn't it?

7 A It appears to, it says what it says. Yeah.

8 Q So is it your testimony that this wasn't a message
9 that you'd relayed to Ambassador Volker to tell Andrey
10 Yermak?

11 A No.

12 Q You never told Ambassador Volker that he needed to
13 tell Andrey Yermak that to relay this message to President
14 Zelensky?

15 A I don't believe so. I think -- I think Volker was
16 talking to Mr. Giuliani. I don't remember telling Volker
17 anything like that. Not -- again, not that soon. I don't
18 think that happened.

19 MR. MEADOWS: What page are you on? What page are you
20 on?

21 MR. NOBLE: Page 19.

22 MR. MEADOWS: So he's on these text messages, is that
23 what you are you are what saying, because I can't find that.

24 MR. NOBLE: No. These there text messages between Andrey
25 Yermak and Kurt Volker. I'm just asking about his

1 conversations with Kurt Volker around at that time.

2 MR. MEADOWS: Okay. But he wasn't party to the text
3 message. Okay.

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, I wasn't on -- this wasn't a
5 group, this was just Volker and Yermak, right?

6 Yeah, maybe they started talking about the 2016 issue
7 back then, I don't know. I don't recall it coming up that
8 early, as I said.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: If I can clarify. The text messages
10 indicate that Volker was in communication with Yermak, and
11 that he needed to be prepared for a conversation with the
12 President about investigating, or looking into 2016, correct?
13 Is that what the text message indicates?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: What it appears to indicate.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Is it your testimony that you were out of
16 the loop when it came to Volker communicating that with
17 Andrey Yermak?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall whether I was in or
19 out. I just don't remember this. As I said, I spoke with
20 President Trump before I got on the plane, I believe, to Kyiv
21 and it was a nothing call. I said we're headed to Kyiv to go
22 see Zelensky and he was like, no, great, whatever. That was
23 sort of the end of the call. We never discussed anything
24 substantive.

25 BY MR. NOBLE:

1 Q So is it your testimony that you never asked Kurt
2 Volker to pass a message to Andrey Yermak around this time?

3 A I don't remember that.

4 Q Okay. Let's turn to page 42, this is the same day,
5 a half an hour after the call.

6 A Okay.

7 Q So if you go to page 42, we're looking at July 25,
8 2019?

9 A Okay.

10 Q At 9:35 a.m.

11 A Uh-huh.

12 Q After you had tried to call Ambassador Volker, and
13 then after the call between President Trump and President
14 Zelensky, he writes you back, "Hi Gordon, got your message,
15 had a great lunch with Yermak and then passed your message to
16 him. He will see you tomorrow, think everything in place."
17 Does that refresh your recollection that you'd asked
18 Ambassador Volker to pass a message to Andrey Yermak in
19 advance of the call with President Trump?

20 A No, because I don't know where I would have gotten
21 that message. I never got that from President Trump. That's
22 the only place I could have gotten it from, because I wasn't
23 talking to Giuliani.

24 Q Were you talking to other people in the White
25 House?

1 A No, not that I recall. And I think Yermak and I
2 were getting together for lunch or something that next day
3 for a drink because we were -- I think we were going to meet
4 the President, President Zelensky the next day as well.

5 Q On July 26th you gave an interview to --

6 MR. LUSKIN: Just a moment, please.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Please go ahead.

8 [Discussion off the record.]

9 MR. NOBLE: Is there something you want to clarify?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, only that I'm not denying
11 these texts occurred between Yermak and Volker. I don't
12 recall passing that message along. That would have been out
13 of -- out of context, or out of order. Because the first
14 time I recall hearing about 2016 and Burisma was during the
15 negotiations of the press statement. Again, unless there's
16 some text that I've completely have forgotten about, that's
17 when I first remember getting into those issues. It was
18 always just about corruption prior to that. It kept -- it
19 kept getting more insidious as timeline went on, and back in
20 July, it was all about just corruption.

21 MR. NOBLE: Okay. I think my time is up.

22 BY MR. CASTOR:

23 Q Any idea what the message was there that Volker
24 conveyed to Yermak?

25 A I have no idea. No, I don't. I know that I was

1 planning to see Yermak at the Zelensky bilateral the next
2 day.

3 Q Right.

4 A So, I don't know.

5 Q Do you remember --

6 A Does it indicate that Volker was talking to the
7 White House?

8 Q Just flipping back to the --

9 A Yeah, I mean, I don't know. Everyone was talking
10 to everyone. That was the problem.

11 Q So seeing these messages between you and Volker,
12 the second half of the message doesn't refresh your
13 recollection about what?

14 A Yeah, my only recollection is that the only thing
15 that we were coaching Zelensky on, or someone was coaching
16 Zelensky on was to tell President Trump he would be
17 vigorously working on corruption issues at that point.
18 That's the only thing I can recall.

19 Q Before you came in today, you said you collect all
20 your text messages and you produced them to the State
21 Department?

22 A Correct.

23 Q Did you review them?

24 A Some of them, yeah.

25 Q Okay. So when these texts are ready, are these

1 texts that you had recently reexamined?

2 A I looked at -- there were a lot of texts. I looked
3 at some of them.

4 Q Okay. But not all of them?

5 A No. As I said, one of the problems with my
6 involvement in this is I kept dropping in, dropping out. I
7 was just trying to help get these meetings set up, and I was
8 doing a lot of other thing unrelated to Ukraine at the same
9 time.

10 Yeah, again, I'm not denying that the issue was raised.
11 I just don't remember it. I honestly don't.

12 Q Okay.

13 A The 2016 issue.

14 Q Okay.

15 A I mean if everyone is saying it was raised in all
16 these multiple texts then it probably was raised. I just
17 don't remember the conversation because none of it seemed
18 remarkable to me.

19 Q Okay. Did you ever have a conversation with Yermak
20 about 2016?

21 A I don't remember. I honestly don't. There were so
22 many conversations with Yermak, and Danylyuk, and Prystaiko
23 and the others, I don't remember.

24 Q You were talking to them separate from Volker?

25 A No, no. We were all talk together when we were in

1 Kyiv.

2 Q Okay. But were you testing or having telephone
3 calls?

4 A I think I was having some directly and some with
5 Volker and some group, everything. But again, that may have
6 occurred, there may have been a conversation about 2016, I
7 don't -- I honestly don't remember.

8 Q Flipping back to page 19, 7/25, 8:36 a.m. text?

9 A Uh-huh.

10 Q This Volker to Yermak again.

11 A Okay.

12 Q I want to be clear, you're not on this. He says,
13 just heard from White House. Do you have any idea where
14 Ambassador Volker was getting that?

15 A I don't.

16 Q Who he was talking to?

17 A I don't.

18 Q You were in constant communication with him during
19 that time, is it possible to -- who were the possibilities
20 that he's talking to?

21 VOICE: I'm sorry, I don't understand who he is at this
22 point.

23 MR. CASTOR: Volker, Ambassador Volker. We're trying to
24 decipher --

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It could have been the NSC, I

1 don't -- I don't know.

2 BY MR. CASTOR:

3 Q Was he talking to anybody else at the White House?

4 A I don't know.

5 Q I don't know that in these discussions we've --

6 A I don't know who --

7 Q Established that Volker was --

8 A The problem was no one owned this file. Everyone
9 had a little hand in it. You know, the NSC, the White House
10 staff, everybody was involved in, you know, everyone was
11 pushing for these meetings and the phone calls.

12 Q Okay.

13 A And I don't know who was talking to whom. All I
14 can tell is what I was doing or what I can remember I was
15 doing, which was trying to get the meeting. In this case, I
16 think I was trying to get the phone call.

17 Q We're going to make sure our members get a chance
18 to ask you some questions and so I want to --

19 MR. MEADOWS: So Ambassador, this is Mark Meadows. I
20 want thank you for your service. Thank you, obviously, for
21 your candor. My colleagues opposite have been consistently
22 trying to lead you down a path to suggest that you knew that
23 President Trump was asking to investigate the Bidens based on
24 knowledge that you have now. But based on knowledge that you
25 had when you met on the 26th with President Zelensky, did

1 investigating the Bidens come up at all during that meeting?

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not to the best of my
3 recollection.

4 MR. MEADOWS: Not to the best of your recollection. Did
5 investigating the Bidens come up in your conversations on the
6 26th with Ambassador Volker?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, not to the best of my
8 recollection.

9 MR. MEADOWS: So as we look at this, this whole context
10 of where we are, and I'm just trying to make sure that
11 somewhere between the questions that get added to a little
12 bit on the end of it that they are going to try to use to say
13 something that I have not heard you say today. I want to
14 make sure we're just getting this very clear. When you met
15 with President Zelensky, did he indicate that the phone call
16 that he had with the President of the United States, Donald
17 J. Trump, was a positive phone call and he presented in
18 positive terms to you?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's all I heard was we had a
20 great call.

21 MR. MEADOWS: And you and Ambassador Volker were not
22 sent over there as a condition of a bad phone call. You were
23 already planning to be there and this meeting you had with
24 President Zelensky on July 26th of this year was -- was
25 already in the works, and you were already on your way there,

1 or you were there when the phone call happened. Is that
2 correct?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, first of all, I was invited
4 to join Ambassador Volker in his bilateral meeting in early
5 July. So the meeting was schedule for the week of, I
6 believe, the 22nd of July. There wasn't even a date nailed
7 out yet and I was invited sometime around the 8th, 9th, 10th,
8 12th of July.

9 MR. MEADOWS: So the early part of July you were invited
10 to participate in a meeting that was going to be held with
11 then president I guess the inauguration had happened so it
12 would have been President Zelensky at that point.

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct, sometime during the week
14 of July 27th.

15 MR. MEADOWS: And that happened long before the phone
16 call actually of July 25th, that was already in the planning
17 stages and you had been invited. Is that correct?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

19 MR. MEADOWS: And so when you start to look at this
20 chronological step of a phone call and what happened, all the
21 asking you about aid and everything else in hindsight, at
22 that particular time, the aid being held up was certainly, it
23 did not cross your mind -- is this correct, that it did not
24 cross your mind, that the aid was being held up because of an
25 investigation into the Bidens?

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not at that time.

2 MR. MEADOWS: Okay. And so I -- I also -- there's a
3 whole lot of back and forth between text messages and what
4 was included. Some of these text messages that you've been
5 asked to opine on just, in the previous hour, were actually
6 text messages that you were not a part of. Is that correct?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

8 MR. MEADOWS: And so it was actually text messages
9 between Ambassador Volker, who's already testified here for
10 over 10 hours and given very clear indication of what he
11 thought. So they are asking you to opine on what Ambassador
12 Volker might have meant on text messages that you were not a
13 party to. Is that correct?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Appears to be correct.

15 MR. MEADOWS: So I guess where I'm going with all of
16 this is that there continues to be this leading
17 question-and-answer process to suggest that you somehow knew
18 that there was this quid pro quo that had happened in the
19 early parts of May and June of 2019. Were you aware of any
20 quid pro quo for aid or anything else that early in May or
21 June?

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I -- the only thing I was aware of
23 that was that there was to be some kind of acknowledgment of
24 corruption investigation at that point, I believe.

25 MR. MEADOWS: And does the Ukraine have a history of

1 corruption?

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, they do.

3 MR. MEADOWS: Have there been prosecutors, multiple
4 prosecutors who were going to clear up corruption in the
5 Ukraine who never cleared up the corruption in Ukraine?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's what I understand.

7 MR. MEADOWS: All right. Is that a concern, not just to
8 the United States, is that a concern to the European Union as
9 well?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah it is a huge concern to them.
11 That's one of reasons they are not all in.

12 MR. MEADOWS: And so, that's one of the reasons why, I
13 guess, they send money for pillows and we send money for
14 military defense systems. Is that correct?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know why they send their
16 money.

17 MR. MEADOWS: All right. Do you know if they contribute
18 to a large part to the defense of Ukraine?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Apparently not enough to suit
20 President Trump.

21 MR. MEADOWS: All right. How about enough to actually
22 appease Ambassador Sondland. Do you think that they are
23 doing their fair share, the EU?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, in my discussions with the
25 EU, they would like to do more. They would like to see some

1 things cleaned up before they contribute more has been my
2 impression.

3 MR. MEADOWS: So, you mean the EU has an quid pro quo in
4 terms of their foreign aid to the Ukraine?

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know if it is a quid pro
6 quo. I think it is one of their conditions.

7 MR. MEADOWS: So they have a condition to giving
8 additional foreign aid. So you're saying -- this is
9 groundbreaking -- so you're saying that someone other than --

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I walked right into that one.

11 MR. MEADOWS: -- other than Donald J. Trump is concerned
12 with corruption, and they might withhold foreign aid based on
13 that. Is that correct, Ambassador? I can tell by your smile
14 it's a yes, is that correct. Are we correct?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: This is like My Cousin Vinny.

16 MR. MEADOWS: Yeah. There are two positive track tire
17 marks here it looks like.

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: To answer your question,
19 Representative, the Ukrainians -- the Europeans are always
20 very careful about when they contribute money to anything and
21 they always have a list of requirements, some of which are a
22 mile long.

23 MR. MEADOWS: So in your diplomatic speak, is that a
24 yes?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes.

1 MR. MEADOWS: Thank you. I yield back.

2 MR. ZELDIN: And President Zelensky, Ambassador, won his
3 election based on an anticorruption campaign primarily,
4 correct?

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Among other things, yes.

6 MR. ZELDIN: What was the anticorruption aspect of
7 President Zelensky's campaign?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think a general commitment to
9 transparency to having less influence by the oligarchs,
10 potentially buying the oligarchs out, or kicking the
11 oligarchs out of some of the key industries in Ukraine,
12 getting boards of directors that had well-recognized
13 international figures on them that would be appealing to the
14 Wall Street and London investment banks, and a whole host of
15 things like that.

16 MR. ZELDIN: And what were some of the corruption
17 problems plaguing President Poroshenko?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The opposite of what I just said.
19 Cronies on the boards, too many oligarchs involved in taking
20 bribes and kickbacks and all kinds of bad stuff.

21 MR. ZELDIN: And this corruption within Ukraine
22 government was something that you were concerned about?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, I was concerned about it
24 from the standpoint that, again, my goal was two things: was
25 to get the Europeans aligned with us, because it was one of

1 the few things where we had very little daylight between us
2 on -- we have a lot of issues with the EU, but Ukraine wasn't
3 one of them. And the second was to get President Zelensky
4 and President Trump together because I figured that they
5 would hit it off, and that the United States and all the
6 interagency, once they saw the two presidents meet, all the
7 interagency nerve endings would start to grow together and
8 we'd have a real solid partnership. The whole idea here is
9 to counter Russia. Russia is the problem. Russia is what
10 needs it be countered. And the more we bear-hug Ukraine, the
11 less influence Russia has. So that was my strategic
12 objective and part of my portfolio?

13 MR. ZELDIN: And Ambassador Volker was very concerned
14 about corruption in Ukraine?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Ambassador Volker? Yes.

16 MR. ZELDIN: Did you get any readouts of the July 25th
17 call at all from the Ukrainian Government?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think the only readouts I
19 remember seeing were the ones from my team, which were very
20 innocuous, and did not represent what was actually said on
21 the call that I found out once the transcript was a released.

22 MR. ZELDIN: Was there any reference to a hold on aid or
23 a quid pro quo in those readouts?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not in the readouts I saw.

25 MR. ZELDIN: You met with President Zelensky on July

1 26th?

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

3 MR. ZELDIN: Did President Zelensky make any reference
4 in the July 26th meeting to hold on aid or a quid pro quo?

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not that I remember.

6 MR. ZELDIN: Tell us about Ambassador Volker. You
7 worked closely with him? Was it a positive experience
8 working --

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, I had a great relationship
10 with him he's a very smart guy, he's clearly very well-liked
11 by all the Ukrainians, the old administration, the new
12 administration. He really understands the country and he was
13 a tremendous assets I think to the United States.

14 MR. ZELDIN: And he was professional at all times as far
15 as you know from your interactions with him?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: All times when I was with him.

17 MR. ZELDIN: And candid and honest, is that part of your
18 assessment, too?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, he's one of those people I
20 would hand my wallet to. That's how I describe him.

21 MR. ROY: I want to clarify one thing you referenced a
22 couple of times today. You repeatedly testified that at the
23 outset, going back to May, going back to conversations that
24 you've been referencing, that your perspective on the -- the
25 only thing that you were aware of, I should say, regarding

1 any asks, right, out of Ukrainians, or any connection to
2 foreign aid or anything else is you specifically said
3 corruption, that that was the early outset. And you've
4 referenced a continuum. And I'm trying to understand your
5 perspective of continuum.

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't believe I ever referenced
7 in May that he there was any tie to aid. I wasn't even aware
8 of the aid I don't think back then.

9 MR. ROY: Right. But from the very beginning, right,
10 you talked about this very specifically, you've referenced
11 only -- you've only referenced corruption, right? And you
12 haven't referenced anything beyond that. What I'm trying to
13 understand is your perspective of the continuum.

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The continuum was, first of all,
15 an unconditional phone call and an unconditional invitation
16 to the White House, and then I believe the next part of the
17 continuum was some kind of a commitment to investigate
18 corruption generally. And then the next part of the
19 continuum was talking about the Burisma and the 2016
20 election, which as I recall, was heavily discussed during the
21 negotiation of the short-lived press statement, which only
22 lasted a few days, and then it died. And then at the end of
23 that continuum I became aware that there might be a link
24 between the White House visit and aid to the Ukraine that was
25 being held up when I couldn't get a straight answer as to why

1 the aid was being held up, both Senator Johnson and
2 Ambassador Taylor raised the possibility that there might be
3 a link. And then the aid was released, and then this whole
4 thing blew up. That's the best I can recall the sort of
5 progression.

6 MR. ROY: Going back to my colleague from North
7 Carolina's questions, to be clear you have said that with
8 respect to conditions that a public embrace by the Ukraines
9 of their anticorruption activities, was a fine precondition
10 from the standpoint of your perspective?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Absolutely.

12 MR. ROY: And so to his point about conditions often
13 being placed on aid, that's not troubling to you at all?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not at all.

15 MR. ROY: And at any point in any of these --

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Did you say aid or did you say the
17 White House meeting?

18 MR. ROY: I said aid.

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sorry. I missed that. I
20 didn't think there should be any preconditions on aid. And
21 the reason I didn't think there should be any preconditions
22 on aid was I thought it would send the absolute wrong message
23 to the Russians if we held up aid for any reason.

24 MR. ROY: But that's a policy choice.

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

1 MR. ROY: Right?

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

3 MR. ROY: But from the standpoint of putting
4 preconditions on a White House meeting or putting
5 preconditions on aid, that might be a policy choice. But in
6 respect to terms of attaching any kinds of conditions to aid
7 that's not an unusual thing to occur, right?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct. And so you're
9 correct, my distinction was I didn't agree with the policy of
10 holding up the aid for any reason whereas others may have
11 said yes, we should condition the aid on corruption.

12 MR. ROY: And you testified there were debates about --

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Exactly.

14 MR. ROY: -- what the policy choices should be?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Exactly.

16 MR. ROY: Thanks. That's all.

17 MR. ZELDIN: Ambassador, it is U.S. law to, when
18 providing aid to Ukraine to be assessing the anticorruption
19 efforts that are correct?

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know what the law is
21 relating to aid. I'm not an expert on preconditions for aid?

22 MR. ZELDIN: But I think that's an important point
23 before declaring that there should be no conditionality on
24 aid related to corruption; it's important to know what the
25 United States law is as it relates to aid to Ukraine and as

1 it relates to corruption.

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: My -- my response, Congressman,
3 was strategic, not legal.

4 MR. ZELDIN: We are concerned about the legal as well.
5 Now you're the U.S. Ambassador to the EU, So you have
6 interaction with a number of countries all across the
7 European continent. I imagine you're engaging with countries
8 on a whole host of issues all day, right, your portfolio's
9 enormous.

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

11 MR. ZELDIN: Okay. And as far as conducting U.S.
12 diplomacy, whether it is aid or other discussions, you
13 probably have asks into countries all across the entire
14 continent, correct?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: True.

16 MR. ZELDIN: Can you give us an idea of your portfolio
17 as it relates to your priorities of getting other countries
18 to do things that are important to the United States?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, my portfolio as I said
20 encompasses 28, currently 28 EU countries, unless something
21 happened in the last few hours with the U.K. And it involves
22 trade, it involves security, it involves energy independence.
23 It involves their actions in various other parts of the
24 world, Iran, Venezuela, et cetera, et cetera. I'm not sure
25 what your question --

1 MR. ZELDIN: As far as you doing your job interacting
2 and the United States State Department interacting with
3 foreign countries, we identify priorities that are important
4 to the United States and try to get other countries to make
5 decisions to adopt their policies and behaviors to our asks
6 to the extent possible, correct?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That is correct and I have a long
8 list of those asks.

9 MR. ZELDIN: And you have seen foreign aid get leveraged
10 in countries all around the world for different reasons,
11 correct?

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That is correct.

13 MR. ZELDIN: For example, Congress recently passed, and
14 the President signed into law legislation called the Taylor
15 Force Act. I don't know, have you heard of that?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I have not.

17 MR. ZELDIN: So where there is a policy -- would it be
18 appropriate where the American taxpayer would not want their
19 tax dollars to go to the Palestinian authority if they are
20 financially rewarding terror, that would be an appropriate
21 prioritization of how to leverage our tax dollars, correct?

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Appears to be, yes.

23 MR. ZELDIN: Now, as far as Fiona Hill, did you and the
24 NSC -- did you sense that they felt threatened at all, that
25 you were, say, stepping on their turf by having a passion for

1 Ukraine?

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, they testified earlier, my
3 first sort of extracurricular trip to Ukraine I met regularly
4 with the Ukrainians in Brussels, and I don't even know that
5 the NSC was involved in those meetings, they normally
6 wouldn't be. But my first trip to Ukraine, which was to
7 Odessa in February, I believe, of 2019, I mentioned to
8 Dr. Hill that I was going with Ambassador Volker and
9 Secretary Reeker, and she sent back a very laudatory note
10 saying, I'm glad you're supporting Ukraine and this is great,
11 or something to go that effect.

12 MR. ZELDIN: At any point did Dr. Hill ever push back on
13 it your interest in Ukraine?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not to me. Not to anyone that
15 contacted me and said the NSC is not happy with your
16 involvement in Ukraine. I've never heard that.

17 MR. CASTOR: I will mark as exhibit 8 the whistleblower
18 complaint.

19 [Minority Exhibit No. 8

20 Was marked for identification.]

21 BY MR. CASTOR:

22 Q The whistleblower complaint was released publicly I
23 think on the day after the call transcript was released?

24 A Uh-huh.

25 Q Did anyone talk to you about the whistleblower

1 complaint before it was released?

2 A I believe I testified that I heard from the White
3 House counsel's office that my name -- they were giving me a
4 heads-up a few hours before it was released. Yes.

5 Q Anybody else? Anybody at the National Security
6 Council?

7 A I don't recall that, no.

8 Q In that time period?

9 A I don't recall.

10 Q Did anyone give you an advanced copy of the
11 complaint?

12 A I don't think so.

13 Q When you saw your name was mentioned, I think it's
14 on page 4, and then again on page 7, what was your reaction?

15 A I was pretty upset.

16 Q And why?

17 A Because it almost implies I was doing something
18 wrong when I was doing my job.

19 Q On page 4 of the complaint under the ongoing
20 concerns Roman III, the last sentence of that first paragraph
21 there beginning with the word based on multiple readouts of
22 these meetings recounted to me by various U.S. officials,
23 Ambassadors Volker and Sondland reportedly provided advice to
24 Ukrainian leadership about how to navigate the demands that
25 President Trump had made of Mr. Zelensky. Does that have any

1 basis in fact?

2 A I didn't know that the President had made any
3 demands.

4 Q Okay.

5 A I wasn't aware of any demands that he had made of
6 Mr. Zelensky until I saw the --

7 Q Okay. So this statement as it relates to you is
8 just not true. Is that true?

9 A Well, I think to be fair to the whistleblower, I
10 was involved in the file. I'm not sure what he's really
11 trying to say here. This sentence confounds me because I'm
12 not quite sure what he's trying to say.

13 Q So you're not sure about what the demands were?

14 A No.

15 Q And you're also not sure about how you were helping
16 the navigate -- helping the Ukrainians navigate the demands?

17 A Well, other than as I testified we tried to
18 negotiate a press statement, the whole group?

19 Q Right.

20 A If that's navigating the demands, then I guess
21 that's navigating the demands. And I think I also testified
22 that I was trying to -- we're all trying to prep President
23 Zelensky for the request that corruption be investigated.

24 Q On the July 26th meeting in Kyiv with Ambassador
25 Volker, did this come up, the press statement and so forth?

1 A I don't think so. I don't remember that.

2 Q Okay. So at least at that meeting the day after
3 the call there was no discussion that you can recall --

4 A No, not that I remember, and again, I saw a readout
5 of the call, and the call was benign until I saw the
6 transcript.

7 Q Okay. So it at that point, you didn't know about
8 demands, and so it is not fair to say you were helping the
9 Ukrainians navigate the demands?

10 A I don't know. I was involved in the file, and if
11 being involved in the file means my name in the whistleblower
12 complaint then I guess I have to accept that.

13 Q Flipping back to page 7. The first bullet the
14 State Department officials, including Ambassadors Volker and
15 Sondland had spoken to Mr. Giuliani in attempt to contain the
16 damage.

17 A Is there a question?

18 Q I just wanted to make sure you read?

19 A Yes, I'm following.

20 Q I'm ready to ask my question now. The last hour,
21 you walked me through all four or five conversations you had
22 with Mr. Giuliani. Any of those conversations possibly --
23 could they possibly be characterized as you and Ambassador
24 Volker trying to contain the damage to U.S. national
25 security?

1 A Not the direct conversations I had with
2 Mr. Giuliani, because, again, they just -- they were really
3 applying to the press statement.

4 Q Right.

5 A I didn't think this the press statement constituted
6 damage to national security.

7 Q Okay. So nothing that you did on a call to Rudy
8 Giuliani could fairly be characterized as containing the
9 damage?

10 A I think it's an exaggeration.

11 Q The second bullet, Ambassadors Volker and Sondland
12 during this time period, meet with members of the Ukrainian
13 administration, and in addition to discussing policy matters
14 helped Ukrainian leaders understand and respond to the
15 differing messages they were receiving from official U.S.
16 channels on the one hand, and Mr. Giuliani on the other.

17 A Well, the problem is, I don't know what official --
18 I don't know what they were receiving from Mr. Giuliani --

19 Q Okay.

20 A -- because I don't know what direct conversations
21 he was having.

22 Q So that also is a statement that can't be true,
23 because you didn't know what Giuliani was doing at that point
24 in time?

25 A All I know, with respect to Mr. Giuliani, is what

1 he told me and what I heard directly through hearsay and from
2 Ambassador Volker.

3 Q But during this time period, the statement that
4 Ambassadors Volker and Sondland sought the help of Ukrainian
5 leaders understand and respond to the differing messages they
6 were receiving from official U.S. channels on the one hand
7 and Mr. Giuliani on the other can't be true if you don't know
8 what Giuliani was telling them?

9 A I think a fairer thing was we were trying to
10 assuage the Ukrainians, and as time kept going on and there
11 were no meetings or phone calls after they had been promised.
12 I that's probably -- we were stroking the Ukrainians a little
13 bit in order to keep them from sort of bailing on us. I
14 didn't want them going in the Russia direction. That was my
15 big concern.

16 Q But you couldn't possibly be doing what is alleged
17 right here because you didn't know what message Giuliani was
18 sending to them?

19 A Yeah, I mean, if anything, we probably more played
20 the role of a mediator just to try and keep things cool,
21 while the time was going on and, you know, the meetings
22 weren't happening. So I don't know if I would have written
23 it exactly this way, but we're trying to help.

24 Q Okay. The next sentence during the same timeframe
25 multiple U.S. officials told me that Ukraine leadership was

1 led to believe that a meeting or phone call between the
2 President and President Zelensky would depend on whether
3 Zelensky showed a willingness to play ball on the issues that
4 had been publicly aired by Mr. Lutsenko and Mr. Giuliani.
5 Does that strike you as something you're familiar with?

6 A That -- are you saying that the call that Mr. -- or
7 President Trump and President Zelensky ultimately had on the
8 25th?

9 Q Well, during the same timeframe, multiple U.S.
10 officials told me Ukrainian leadership is led to believe that
11 a meeting or phone call between President Trump and President
12 Zelensky would depend on whether Zelensky showed a
13 willingness to play ball on the issues that had been publicly
14 aired by Lutsenko and Mr. Giuliani.

15 A Well, that appears not to be true because the phone
16 call happened without any precondition. The phone call
17 happened on the 25th and I don't believe anything was agreed
18 upon by the Ukrainians by the time the phone call happened.

19 Q Did you ever hear a U.S. official use the term
20 "play ball"?

21 A I've never heard that expression from anyone.

22 Q Because it is in quotes?

23 A I don't recall ever hearing that.

24 Q Okay. I want to go back to the recall of
25 Ambassador Yovanovitch. Can you tell me when you first

1 learned that her post was in jeopardy?

2 A I can't, I don't recall. As I said, I met with her
3 when I was in Odessa, she joined us on the meetings with
4 Poroshenko and others, and we may have had some calls after
5 that, but I don't remember.

6 Q Did anyone consult with you prior to her removal?

7 A I don't -- I don't believe so.

8 Q So nobody at the White House asked for your
9 opinion?

10 A I don't think so.

11 Q Nobody?

12 A I probably would have remembered that, but I don't
13 remember that.

14 Q Anyone on the 7th floor of the State Department?

15 A No, I don't think so.

16 Q So nobody asked for your views on whether she was
17 doing an effective job at that time?

18 A I mean I don't recall giving my views to anyone.
19 As I said, I had a perfectly good experience with her. My
20 limited experience that I had with her.

21 Q So had someone asked you, you would have --

22 A I can't imagine I would have said anything, but she
23 seems great.

24 Q Were you surprised when she was recalled?

25 A A little bit. Especially after I heard from a lot

1 of people in the Mission that she was going good ambassador
2 they had, as I said earlier, they had served with her.

3 Q Did anybody seek your input on the next ambassador?

4 A I don't think so, no. I don't think I ever heard
5 of Taylor until he was in place.

6 Q Okay. There is an allegation, simply an
7 allegation, I'm not endorsing it. Perhaps the Ambassador at
8 one time or another was disparaging the President, and I
9 think one Member of Congress wrote a letter about that, and
10 State Department officials have been disappointed about that
11 allegation. Did you ever hear the Ambassador disparage the
12 President?

13 A Not in my presence.

14 Q Did you ever hear anybody in the National Security
15 Council disparage the President?

16 A Yeah, Dr. Hill.

17 Q Okay. Could you help me understand that?

18 A Well, when Dr. Hill, left her post to leave the
19 government, I happened to drop by her office to say good-bye
20 to her. I knew she was leaving, I think, in a few days or a
21 week. I was at the White House for some other unrelated
22 reason and I dropped up and we sat and had coffee. And she
23 was pretty upset about her role in the administration, about
24 her superiors, about the President. She was sort of shaking.
25 She was pretty mad.

1 Q She was mad?

2 A Yeah.

3 Q Is that the first time you saw her mad?

4 A First time I've seen her like that, yeah.

5 Q Did how long did you speak with her?

6 A 15, 20 minutes.

7 Q She wasn't mad at you?

8 A No, no, she gave me a big hug and said stay in
9 touch, she was going, I think, to Brookings or something
10 after.

11 Q And what did she relate to you?

12 A She was just upset about everything having to do
13 the Trump administration. She was upset at the President,
14 she was upset with Ambassador Bolton, she was upset at a lot
15 of things.

16 Q What specifically did she say about the President?

17 A Just that the whole, you know, operation was just
18 not well run, or something to that effect. I mean, she was
19 kind of -- it was very unusual. I mean I've never seen her
20 like that. She's usually pretty calm, collected,
21 straightforward, but she was pretty emotional.

22 Q Was this a coffee you had with her, just you and
23 her?

24 A Yeah.

25 MR. JORDAN: Excuse, Ambassador. When was this meeting

1 with Dr. Hill?

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I it was a few days -- I don't
3 know what her departure date was, but I think she mentioned
4 she was on her way out in next few days.

5 MR. JORDAN: What month?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You have tell me her departure
7 date, and then I can tell you.

8 MR. CASTOR: Her last day was he 19th, July 19th.

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: So it probably was sometime
10 between, I don't know, 15, 14, 13, something like that.

11 MR. JORDAN: After the July 10th meeting.

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, I think it would have been
13 after the July 10th meeting, because that's 9 days before she
14 left. It would have been before the July 10th meeting and
15 her departure.

16 BY MR. CASTOR:

17 Q And what were her issues with Ambassador Bolton?

18 A I think she was just generally upset at the way the
19 NSC was being run, and communication, and disorder, and just
20 she was sort of railing.

21 Q She was railing against President Trump?

22 A Yes.

23 Q Railing against Ambassador Bolton?

24 A Yes.

25 Q Dissatisfied with her role?

1 A I don't know that she said that.

2 Q What else did she say? What can you tell us?

3 A I was -- I sat and listened. I was trying to be a
4 little bit of a shoulder, and we had coffee. And I wished
5 her well. As I said, gave her a hug, and I don't believe
6 I've spoken to her since.

7 Q Did she mention why he was leaving specifically?

8 A She just said she'd had enough. She wanted to go
9 back to academia.

10 Q Were you surprised by this?

11 A A little bit, yeah, because as I said, I've never
12 seen her that emotional.

13 Q Did she tell you who would be taking over for her?

14 A I think she did tell me that Mr. Morrison was
15 taking her place.

16 Q How has your relationship being with Mr. Morrison?

17 A Type, very straightforward.

18 Q Is he your primary contact it is NSC right now?

19 A Yeah. Although I got to meet Director -- or
20 Ambassador O'Brien, I chatted with him a little bit, but
21 generally, Bolton was not as accessible as O'Brien appears to
22 be. So it would be Morrison and O'Brien.

23 Q Uh-huh.

24 A My two primary.

25 Q Do you still talk with Lieutenant Colonel Vindman?

1 A I don't think I have spoken with him in quite some
2 time.

3 Q Okay. But not because of any falling out, it is
4 just haven't --

5 A Haven't had any reason to.

6 Q An occasion to?

7 A Yeah.

8 Q You traveled where Lieutenant Colonel Vindman to
9 President Zelensky's inauguration. Is that correct?

10 A I don't know that we traveled together, but he was
11 there, he was part of the delegation.

12 Q And anything notable about that travel, did you
13 have dinner with him or share any meals?

14 A I think we included him in every part of the event,
15 or most of the parts of the event. It was really Secretary
16 Perry was the leader of the delegation, it was up to him to
17 decide who was doing what.

18 Q Did you ever heard Lieutenant Colonel Vindman
19 criticize the President?

20 A Not to me.

21 Q Have you ever heard anyone relate to you that
22 Lieutenant Colonel Vindman has criticized the President?

23 A I don't -- I don't recall that, no.

24 MR. CASTOR: We're almost -- our time is almost up, I
25 want to make sure if there are any members on our side that

1 have a couple of questions?

2 MR. ZELDIN: Ambassador, was there any one else at the
3 NSC who was critical of the President?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, not that I recall. This was
5 as I said it wasn't an exit interview because she didn't work
6 for me, it was a drop-by to say good-bye, and that was the
7 only time I heard someone being critical.

8 MR. ZELDIN: How was relationship with Bill Taylor?

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I haven't spoken to him with
10 whistleblower. But prior to that, it was great. In other
11 words, he -- several times was happy that Secretary Perry,
12 myself, and Ambassador Volker were helping support him
13 because as he, to put in his words, he liked the high
14 visibility support which helped his mission.

15 MR. ZELDIN: Why haven't you spoken to Bill Taylor after
16 the whistleblower complaint?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I haven't really spoken to anyone
18 on the Ukraine file at the advice of counsel.

19 MR. JORDAN: In your meeting with Dr. Hill shortly
20 before she left the White House, did you discuss -- did
21 Lieutenant Colonel Vindman come up in any of that discussion
22 with Dr. Hill?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't think so.

24 MR. JORDAN: Okay.

25 MR. ROY: Just a quick question, is it in the national

1 security interest of the United States that we instill
2 confidence with respect to our relationship with other
3 countries, right?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Exactly.

5 MR. ROY: And with respect to Secretary Perry, at any
6 point in any of her engagement with him and the various trips
7 and conversations repeatedly, you said you talked to him a
8 lot, friends, was there anything that -- was his primary
9 focus our status with Ukraine, improving that status
10 vis-a-vis Russia, and making sure that our national security
11 interests were being promoted with respect to natural gas,
12 coal, economic interests, as well as pushing back on Russia,
13 was that had the primary motivating factor behind your
14 observation of what Secretary Perry was doing?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes. My impression of the
16 Ukrainians they were very impressed to have a cabinet level
17 member to take such a strong interest in the country.

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1 [4:38 p.m.]

2 MR. ROY: And would you characterize our current
3 relationship with Ukraine as improved based on these
4 engagements in trying to move the ball forward with respect
5 to coal and natural gas, our presence vis-a-vis Russia
6 because of those engagements?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, again, with 20/20 hindsight,
8 now that I am privy to all of the different things that were
9 going on that I wasn't at the time, I thought that with
10 respect to my activities, first, my engagement with the
11 Poroshenko team in Brussels, then ultimately culminating in a
12 joint U.S.-EU visit to Odessa in February, attending the
13 inauguration, inviting President Zelensky to Brussels to meet
14 with other European leaders, which, as I mentioned, resulted
15 in him getting to know the President of Poland and a couple
16 of other leaders, that they've now had some productive -- I
17 thought we were on a roll with Ukraine until all of this blew
18 up. I was very pleased with where we were going.

19 MR. ROY: So all of those engagements all along in that
20 process that you are part of with Governor Perry -- sorry --
21 Secretary Perry -- you can take the guy out of Texas, but you
22 know -- with Governor Perry was moving the ball forward with
23 respect to our policy objectives and what we were trying to
24 do to strengthen our position vis-a-vis Ukraine?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, at the time, yes.

1 MR. ROY: Thanks.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: The time of the minority has expired.
3 Would you like to take a 5- or 10-minute break?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That would be nice.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's shoot for resuming at 4:50, if we
8 could.

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That'd be great.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

11 [Recess.]

12 THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Shall we get started again?
13 Let's go back on the record.

14 And I want to recognize Debbie Wasserman Schultz.

15 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Ambassador, it's good to see you again.

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Nice to see you.

18 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: I am both a member of the
19 Oversight Committee as well as the Appropriations Committee,
20 and so my questions are appropriations-focused.

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Okay.

22 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: You testified today -- I've been
23 here most of the day -- that you don't believe that
24 preconditions for aid were appropriate, correct?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: As a policy matter, I agree with

1 that, with respect to Ukraine --

2 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Right.

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: -- at this point, at this moment.

4 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Yes. Yes, with respect to
5 Ukraine at this moment.

6 And, generally, you know, given that you have a budget,
7 you and your staff are aware that the Appropriations
8 Committee does, as Mr. Zeldin referenced, the Appropriations
9 Committee, other committees, attach conditions to aid that we
10 provide, correct?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

12 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: And you're in the habit of
13 following those instructions, correct?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

15 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. And you testified today
16 that you were initially unaware of the conditions that were
17 put on Ukraine by the President and the directions from
18 Mr. Giuliani?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

20 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. What about the
21 congressional conditions?

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I wasn't aware of the
23 congressional conditions, because that aid would've gone
24 directly from the respective agencies to Ukraine. It would
25 not have passed through my hand or I don't even think the

1 bilateral hand.

2 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Right. And you were unaware
3 even though you did testify today that Ukraine was a central
4 component of your portfolio.

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The meaning of my testimony,
6 Congresswoman, was that the situation between Russia and
7 Ukraine was very fragile at the time. We had the
8 ambassadorial change. We had the election in Ukraine. It
9 was very touchy. And in the scheme of the U.S. budget, a
10 quarter of a billion dollars, while that's a lot of money, is
11 not a lot of money.

12 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Sure. I'm on the Appropriations
13 Committee.

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: And you know that better than
15 anyone.

16 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Yeah.

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I thought that, at that very
18 moment in time, having any delay whatsoever, once I found out
19 that there was a hold -- and I didn't know what the purpose
20 of the hold was -- that any delay would send the wrong signal
21 to Russia. That was my concern.

22 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: But the delay that was occurring
23 was not as prescribed by law. It was occurring because the
24 President, through Mr. Giuliani, appears to have indicated
25 that unless there were investigations against the Bidens or

1 the company --

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I didn't know why.

3 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Right.

4 However, you were or you were not aware of the
5 Appropriations Act requiring that the Pentagon certify that
6 when Ukraine -- when they deemed Ukraine meeting the
7 requirements of reducing corruption, that those funds would
8 be released? Were you aware during any of this period of
9 time of those requirements?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not aware.

11 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. So, at no time, even
12 though this was a central component of your portfolio, did it
13 come up in any conversations that the law actually required
14 that the Pentagon certify that Ukraine had taken steps to
15 reduce corruption.

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: As I indicated, my objective was
17 to simply secure a meeting for President Zelensky. I was not
18 involved --

19 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: But that was not my question.
20 My question is, during any of these conversations during this
21 period of time, did it ever come up that Congress actually
22 had required that the Pentagon certify that Ukraine had
23 reduced corruption and then that aid could be released?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall that ever coming
25 up.

1 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay.

2 So, as you said, you didn't believe that non-lawful
3 preconditions would be required. Would it be your testimony
4 today that complying with the law and then the funds being
5 released is important?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think complying with the law is
7 always important.

8 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. Well, are you aware that
9 on May 23rd, the same day as the meeting that you talked
10 about with the President after you attended the inauguration,
11 the Pentagon did certify that Ukraine had taken steps, the
12 steps necessary as required by the Appropriations Act, to
13 reduce corruption and that the funds should be released?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I wasn't aware.

15 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. So, then, wouldn't you
16 agree that, given that that occurred and that the Pentagon
17 indicated that they had complied and corruption had been
18 appropriately reduced, that those funds should've been
19 released?

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not familiar, Congresswoman,
21 with all of the conditions, whether it was simply that
22 certification or there were other conditions necessary. I
23 don't know enough about --

24 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: No, but --

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: -- the vagaries of funds

1 released --

2 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Well, the Pentagon did. Because
3 the Pentagon wrote a letter that I have here in my hand that
4 specifically said, Ukraine is in compliance with this public
5 law, and the funds, as a result, you know, should be
6 released. And they had certified that their release was
7 appropriate.

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Let me answer your question this
9 way. If all lawful conditions had been met for funds
10 release, then the funds should've been released.

11 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Right. Okay. So then it would
12 not have been appropriate for conditions unrelated to the law
13 to be attached further.

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: If the law required the funds to
15 be released, they should've been released.

16 MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. Thank you.

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: I just have a couple followup questions
19 before I hand it back to Mr. Goldman.

20 My colleagues on the minority asked you questions along
21 the lines of, don't other countries, doesn't Europe attach
22 conditions and sometimes those conditions involve fighting
23 corruption, and I think you said that, yes, those kinds of
24 conditions are imposed. Is that right?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's right.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: But you would distinguish between
2 conditions to fight corruption and a condition imposed to get
3 Ukraine to investigate a political rival for help in a
4 reelection campaign. You can distinguish between those two
5 things, right?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I can.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: The one is appropriate; the one, very
8 much not appropriate. Am I right?

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: And you never heard Europe, for example,
11 express its desire to have a condition on its aid to Ukraine
12 that Ukraine investigate the Bidens or the 2016 election in a
13 way that would help Donald Trump. I assume Europe never
14 expressed that view to you.

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Never heard that from Europe.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: I want to ask you a couple followups on
17 the questions about the whistleblower complaint. You were
18 asked whether it was fair for the whistleblower to suggest
19 that you or others had to navigate the demands that were
20 imposed for a call or a meeting with President Trump.

21 There were demands, weren't there, that an investigation
22 take place of 2016 or Burisma? Ultimately those were
23 demands, were they not?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Ultimately, yes.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: And it's fair to say that you had to

1 navigate those demands, you had to accommodate what the
2 President and his lawyer wanted, if you were going to set up
3 this meeting you thought very important?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think that's fair.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: My colleague also took issue with the
6 whistleblower characterization of differing messages.

7 You would agree that Rudy Giuliani was meeting and
8 talking to Ukrainians, would you not?

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: And you did not have full visibility into
11 what he was telling the Ukrainians, did you?

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did not.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Did you have a concern that what we might
14 be telling the Ukrainians was not perfectly consistent with
15 what you and Ambassador Volker or others might be telling the
16 Ukrainians?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, and that's why in my
18 statement I said we would've preferred to let the State
19 Department handle the relationship.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: And, indeed, having a back channel or a
21 second channel through the President's lawyer could cause
22 damage if that message was inconsistent with State Department
23 policy.

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It could.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: And so part of your role was to try to

1 contain whatever damage that second channel might cause? Is
2 that fair to say?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, "containing the damage"
4 implies that we would let the damage occur and then somehow
5 try to fix it. I mean, our goal was never to have damage in
6 the first place.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: But I think you said, Ambassador, that
8 over time things got more and more insidious. I think those
9 were your words. It started out with no condition, and then
10 there was a condition for investigation into the corruption,
11 and then there was a condition of an investigation into 2016
12 and Burisma, and then on the call itself it became clear the
13 condition was investigation of 2016 and the Bidens. I think
14 you described that as becoming more and more insidious,
15 correct?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: And isn't it also fair to say that
18 because there were added conditions to this meeting that
19 Ukraine desperately wanted and that you wanted to make
20 happen, that that meeting wasn't going to happen unless
21 Ukraine played ball in meeting the demands of the President
22 and Mr. Giuliani? Isn't that a fair use of that colloquial
23 expression?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, that expression came up in
25 previous testimony, and I'd never heard the term "play ball."

1 THE CHAIRMAN: But you understand what that means,
2 right?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: If you mean that those conditions
4 would have to be complied with prior to getting a meeting,
5 that was my understanding.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

7 Mr. Goldman.

8 MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you.

9 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

10 Q You testified in the last round that, since the
11 whistleblower complaint was released, or the transcript of
12 the call record was released, you haven't spoken to anyone on
13 the Ukraine file at the advice of counsel. Is that right?

14 A Except, I believe, with, as I recall, just
15 Secretary Perry. I think I testified to that earlier.

16 Q Okay. But Secretary Perry was one of the three
17 amigos, no?

18 A Correct.

19 Q So he was on the Ukrainian file?

20 A And then I did -- I also testified I think I called
21 Ambassador Volker to thank him for his service when he
22 resigned.

23 Q Right.

24 You also -- I believe you said that you got a general
25 read-out from someone on your staff of the July 25th call?

1 A Correct.

2 Q Okay. Did you get any read-out from the Ukrainian
3 side of that call?

4 A I don't remember seeing a Ukrainian read-out. If
5 someone sent me one, I didn't internalize it.

6 Q How about a verbal read-out?

7 A The only verbal read-out, Mr. Goldman, was, "It was
8 a great call." I mean, no one thought the call was
9 remarkable other than the fact that, A, it had finally
10 happened after multiple attempts, and, B, that the
11 President's -- whatever their conversation was seemed to be a
12 pleasant conversation.

13 Q And you had an hour-long meeting with Mr. Zelensky
14 the day after the call, right?

15 A Right.

16 Q And this was a significant achievement, to get the
17 call at this point, correct?

18 A Correct.

19 Q And as part of your duties and responsibilities,
20 you generally memorialized what occurred at meetings with
21 high-level leaders, right?

22 A I always have note-takers. And, as I said, this
23 was Ambassador Volker's meeting that he invited me to.

24 Q Right. So you had a note-taker there for this
25 meeting?

1 A I didn't have one. I assume Ambassador Volker had
2 one.

3 Q So you did not have a note-taker.

4 A I did not have a note-taker.

5 Q Do you know whether anyone from the United States
6 delegation there for this meeting was taking notes?

7 A I assume someone was taking notes. There were
8 quite a few people at the meeting.

9 Q And someone from the State Department?

10 A Probably.

11 Q Okay. And those notes would be transmitted back to
12 Washington in some way?

13 A If they were taken by the Kyiv Embassy, they
14 would've been put into some cable form and sent back, yeah.

15 Q Okay. So, presumably, there is some
16 memorialization of that meeting within the State Department
17 records, right?

18 A I believe that's correct.

19 Q Okay.

20 You also said in your opening statement that there are
21 documents that the committee doesn't have that you think
22 would corroborate your testimony here today. Is that right?

23 A I believe so.

24 Q Can you describe, generally speaking, what those
25 documents would include?

1 A Texts, emails, et cetera.

2 Q Any memos that --

3 A No. I think they were all electronic.

4 Q All electronic?

5 A Yeah.

6 Q On your personal phone?

7 A I use a dual-SIM phone for both personal and
8 business.

9 Q Okay.

10 Do you recall that you gave an interview on Ukrainian
11 television the day after the call on July 25th?

12 A Uh-huh, I do.

13 Q Do you recall that you said that there were, quote,
14 "certain things that the Ukrainians have to do, there are
15 preconditions to anything," when describing the potential
16 White House meeting?

17 A If I said that in the interview, yeah, I'm sure
18 that's true.

19 Q What did you mean by that?

20 A At the time, I probably meant, you know, getting
21 the schedule straight, getting the commitment. I think that
22 was when we were still, on the corruption continuum, on the
23 plain -- on the vanilla corruption part of the continuum.

24 I didn't want to imply, I believe, to the interviewer
25 that the meeting was going to occur, you know, the next day.

1 I didn't want to not have credibility with the Ukrainian
2 media. So I wanted to, sort of, thread the needle of looking
3 like we were being very supportive of Ukraine, things were
4 moving forward, but there still had to be some things to be
5 done before the meeting could occur.

6 Q Right.

7 And just to be clear, the text message between Kurt
8 Volker and Andrey Yermak where Volker specifically identifies
9 the message that President Zelensky needs to give to Donald
10 Trump, that does not refresh your recollection on -- which
11 was the day before this interview -- that does not refresh
12 your recollection as to what the state of play was as to what
13 the conditions were for the White House --

14 A No. As I said, I think that part of the time we
15 were still in the corruption -- vanilla corruption part of
16 the continuum, as I recall.

17 Q Okay.

18 We talked a lot about the statement, so let's get to
19 that. I want to turn your attention to page 4 of the text
20 messages, which is exhibit 3.

21 A Okay.

22 Q And at the very bottom of that page, on August 9th
23 at 11:27, you write to Rudy Giuliani: "Hi Mr Mayor! Had a
24 good chat with Yermak last night" -- oh, I'm sorry. This is
25 Kurt Volker writing this.

1 A Okay.

2 Q So you are -- but you are on the -- you were on
3 this -- well, let me ask you this. Do you see the number
4 [REDACTED] there?

5 A That's my number.

6 Q Okay, that's your number. So you're on this chain,
7 right?

8 A Yes.

9 Q And Kurt Volker writes, "Hi Mr Mayor! Had a good
10 chat with Yermak last night. He was pleased with your phone
11 call. Mentioned Z making a statement. Can we all get on the
12 phone to make sure I advise Z correctly as to what he should
13 be saying? Want to make sure we get this done right.
14 Thanks!"

15 And then you respond, "Good idea Kurt. I am on Pacific
16 time." Do you see that?

17 A I do.

18 Q And then a little bit below it, you organize for
19 State Ops to organize the phone call.

20 Do you remember having this conference call on
21 August 9th with Kurt Volker and Rudy Giuliani?

22 A Vaguely. This is one of the calls I think I
23 described in my previous testimony with Rudy. I think this
24 was one of the conference calls.

25 Q Right. And this is specifically referencing a

1 statement, correct?

2 A Right.

3 Q And, clearly, Yermak was aware, Yermak being a
4 senior advisor to President Zelensky, was aware of the desire
5 for a statement based on this text. Do you agree with that?

6 A I do.

7 Q Okay. So what do you recall about that
8 conversation?

9 A Again, without knowing exactly where we were on
10 the, as I want to call it, the continuum, this might have
11 been beginning to morph into the press statement where the
12 Burisma/2016 election may have been introduced by Rudy.

13 I don't remember which call that was on, but, at some
14 point, as I testified earlier, it went from a generic
15 corruption requirement to a more specific requirement. And
16 it could've been on this call; it could've been on a
17 subsequent recall. I don't recall.

18 Q Okay.

19 If you can go to page 42, on August 9th, 5:35 p.m. --
20 and this is a text chain between you and Kurt Volker -- you
21 say, "Morrison ready to get dates as soon as Yermak
22 confirms."

23 Is that Tim Morrison, the NSC senior director?

24 A Yes.

25 Q Okay.

1 And then Kurt Volker responds, "Excellent!! How did you
2 sway him? :)" You respond, "Not sure I did. I think potus
3 really wants the deliverable." Volker responds, "But does he
4 know that?" And you respond, "Yep."

5 What is the deliverable?

6 A The deliverable, I believe, was the press
7 statement.

8 Q And here you're specifically referencing the
9 President, who wants the press statement.

10 A That was my surmise, again, based on what I had
11 heard through Volker from Giuliani.

12 Q Right. So you still were under the impression, in
13 part based on the May 23rd meeting, that what Rudy Giuliani
14 wanted related to Ukraine is what the President wanted
15 related to Ukraine.

16 A That's the only logical connection I could make.

17 Q And then when Volker says, "But does he know that,"
18 and you say, "Yep," who's "he"?

19 A I think he was referring to Morrison.

20 Q Okay.

21 Now, later -- and then a little bit lower, at 5:51, you
22 say, "To avoid misunderstandings, might be helpful to ask
23 Andrey for a draft statement (embargoed) so that we can see
24 exactly what they propose to cover. Even though Ze" --
25 that's Zelensky, right?

1 A Right.

2 Q -- "does a live presser they can still summarize in
3 a brief statement. Thoughts?" And Kurt Volker says,
4 "Agree!"

5 So do you know what happened? Did Volker recommend that
6 the Ukrainians send a draft statement to you?

7 A As I recall -- this is refreshing my memory, and,
8 as I recall, this is when I believe there was talk about
9 having a live interview or a live broadcast. And what I was
10 concerned about was that Zelensky would say whatever he would
11 say on live television and it still wouldn't be good enough
12 for Rudy, slash, the President, and then we would be having
13 to go back and tell Zelensky, sorry, not good enough, and
14 that would be extremely embarrassing.

15 So I had suggested, why don't you give us a summary of
16 what you're planning to say so that it can be run by Mayor
17 Giuliani first to nail down what it is exactly that the
18 President was asking or Giuliani was asking versus what
19 Zelensky was intending to say? I didn't want there to be a
20 false press statement made live that was inadequate in some
21 way. And I was, again, just trying to protect our reputation
22 with the Ukrainians.

23 Q Okay.

24 And then on August 10th at 1:23 p.m., you write, "I
25 briefed Ulrich. All good."

1 Who's Ulrich?

2 A That's Ulrich Brechbuhl, who is the counselor to
3 the Secretary.

4 Q And do you recall briefing him on this?

5 A I may have walked him through where we were.

6 Q About the statement?

7 A Probably.

8 Q And what was his response?

9 A Based on my text, his response was probably,
10 "Fine." If he had had an adverse reaction to what was going
11 on, he would've said something to me and I probably would've
12 communicated it back. So, again, I'm speculating that I
13 briefed him and everything was copacetic.

14 Q Okay. Do you know if he consulted with Secretary
15 Pompeo on this?

16 A His habit is to, you know, consult with Secretary
17 Pompeo frequently. I mean, that's why he's the counselor.

18 Q Do you recall receiving specific authorization from
19 Secretary Pompeo to go forward with arranging the statement
20 with Rudy Giuliani?

21 A Well, we never got the final statement. There was
22 nothing --

23 Q I know, but --

24 A There was nothing to ask Secretary Pompeo until we
25 were ready to go.

1 Q Well, you felt the need to brief Ulrich Brechbuhl.

2 A I talk to Ulrich all the time, just to keep him in
3 the loop.

4 Q Okay. And so you don't know whether or not --

5 A No.

6 Q -- Secretary Pompeo was aware of this or not?

7 A I wasn't going to take anything back to the
8 higher-ups until we had a tentative commitment from the
9 Ukrainians, again, so I wasn't wasting anyone's time.

10 Q And you knew you needed a commitment that satisfied
11 Rudy Giuliani's desires, right?

12 A I knew I needed a commitment that, yes, that Rudy
13 Giuliani would represent that then there would be a meeting.

14 Q Okay.

15 But the next text is a little bit later on August 10th,
16 where Volker writes, "This came in from Andrey." Is that
17 Andrey Yermak?

18 A Presumably.

19 Q And then he says, quote, "Hi Kurt. Please let me
20 know when you can talk. I think it's possible to make this
21 declaration and mention all these things. Which we discussed
22 yesterday. But it will be logic to do after we receive a
23 confirmation of date. We inform about date of visit and
24 about our expectations and our guarantees for future visit.
25 Let's discuss it."

1 What's going on here?

2 A I think this was the back-and-forth between the
3 Ukrainians and Volker. What comes first, the chicken or the
4 egg?

5 Q Uh-huh. Meaning, they wanted to get a date for the
6 White House before they made an announcement about these
7 investigations? Is that correct?

8 A Presumably that's what was going on.

9 Q Did you subsequently have another conversation with
10 Andrey Yermak?

11 A Well, I had many conversations, but I don't know if
12 we had any about this.

13 Q Well, I mean, you see that it says -- oh, I guess
14 this might be with Kurt Volker.

15 A Yeah. No, but if your question was, after whatever
16 the date was, did I have any other conversations with Yermak,
17 I think the answer would be yes.

18 Q Okay.

19 So, at the very bottom, on the 11th, Volker says, "Hi
20 Gordon -- ready in 10 min?" You say, "Yes." Volker says,
21 "He needs another 15 min. So 10:15."

22 Do you think that's a reference to Yermak?

23 A I don't know.

24 Q You don't remember speaking to Yermak directly at
25 this time?

1 A I don't. I think, again, Kurt was handling the
2 back-and-forth on the press statement, and I kept the State
3 Department informed through Ulrich Brechbuhl as to what was
4 going on so that everyone was on the same page.

5 Q And then if I can go back to page 5 with you --

6 A Yeah, I was trying to navigate. Where are you, I'm
7 sorry?

8 Q Page 5.

9 A Page 5? Oh.

10 Q Yeah, the group text with Mr. Giuliani and Kurt
11 Volker. On August 11th at 10:28, Ambassador Volker writes,
12 "Hi Rudy -- we have heard bCk" -- I assume that's "back" --
13 "from Andrey again -- they are writing the statement now and
14 will send to us. Can you talk for 5 min before noon today?"

15 So do you know if you ever had another conversation with
16 Mr. Giuliani about this?

17 A I think we had at least two conference calls, and
18 this may have been the second one or the first one. But,
19 again, this was when we were in the process of going back and
20 forth on the wording of the statement.

21 Q And describe in those conference calls what Rudy
22 Giuliani -- what requirements he had for the press statement.

23 A This was when, in mid-August? Yeah, mid-August.
24 This was when we were in the Burisma/2016 election part of
25 the continuum.

1 Q Uh-huh. So he didn't say, we need to have a
2 statement that says that Ukraine must continue their
3 anti-corruption efforts, right?

4 A I believe it then morphed -- when we started to
5 work on the statement, it morphed from the vanilla corruption
6 into the Burisma/2016 portion.

7 Q Okay.

8 Now, if we go to page 43 -- wait 1 second. Sorry, 23.

9 A Twenty-three?

10 Q Yeah.

11 So, at the bottom, the very last text -- this is a group
12 text with you and Andrey Yermak and Kurt Volker -- Volker
13 writes, "Special attention should be paid to the problem of
14 interference in the political processes of the United States,
15 especially with the alleged involvement of some Ukrainian
16 politicians. I want to declare that this is unacceptable.
17 We intend to initiate and complete a transparent and unbiased
18 investigation of all available facts and episodes, including
19 those involving Burisma and the 2016 U.S. elections, which in
20 turn will prevent the recurrence of this problem in the
21 future."

22 Is this the revised proposed statement with Rudy
23 Giuliani's input?

24 A It might've been. I don't know if that language
25 came from Giuliani or it came from Volker or if it came from

1 the Ukrainians. I really don't know.

2 Q Was this approved language by Giuliani?

3 A I don't know.

4 Q You don't know?

5 A I don't know if it was approved or it was draft or
6 what.

7 Q But -- and so you don't know if this was
8 sufficient -- if the Ukrainians released this statement --

9 A I don't know if it was sufficient.

10 Q You don't know if it was sufficient.

11 A No, I don't.

12 Q But is this consistent with what Rudy Giuliani had
13 indicated he wanted in the statement?

14 A Yes.

15 Q Okay.

16 And so, to the extent that you were involved, in your
17 role, in advocating for a White House meeting and whether and
18 to whatever extent that a condition of that White House
19 meeting was some sort of investigation, is it accurate that
20 whatever that investigation was that the President needed was
21 described or proscribed by Rudy Giuliani?

22 A All the communication flowed through Rudy Giuliani,
23 and I can only speculate that the President was instructing
24 his personal lawyer accordingly. I don't know. I don't know
25 if this was coming out of Rudy Giuliani irrespective of the

1 President, because I wasn't involved in those conversations.

2 Q But when you describe this continuum --

3 A Yes.

4 Q -- as to, you know, whatever the condition is for
5 the White House meeting and it evolves over time, whatever
6 the evolution of it was was dictated by Rudy Giuliani.

7 A Correct. Either directly or through Volker or
8 Perry or others.

9 Q Okay.

10 Now, you said the statement was never issued by the
11 Ukrainians, correct?

12 A I believe the idea was shelved.

13 Q Do you know why?

14 A I don't.

15 Q Do you know who determined that it was shelved?

16 A I don't know that we ever got to a point where
17 everyone was in agreement.

18 Q Okay.

19 Now, around this time period, in mid-August, do you
20 recall an unofficial meeting with a Member of the House of
21 Representatives at the Brussels airport?

22 A Refresh my memory.

23 Q Did you meet with anyone, any members of the
24 Intelligence Committee, without staff at the Brussels airport
25 on or about August 16th?

1 A I may have. I don't know. You mean in the lounge?

2 Q Yeah, in the lounge.

3 A Yeah. Who I did meet with?

4 Q I mean, you tell me. Do you remember?

5 A I don't remember. I meet with a lot of people as
6 I'm coming and going.

7 Q Do you remember meeting with Representative Nunes
8 at that time?

9 A I saw Representative Nunes in Brussels when he had
10 a meeting there. I think we -- I think I saw him and we had
11 coffee or something. But that wasn't at the airport; I think
12 that was in the city.

13 Q Okay. Just the two of you?

14 A Yeah, I think it was just the two of us.

15 Q Did you discuss Ukraine at all in any way?

16 A No, I think it was just a, you know,
17 shoot-the-breeze sort of conversation, as I recall it. Just
18 sort of a friendly, he's in town kind of thing.

19 Q You don't recall Ukraine coming up at all?

20 A I don't remember Ukraine coming up.

21 Q Okay.

22 You've obviously discussed and described some of the
23 conversations you had with Senator Johnson about Ukraine.
24 Are there any other Congressmen or Senators that you remember
25 discussing Ukraine issues with?

1 A Not that I recall. Senator Johnson, because he was
2 on the delegation.

3 Q And no one else?

4 A Not that I can remember.

5 Q How about staff members from any committees in the
6 House of Representatives?

7 A I mean, one of the problems with my memory is that
8 if I wasn't in Washington I'm most often in Brussels. Unless
9 they were in Brussels and they were coming through in a codel
10 and asked me about it specifically, I don't know that I
11 sought anyone out to speak to them about Ukraine.

12 Q Uh-huh. And did you have any conversations with
13 any of the minority staff before your testimony here today?

14 A Not to the best of my knowledge, no.

15 Q No?

16 A No.

17 Q Did your attorney?

18 MR. LUSKIN: I spoke with Mr. Castor. We did not share
19 Ambassador Sondland's statement --

20 MR. GOLDMAN: You want to repeat that?

21 MR. LUSKIN: We did not discuss the substance of his
22 testimony, and we did not share Ambassador Sondland's
23 statement with him in advance.

24 MR. GOLDMAN: All right.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: At this point, let me recognize the

1 members for questions.

2 Mr. Himes, do you have some questions?

3 Mr. Heck?

4 MR. HECK: Thank you very much.

5 Mr. Ambassador, just to nail down a couple foundational
6 facts, you were confirmed by the Senate on June 28th of last
7 year in a presumably unanimous voice vote?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

9 MR. HECK: And a short 12 days later, you were packed up
10 and had moved to Brussels?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. I was confirmed quickly
12 because that was the NATO summit and I had to be Europe for
13 the NATO summit.

14 MR. HECK: Where were you living prior to that?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Seattle, Washington.

16 MR. HECK: Is that your legal residence?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It is.

18 MR. HECK: Do you have a driver's license?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do.

20 MR. HECK: What State issued it?

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Washington.

22 MR. HECK: Are you registered to vote?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I am.

24 MR. HECK: In which State?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Washington.

1 MR. HECK: Thank you, sir. That's all I have.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Representative Rouda.

3 MR. ROUDA: Thank you, Chairman.

4 Thank you, Ambassador, for being here.

5 I know it's tough to remember all these conversations
6 and texts and the essence of it over many, many months. And,
7 you know, I can't even remember what I had for lunch
8 yesterday, and I know you had a tough time remembering your
9 conversation with Secretary Perry yesterday.

10 So I really want to focus on the continuum. And when
11 President Zelensky came into office and won the election, he
12 won based on a platform of fighting back against corruption,
13 right?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

15 MR. ROUDA: And I think the diplomatic consensus, your
16 consensus with your fellow leaders, Volker, Dr. Hill,
17 Yovanovitch, Bolton, everyone felt this was a good change to
18 address corruption in Ukraine.

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's right.

20 MR. ROUDA: And that this was better than the previous
21 President, the previous President who many believed was very
22 corrupt, including the people who voted in Ukraine.

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

24 MR. ROUDA: So, in that continuum, as you talked about,
25 where it moved from corruption to Burisma, what was so

1 special about Burisma? I mean, when that name came up, what
2 was your reaction? Why Burisma?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know. In hindsight, I
4 should've asked more questions about Burisma. But it was
5 something that was important, apparently, to Mr. Giuliani and
6 to the President. And, again, my focus was on getting the
7 meeting and getting the phone call.

8 MR. ROUDA: But corruption has been rampant in Ukraine
9 for decades. And if a new President is coming in who's, we
10 hope, better positioned to address corruption, why is it
11 moved to a single company and not multiple companies with a
12 long history of corruption?

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: First of all, I agree with you, I
14 think there should not have been any preconditions to the
15 meeting. I think the meeting should've just taken place
16 shortly after the inauguration.

17 MR. ROUDA: But were you curious as to why this name of
18 one company came up?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, as I said, also Naftogaz
20 came up, and there was a general consensus or list of
21 apparently a bunch of investigations relating to corruption
22 that had been suspended under the previous President that
23 President Zelensky, I believe, in his platform had said, I'm
24 going to restart all of these investigations. And I don't
25 even know what they related to.

1 MR. ROUDA: But I guess the part I'm struggling with is,
2 you're a really smart guy. You've been incredibly
3 successful, so successful, you're able to give a million
4 dollars to the inauguration for Trump. And you're in this
5 diplomatic position where it's really important that you
6 understand all of the information so that you can put the
7 best foot forward for our country in the relations with not
8 just Ukraine but all the countries in your portfolio. You
9 want to make sure that you don't step into anything
10 accidentally that would reflect poorly on the country.

11 So, again, I'm just kind of curious, why aren't you
12 curious to know more about Burisma?

13 A Yeah, I mean, this was -- without sounding like I'm
14 passing the buck, this was primarily Ambassador Taylor and
15 Ambassador Volker's file. And in terms of this issue, I was
16 there to lend support. I'm not, you know, shirking my
17 responsibility, but it did not rise to the point, until the
18 meeting never occurred, that I began to get more and more
19 suspicious about what was going on.

20 MR. ROUDA: So you didn't ask anybody, hey, why Burisma?

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did not.

22 MR. ROUDA: Okay. Did you ask anybody about, why the
23 2016 election, what about the server, what's that all about?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, that -- President Trump,
25 when he brought it up, you know, "They tried to take me

1 down," I assumed it had something to do with that.

2 MR. ROUDA: So with Zelensky coming into the Presidency
3 and his administration, the hope is that corruption is going
4 to go down. How long did President Trump freeze the aid to
5 Ukraine in 2018?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not aware.

7 MR. ROUDA: You're not aware?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Are you saying in 2019 or 2018?

9 MR. ROUDA: I'm saying 2018.

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not aware.

11 MR. ROUDA: Did he freeze the aid?

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know.

13 MR. ROUDA: You don't know.

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know.

15 MR. ROUDA: But you were --

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I only became Ambassador in middle
17 of 2018. I wasn't --

18 MR. ROUDA: Right.

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah.

20 MR. ROUDA: So you think if he did freeze the aid you
21 would've known about it?

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

23 MR. ROUDA: You represent 29 countries in your
24 portfolio. How many of those countries receive aid from the
25 United States?

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, the aid flows through the
2 bilateral ambassador, not through the EU. So I wouldn't know
3 whether a country is getting aid or not getting aid.

4 MR. ROUDA: But you knew Ukraine was getting aid.

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did not know Ukraine was getting
6 aid until this all came up in 2019 and I heard that there was
7 a freeze on the aid and it was in the context of another
8 obstacle to getting the meeting.

9 MR. ROUDA: So, to the best of your knowledge, President
10 Trump, in 2018, when, arguably, Ukraine is under a more
11 corrupt administration, no aid was withheld from Ukraine
12 under President Trump's administration?

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: If you say so, Congressman. I
14 don't --

15 MR. ROUDA: Okay. And you're not aware of any aid being
16 withheld to the other 28 countries in your portfolio under
17 President Trump in 2018 or 2019. You're not aware of it.

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I haven't received any complaints.

19 MR. ROUDA: Okay.

20 And I know it's really tough to recall all this stuff,
21 you know, these conversations. Some of them have taken place
22 in the past. But I am kind of curious, because when you
23 recalled your conversation with Ambassador Yovanovitch, you
24 were very specific. A lot of detail there about how
25 emotional she was, how mad she was, how she was railing on

1 Trump and Bolton.

2 Why do you think you had such greater recollection on
3 your conversation with her? I'm sorry. Hill. Sorry. Hill.

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That was Dr. Hill.

5 MR. ROUDA: Dr. Hill. My apologies.

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Only because it stuck out to me
7 because it was so unusual. That was not her usual
8 department.

9 MR. ROUDA: Even though many of the things we've talked
10 about today are highly unusual, that one seemed to really
11 resonate?

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It resonated with me because I've
13 never seen anyone so upset.

14 MR. ROUDA: Okay.

15 The last thing I want to ask you: My understanding is
16 Secretary Perry resigned.

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I didn't know that. I haven't had
18 any -- I haven't had any phone access.

19 MR. ROUDA: Don't hold me to it. The reports may not be
20 correct, but -- so you weren't aware of that? That's a --

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

22 MR. ROUDA: -- surprise to you?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Absolutely.

24 MR. ROUDA: Okay. Thank you.

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: In fact, we are scheduled to meet

1 on Sunday in Brussels for an energy conference. So, all news
2 to me.

3 MR. ROUDA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Krishnamoorthi.

5 MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: Mr. Sondland, on April 21st,
6 President Zelensky was elected President of Ukraine, and
7 around that time Donald Trump made a phone call to him,
8 congratulating him, right?

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I believe that's true.

10 MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: And were you a part of that phone
11 call?

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I was not.

13 MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: Were you briefed before or after
14 that phone call about the contents of the call?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I was not.

16 MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: I wanted to ask you about Ukraine.
17 Do you have any interests in Ukraine?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: None.

19 MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: No business interests?

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: None whatsoever.

21 MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: When you said in your statement, on
22 page 8 of your statement, you did not understand until much
23 later that Mr. Giuliani's agenda might have also included an
24 effort to prompt the Ukrainians to investigate Vice President
25 Biden or his son or to involve Ukrainians directly or

1 indirectly in the President's 2020 reelection campaign, why
2 did you -- why do you think that either of those activities
3 are problematic?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Because I believe I testified that
5 it would be improper to do that.

6 MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: And illegal, right?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not a lawyer, but I assume so.

8 MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: Sir, one last question, which is:
9 Do you believe that, with regard to Burisma, that the effort
10 by Giuliani to investigate Burisma, now that we know that it
11 was actually intended to go after Mr. Biden's son Hunter, was
12 ever a proper inquiry?

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I mean, I think I testified to
14 that at the beginning, that it would not be proper.

15 MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: And illegal, correct?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, I'm not a lawyer. I don't
17 know the law exactly. It doesn't sound good.

18 MR. KRISHNAMOORTHY: Thank you.

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You're welcome.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: I don't remember the order in which
21 people came in. Who would like to be recognized next? I'll
22 leave it to either one of you.

23 MR. ESPAILLAT: Ambassador, I want to go along the same
24 line of questioning. I mean, obviously, the acknowledgement
25 of corruption seems to be a prominent issue.

1 First, in your testimony, for example on page 6, you
2 say, "Corruption poses challenges to the legitimacy and
3 stability of government. Corruption is also an economic
4 issue."

5 Then on page 7, you again state that "to make reforms
6 necessary to attract Western economic investment and to
7 address the Ukraine's well-known longstanding corruption
8 issues."

9 Again on page 7, you refer to President Zelensky as "a
10 reformer who received a strong mandate from the Ukrainian
11 people to fight corruption and pursue greater economic
12 prosperity."

13 So corruption seems to be an important issue, as you've
14 highlighted in your testimony today, in your statement. And,
15 furthermore, it seems to be of greater importance when the
16 names of Burisma and the 2016 election continuously pop up,
17 as you've stated in your statement and in your testimony
18 today.

19 How many folks do you have working for you? What's your
20 team like? How many people do you have working for you?

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: About 150.

22 MR. ESPAILLAT: You have 150 people working for you. At
23 any time when you heard the word "Burisma," as it was
24 connected to corruption, did you ever instruct any of your
25 150 staffers to research the company?

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, I did not. Again, Ambassador
2 Taylor and Ambassador Volker were, sort of, on the front
3 lines of this.

4 MR. ESPAILLAT: Did anybody google the word "Burisma,"
5 yourself or a staffer?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I didn't do it. I don't know
7 about anyone else.

8 MR. ESPAILLAT: So none of your 150 staffers, nor
9 yourself, after being deliberately concerned about corruption
10 in the Ukraine and hearing consistently the name "Burisma"
11 come up, not one of your staffers, 150 of them, nor yourself,
12 ever researched the company or googled the company or find
13 out who was on its board of directors? Is that accurate?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

15 MR. ESPAILLAT: Okay. Now --

16 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Our time has expired, but
17 we'll be happy to come back to you in the next round.

18 Mr. Castor.

19 BY MR. CASTOR:

20 Q Going back to exhibit No. 8, the whistleblower
21 complaint, exhibit 8 --

22 A Exhibit 8?

23 Q Exhibit 8.

24 A Okay.

25 Q Page 4. I just want to clarify that the last

1 sentence of the first paragraph under Roman III -- this is
2 the sentence we reviewed before with "navigate" and
3 "demands." "Based on multiple readouts of these meetings" --
4 and "these meetings" refer to the meetings on July 26th?

5 A Yes.

6 Q -- "Ambassadors Volker and Sondland reportedly
7 provided advice to the Ukrainian leadership about how to
8 'navigate' the demands that the President had made."

9 But on July 26th, you were not aware the President had
10 any demands. Is that correct?

11 A Well, I think we were aware at that point that the
12 President wanted -- I think this was still in the vanilla
13 corruption part of the continuum. Because, again, we didn't
14 get a transcript of the actual call until, I think,
15 September.

16 Q Right.

17 A So this whole notion of investigating the Bidens I
18 don't believe would've come up in that meeting because we
19 weren't aware of it.

20 Q Okay. So, during that meeting, I mean, if I
21 understand your testimony, the statement didn't come up
22 and --

23 A I don't remember it coming up.

24 Q Okay.

25 A Didn't flag it for me.

1 Q And then just flipping back to page 7, the first
2 bullet point: "that State Department officials, including
3 [yourself and] Ambassador Volker, had spoken with
4 Mr. Giuliani in an attempt to 'contain the damage.'"

5 I mean, none of your communications with Mr. Giuliani
6 were trying to contain any damage, because you didn't know
7 any damage had occurred. Is that correct?

8 A Well, as I said, my conversations -- because
9 they're lumping Volker and me together -- my conversations
10 with Giuliani really centered around negotiating this press
11 statement.

12 Q Okay.

13 A If you want to call that containing the damage, I
14 guess you could, but I don't see it as that.

15 Q Yeah. I don't understand how that could be
16 containing the damage.

17 The next sentence: "During this same timeframe,
18 multiple U.S. officials told me that the Ukrainian leadership
19 was led to believe that a meeting or phone call between the
20 President and President Zelensky would depend on whether
21 Zelensky showed willingness to 'play ball.'"

22 Now, as far as you know, the July call was scheduled
23 without any preconditions, right?

24 A Ultimately, yes.

25 Q The company Burisma has been the subject of a

1 number of investigations in Ukraine over the years. You're
2 aware of that, right?

3 A I am now.

4 Q And to the extent Ukrainians are investigating
5 other Ukrainians for wrongdoing in the company of Burisma,
6 that would be perfectly acceptable, correct?

7 A Presumably.

8 Q Okay. Now, you're aware that Hunter Biden was
9 asked to serve on the board of Burisma, correct?

10 A Based on press accounts, yes.

11 Q Yeah. Do you know whether Mr. Biden has any
12 corporate governance experience?

13 A I don't.

14 Q Okay. And, you know, is it conceivable that
15 Ukrainians could have decided to place Mr. Biden on the board
16 because they wanted to curry favor with the U.S.?

17 A Conceivable.

18 Q Okay. And if they did and if the decision to place
19 him on the board was improper and the Ukrainians found
20 evidence of that, wouldn't it be fair that they would
21 investigate that?

22 A Are you asking for my opinion?

23 Q Well, it's just, if there was wrongdoing associated
24 with placing Hunter Biden on the board, wouldn't that be
25 something worth investigating?

1 A Seems to be.

2 Q Okay.

3 I'm going to ask you a very odd fact that came up in
4 another interview. I just want to get your reaction to it.
5 Have you ever encouraged Romanians to show up at the White
6 House without an appointment?

7 A No.

8 Q Okay. If someone were to suggest that, would you
9 have any idea what the basis for that was?

10 A Well, one of the things that I wound up doing was
11 helping bilateral ambassadors -- what do you call it? --
12 advocate for meetings of their country's leaders. So,
13 occasionally, I would get a phone call from a bilateral
14 ambassador and say, "Our President would like to meet with
15 President Trump. I've had a request in for months. Could
16 you help? Could you help push?"

17 Q Now, when you --

18 A So that's the context in which I would join with my
19 bilateral colleague and call someone at the White House and
20 say, I think this is very important that we get the President
21 of fill-in-the-blank EU country in to see President Trump.

22 But have I ever said, you just show up at the White
23 House without an appointment?

24 Q Yes.

25 A No. No.

1 Q And by bilateral ambassador, you mean the
2 U.S. ambassador?

3 A The U.S. ambassador to the particular country.

4 Q Like another State Department employee.

5 A Correct.

6 Q Okay.

7 And you can't just show up to the White House and get
8 in, right?

9 A Correct.

10 Q You've got to have a meeting. And before the
11 meeting, you've got to do certain things, correct?

12 A That's right.

13 Q Okay.

14 Did anyone in the National Security Council ever express
15 concern to you that you were using an unsecure mobile device
16 in your discussions with other international leaders?

17 A Never.

18 Q President Zelensky's inauguration was scheduled
19 relatively quickly. Is that fair to say?

20 A I think that's right.

21 Q A matter of days, even?

22 A Yeah, I think the date was sort of floating, and
23 they nailed it down somehow.

24 Q And the U.S. delegation, in advance of the trip,
25 was in flux?

1 A Correct.

2 Q And at one point, it's been related to us, that
3 Vice President Pence was considering going? Is that
4 something you --

5 A I had heard that, yes.

6 Q Okay. And then, as it turned out, he was unable to
7 go. Do you know why?

8 A I don't.

9 Q Do you know if his decision not to attend was
10 related to any of the things we've been discussing today,
11 such as the Burisma matter, the 2016 --

12 A I don't know why he didn't go.

13 Q Okay. So there's no reason -- you have no evidence
14 to suggest that Vice President Pence's participation in the
15 inaugural was withheld from Ukraine as an admonishment for
16 not playing ball or something of that sort?

17 A I don't remember anything to that effect.

18 Q Okay.

19 MR. CASTOR: Mr. Zeldin.

20 MR. ZELDIN: I'm picking up where my colleague was just
21 asking you some additional questions about Burisma. Do you
22 know why Burisma and -- do you know whose Zlochevsky is?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Who?

24 MR. ZELDIN: Zlochevsky.

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

1 MR. ZELDIN: Do you know why -- so Zlochevsky was an
2 oligarch with ownership stake in Burisma. Do you know why
3 Burisma and Zlochevsky were under investigation for
4 corruption in the Ukraine?

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do not.

6 MR. ZELDIN: But you are aware that Hunter Biden was
7 hired for a paid position on the board of directors?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, based on press accounts,
9 recent press accounts, yes.

10 MR. ZELDIN: Those press accounts, did they indicate
11 that Hunter Biden was getting paid at least \$50,000 per
12 month?

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I recall a figure close to that,
14 yeah.

15 MR. ZELDIN: Did any of those press accounts indicate
16 that he had no energy experience or Ukraine experience?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes.

18 MR. ZELDIN: Are you aware that Vice President Joe Biden
19 went to Ukraine in 2016 and successfully got the prosecutor
20 general, the state prosecutor, fired?

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, based on press accounts.

22 MR. ZELDIN: The name of that state prosecutor, Viktor
23 Shokin.

24 Are you aware, based on those press accounts, that the
25 Vice President threatened Ukraine with the loss of \$1 billion

1 if they didn't immediately fire that state prosecutor?
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1 [5:50 p.m.]

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, based on recent press
3 accounts, yes.

4 MR. ZELDIN: Is it fair that there's a lot about
5 Burisma, Zlochevsky, Hunter Biden and Joe Biden that you
6 don't know about?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

8 MR. ZELDIN: Do you have a problem with the Vice
9 President's son being paid \$50,000 a month in Ukraine?

10 THE CHAIRMAN: We're getting very far afield if we're
11 asking the Ambassador's opinion on what someone should be
12 paid to serve on a board.

13 MR. ZELDIN: But you have asked for his opinion on a lot
14 of things related to this, and I'm going to --

15 THE CHAIRMAN: You know, I don't think I have. The
16 Ambassador can venture an opinion on this, but --

17 MR. ZELDIN: Well, he has been asked many questions
18 about his assessment of whether it was right or wrong. So we
19 are going to get into just what basis of information he
20 has --

21 THE CHAIRMAN: We're talking about diplomatic efforts
22 and shadow foreign policy, but I'll let the witness answer.
23 It just seems an odd opinion question to be asking of this
24 witness.

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I have no opinion.

1 MR. ZELDIN: Do you believe that it would be appropriate
2 for the son of the Vice President to be paid \$50,000 a month
3 from an entity in one of the countries in your portfolio, run
4 by an oligarch under corruption, and that person is -- has no
5 energy experience or no Ukraine experience? You don't have
6 any opinion? You have no problem with that?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Congressman, I can't speculate as
8 to why they hired him or what they paid him. That wouldn't
9 be right on my part to speculate.

10 MR. ZELDIN: Do you believe that there would be any
11 conflict of interest for the Vice President to be having
12 the -- let me backtrack a moment.

13 Are you aware that Viktor Shokin, that state prosecutor,
14 had an open investigation into Burisma and Zlochevsky at the
15 time that he made that threat?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Only through recent press
17 accounts.

18 MR. ZELDIN: And do you have any -- do you see any issue
19 with the Vice President issuing that threat if his son is
20 being paid \$50,000 a month from that entity?

21 THE CHAIRMAN: If I could just state for the record, I
22 think the evidence we've received thus far indicated there
23 was no open investigation. You can posit an allegation, but
24 that's not been the --

25 MR. MEADOWS: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, I

1 don't mind you opining on your 45 minutes. And this is a
2 deposition, and unless you want us opining on your 45
3 minutes, let's leave it to the questions and answers. He's
4 got three capable counselors there that I'm sure are paid far
5 more than you and I are paid to advise him on what he should
6 and should not answer.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: The objection, if we were in court, would
8 be facts not in evidence. And --

9 MR. MEADOWS: But the objections if we were in court
10 would be on you leading the witness over and over and over
11 again.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: I don't think it's fair --

13 MR. NOBLE: That's admissible in court.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: I don't think it's fair --

15 MR. ZELDIN: By the way, the question was, are you aware
16 that there was an open case?

17 THE CHAIRMAN: I don't think it's fair to this witness
18 to ask him if he is aware of facts which are not, in fact,
19 facts. If you want to say, are you aware that there is an
20 allegation, that's fine.

21 MR. MEADOWS: Well, Mr. Chairman, with all due respect,
22 you have indicated facts regarding a 2020 campaign
23 investigation that are not facts, they're merely your
24 opinion. So if we want to get in this back-and-forth, I'm
25 more than willing to get into a colloquy with you with the

1 facts, because the facts are on my side.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: I would just caution the witness facts
3 represented by members may not actually be facts, but you are
4 free to answer their questions.

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I can't express an opinion on
6 Mr. Biden's employment.

7 MR. ZELDIN: Are you aware -- do you know if Viktor
8 Shokin had an open investigation into Burisma and Zlochevsky
9 at the time that Vice President Biden threatened Ukraine with
10 the loss of \$1 billion?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not aware. Again, all of my
12 awareness comes from recent press reports.

13 MR. MEADOWS: So, Mr. Ambassador, let me jump in. I
14 don't want you answering to facts that are not facts. I want
15 to make that clear for the record. I also don't want you to
16 give opinion on things that you're not an expert on.

17 And I can tell that some of your reluctance with my
18 colleague is that you don't want to weigh in. And so, as
19 much as we might want you to weigh in, and as much as the
20 other side might want you to weigh in on facts that are not
21 necessarily facts, I want you to stick to that. Can I
22 interject?

23 Here is one area that I do believe that there -- we are
24 conflating two different things. We're conflating foreign
25 aid and javelins at times. Would you agree with that? That

1 foreign aid, the foreign aid that was withheld was not
2 actually withholding javelin defense items. Are you aware of
3 any conversation where javelins were being withheld?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: My knowledge of the aid package is
5 very limited. Again, my focus -- it sounds very narrow, but
6 you have a full-time bilateral Ambassador who would deal with
7 those issues. That was Ambassador Taylor and prior to that,
8 Ambassador Yovanovitch. That is right in the center lane of
9 their portfolio. Then on top of that, which is unusual, you
10 have layered over that a Special Envoy, whose sole focus is
11 to oversee the Ukraine portfolio.

12 My role in this was to use whatever influence I had at
13 the NSC and the White House to help advocate for a meeting.
14 I did not get into the peculiarities --

15 MR. MEADOWS: And that advocacy for the meeting, your
16 advocating for that meeting was in the sole interest, best
17 interest of the United States and our national security. Is
18 that correct?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That is correct.

20 MR. MEADOWS: 100 percent?

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: 100 percent.

22 MR. MEADOWS: Not 99, 100 percent in the best interest
23 of our country. Is that correct?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: In my view, yes.

25 MR. MEADOWS: Okay. And so, in advocating for this

1 meeting, in advocating to make sure that the new President
2 Zelensky was, indeed, set on a new path, you were very
3 encouraged that he was serious about addressing corruption.
4 Is that correct?

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That is correct.

6 MR. MEADOWS: Because my colleague was talking about
7 Mr. Shokin, and I guess his reputation was one that he was
8 not serious about really rooting out corruption. Had you
9 heard that?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, based on recent press
11 reports.

12 MR. MEADOWS: Had you heard about the special prosecutor
13 that replaced him, that he was not serious about rooting out
14 corruption?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Contemporarily, yes.

16 MR. MEADOWS: So both of those individuals were not
17 serious. So we were taking a leap of faith, a leap of faith
18 that this new government was going to get rid of corruption,
19 which was contrary to all history that we know about with
20 Ukraine. Is that correct?

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You can always dream.

22 MR. MEADOWS: All right, we can always dream. Would you
23 agree that the European Union, prior to May of 2019, shared a
24 similar view with President Donald Trump that corruption was
25 a way of life in the Ukraine?

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They were concerned about
2 corruption, I think it's fair to say.

3 MR. MEADOWS: All right. And had any of the European
4 Union raised corruption issues about the Ukraine with you in
5 your role, in your official role as Ambassador for the EU?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes. In fact, the official that
7 traveled with me to Odessa, who was the Secretary General of
8 the EU, raised it himself with President Poroshenko at our
9 bilateral meeting.

10 MR. MEADOWS: All right. So you're saying that people
11 outside of this administration raised with the previous
12 President their concern about corruption. Whether or not it
13 had anything to do with any individual, they were just
14 generally concerned about corruption. Is that correct?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Corruption per se, yes.

16 MR. MEADOWS: All right. I can yield back.

17 MR. ZELDIN: If the President of the United States has a
18 problem with the former Vice President of the United States'
19 son being paid \$50,000 a month with no energy experience and
20 no Ukraine experience, if the President of the United States
21 has a problem with the Vice President running point for the
22 Obama administration and threatening to withhold \$1 billion
23 of U.S. aid if the State prosecutor isn't fired, and if the
24 President of the United States is aware that there was an
25 investigation into the entity that was paying Hunter Biden

1 \$50,000 a month, and Zlochevsky who runs that, and if the
2 President of the United States believes that there was an
3 open investigation into Burisma and Zlochevsky at the time of
4 Vice President Biden's threat, if the President of the United
5 States has a problem with all of this, is that a reasonable
6 position, is that an acceptable position for the President of
7 the United States to want to look into that further?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I can't express an opinion on
9 that. I don't know legally if the President has the right to
10 do that. Again, I'm not a lawyer. I think that's really
11 between the President and his -- you know, the electorate, as
12 to whether the voters think that that's proper or not. I
13 don't know.

14 MR. ZELDIN: But earlier on, you were testifying to a
15 question worded differently, where you were saying that it
16 would be inappropriate to ask the Ukrainian Government to
17 conduct an investigation into a 2020 political rival,
18 correct? Did you say something to that effect earlier?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I believe I did, yes.

20 MR. ZELDIN: But you're not willing to explain that any
21 further beyond that, given all of -- of what the President
22 may believe when making that -- when making that request.
23 Does it matter what the facts are to you?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, the facts are critical, and
25 I don't know all the underlying facts. And I'm really not in

1 the business of providing an opinion on this hypothetical as
2 to whether it was proper or improper. I do think it was
3 improper on the future election.

4 MR. ZELDIN: Did you feel pressured earlier in today's
5 deposition to answer that it was improper to ask, based on
6 the fact that you don't have all the facts?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't think I felt unduly
8 pressured at this deposition at all.

9 MR. ZELDIN: You didn't feel unduly pressured to answer
10 that question without your facts, but you feel like you
11 shouldn't answer my question because you don't have your
12 facts? It's the same exact issue.

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Tell me again your question.

14 MR. ZELDIN: So the President of the United States, if
15 the President of the United States believes that Hunter
16 Biden, Vice President Joe Biden's son, is getting paid
17 \$50,000 a month from this foreign company run by a foreign
18 oligarch, that there is a corruption investigation into
19 Burisma and Zlochevsky; if the President of the United States
20 believes that Vice President Joe Biden threatened Ukraine
21 with the loss of \$1 billion, if they didn't immediately fire
22 the state prosecutor who was the state prosecutor who had an
23 investigation into Burisma and Zlochevsky; if the President
24 believes all of these different things, if the President
25 believes that Burisma, Zlochevsky, Hunter Biden and Joe Biden

1 shouldn't be immune from scrutiny just because Joe Biden is
2 running for President; if the President was to believe that
3 if it's not illegal then it should be; if the President
4 believes that U.S. aid to Ukraine should be spent as
5 effectively as possible; if the President has longstanding
6 issues with corruption in Ukraine, if the President believes
7 all of these things, would it be okay for the President to
8 want to look into this further?

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: As I said, I'm not a lawyer. If
10 it's legal for him to do so, then I assume it would be okay.
11 If it's illegal for him to do so, then I assume it would be
12 wrong. That's the best answer I can give you. It's really a
13 question of law.

14 MR. ZELDIN: So we're talking about an earlier question
15 you were asked and you answered one way, and another question
16 I just asked that you're answering the opposite way. One
17 question was worded the way that I just worded the question I
18 just asked you, and you gave what seemed to be a candid
19 answer. One of my colleagues earlier asked you if it would
20 be appropriate to ask Ukraine to conduct an investigation
21 into a political rival, and you answered a different way.

22 So I'm trying to understand two completely different
23 answers to what is the same exact situation, a request by the
24 President of the United States to Ukraine to look into a case
25 involving an entity that was under investigation for

1 corruption owned by an oligarch under investigation for
2 corruption, and the President of the United States has an
3 issue with the entire setup and he makes the request.

4 So you've been asked the question on what is the same
5 exact issue two different ways, but you're giving two totally
6 different answers. And we need to -- I believe it would be
7 helpful if we can better understand why it's two totally
8 different answers to what is the same exact request.

9 MR. LUSKIN: With all respect, Congressman, we've now
10 been here for eight and a half hours and Ambassador Sondland
11 has not declined to answer a single question posed by any
12 member or any counsel member. You've asked this question now
13 three different times. I know you're unhappy with his
14 answer, but if we stay until 7:30 he's not going to change
15 his answer.

16 MR. ZELDIN: So you might have misunderstood my answer,
17 Counselor, but I had no issue at all with what Ambassador
18 Sondland just said. My issue is with his answer earlier
19 today that was a different answer to what was a different
20 version of the same exact question, and I'm giving the
21 Ambassador an opportunity, if he would like to, if he would
22 like to, help us better understand why there were two
23 different answers to those two questions.

24 MR. LUSKIN: And I think, as he's made clear, he stands
25 by his testimony today, by his answers to your questions and

1 by his answers to the questions by the majority earlier. And
2 I think it's obviously the task of this committee if you
3 perceive there to be any differences between those answers to
4 reconcile those differences. But more questions I don't
5 think are going to assist you any further. I think you've
6 asked it about as many times as you can, and he's given you
7 his best shot at an answer.

8 MR. ROY: Do you have something to add? No?

9 Ambassador, in your statement you provided, you said:
10 "First, I knew that a public embrace of anticorruption
11 reforms by Ukraine was one of the preconditions for securing
12 a White House meeting with President Zelensky."

13 Do you stand by that?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do.

15 MR. ROY: My view was and has always been that such
16 Western reforms are consistent with U.S. support for rule of
17 law in Ukraine, going back decades, under both Republican and
18 Democratic administrations, right, you agree?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, I do.

20 MR. ROY: Nothing about that request raised any red
21 flags for me, Ambassador Volker, or Ambassador Taylor.

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

23 MR. ROY: A few moments ago, though, you made a
24 statement and I just want to make sure -- I might have
25 misheard, but you made a statement along the lines of you

1 thought that there should be no preconditions for a meeting,
2 and that there should have been a meeting immediately after
3 the inauguration?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, as a policy matter,
5 obviously, if my goal was to get the two Presidents together
6 as quickly as possible following the inauguration, a meeting
7 with no preconditions would have been a lot easier to handle.

8 MR. ROY: Right. But do you see my -- I mean, my
9 question here is just -- I mean, you can have a policy debate
10 about that, right? And I get -- and we had an exchange
11 earlier about your goals and trying to, you know, get the
12 things we want to get accomplished in Ukraine. We talked
13 about Secretary Perry.

14 My question here, though, is just you have stated fairly
15 affirmatively nothing about that request raised any red flags
16 for you. So, just to be clear, you don't see a problem with
17 having preconditions. Just to exercise your goal of getting
18 a meeting as soon as humanly possible, that would have been
19 your preference.

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct. In other words, from a
21 policy matter, there was nothing wrong with --

22 MR. ROY: Right.

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: -- clear and straightforward
24 preconditions that were lawful preconditions. Nothing wrong
25 with that. My preference would have been no preconditions.

1 MR. ROY: Right, and that's fine. But, in other words,
2 to carry out your objective, which is to have a meeting.

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

4 MR. ROY: But preconditions might be perfectly
5 acceptable?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Totally.

7 MR. ROY: Okay. The other question I have is, if the
8 United States Government believes, if we have reason to
9 believe, the President down through law enforcement or
10 otherwise and our intelligence agencies, we have reason to
11 believe that any country in the world had any interference
12 with our system of elections or otherwise, would that not be
13 a basis for our government to choose to withhold funds, or to
14 otherwise make decisions about how we handle aid and so
15 forth, any country, hypothetically speaking, speaking as an
16 Ambassador, would that not be a reason for a country to kind
17 of think about how they handle aid?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think it would create concern on
19 our part, yes.

20 MR. ROY: Okay.

21 MR. MEADOWS: Ambassador, I'm going to go back to one
22 thing just to make sure that we're clear. We talked about
23 the letter earlier today, the letter that surprised you I
24 think was your words. I don't want to put words in your
25 mouth, but the letter from the President that said, we can

1 have this meeting, and you were surprised by it, based on the
2 initial meeting in the Oval Office. Is that correct?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That is correct.

4 MR. MEADOWS: And so once you had this letter that was
5 unconditioned in terms of meeting with President Zelensky,
6 would you characterize that as a letter that had no
7 conditions to it, in terms of a meeting with President
8 Zelensky?

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Other than scheduling.

10 MR. MEADOWS: Other than scheduling. Did you ever hear
11 from Secretary Pompeo that the President really didn't mean
12 that letter and that you shouldn't take the letter at face
13 value, that the only problem was a scheduling problem?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

15 MR. MEADOWS: Did you ever hear from President Trump
16 that he really didn't mean what he said in the letter, that
17 it was -- the only precondition was a scheduling problem?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

19 MR. MEADOWS: Did you hear from anyone in authority that
20 the President really didn't mean what he said in that letter
21 and that he was -- that there was any problem other than
22 scheduling and that you shouldn't believe what that letter
23 said?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did not hear that, to the best
25 of my recollection.

1 MR. MEADOWS: All right. And I appreciate you
2 clarifying that and helping me understand that better, and I
3 will yield back to my colleagues.

4 MR. CASTOR: We yield back.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: I would suggest, rather than breaking,
6 because we're nearing the end that we just motor on through.
7 Is that okay, Ambassador?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: How much longer?

9 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm going to go to our members and then
10 our staff has a few cleanup questions, and then we're done if
11 they're done. So, hopefully, very soon.

12 MR. LUSKIN: Good. Let's motor through, Chairman.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Malinowski.

14 MR. CASTOR: We might have a followup question or two.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Sure.

16 MR. MALINOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you,
17 Ambassador, for your patience and diligence in answering
18 these questions. And let me just say I personally very much
19 appreciate what you were trying to accomplish throughout this
20 difficult period in getting the two Presidents together to
21 get our relationship with Ukraine back on track, something we
22 are all committed to in a bipartisan way.

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you, Congressman.

24 MR. MALINOWSKI: I wanted to -- my first question
25 relates to your phone call to the President on, I believe,

1 September 9th, when you asked him, you said, what do you want
2 from the Ukrainians, and you said that the President said
3 that he wanted nothing. He repeated that there was no quid
4 pro quo.

5 But then you told us at a later point that the President
6 then added, I want Zelensky -- I just want Zelensky to do
7 what he ran on. Is that essentially correct?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: In so many words, yes.

9 MR. MALINOWSKI: Okay. So even in that conversation in
10 which he said there was no -- that he wanted nothing, no quid
11 pro quo, he did actually want something. He wanted Zelensky
12 to do something consistent with what he ran on. That's
13 correct?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: If you consider that a quid pro
15 quo, then --

16 MR. MALINOWSKI: Well, how did you -- what did you
17 understand he meant by "I want Zelensky to do what he ran
18 on"?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, I didn't have the time or
20 opportunity to question him. He -- as I stated in my opening
21 statement, he was in a very bad mood and it was a very short
22 call. I don't want to characterize him as hanging up on me,
23 but it was close to that.

24 MR. MALINOWSKI: But then in the text message that you
25 sent reporting on that conversation, you said: "The

1 President is trying to evaluate whether Ukraine is truly
2 going to adopt the transparency and reforms that President
3 Zelensky promised."

4 So I think it suggests that you thought he was
5 referring, again, to the corruption issue.

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I thought it was -- based, again,
7 on the short call, it was my interpretation of what the
8 President was trying to tell me. I didn't have the
9 opportunity to ask followup questions. He didn't want to
10 talk.

11 MR. MALINOWSKI: So your assumption was that this was
12 basically the same thing that had been communicated again and
13 again. And, of course, corruption by September 9th, you
14 know, you realize that that entails those two specific asks
15 related to 2016 and Burisma?

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, no. I had realized that it
17 entailed those two specific asks, based on anecdotal evidence
18 from a lot of other people. I had never heard it from the
19 President. That's why I called the President.

20 MR. MALINOWSKI: Well, you did hear from the President
21 at one point his interest in 2016, though, you said.

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I heard on the 23rd that he
23 wanted -- that Ukraine was trying to take him down. That was
24 what I heard --

25 MR. MALINOWSKI: Got it.

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: -- on the 23rd.

2 MR. MALINOWSKI: Second issue: You told us that you
3 were trying to figure out why the aid was cut off when you
4 learned that that was, in fact, true, and that nobody
5 involved in the Ukraine file seemed to know why the aid was
6 cut off.

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They all seemed to have different
8 reasons. No one could give me a clear answer saying, this is
9 our current policy.

10 MR. MALINOWSKI: Isn't that a bit odd that nobody
11 involved in making and implementing policy towards this
12 important country knew why aid had been cut off to that
13 country?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It's extremely odd.

15 MR. MALINOWSKI: One of the theories, one of the
16 potential reasons that was stated was that the Europeans were
17 not doing enough to help Ukraine, correct?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That was one reason.

19 MR. MALINOWSKI: You're our Ambassador to the EU. After
20 the aid was cut, did anyone ever ask you, in your formal role
21 as our representative to the EU, to go to the Europeans and
22 to ask them to do more to help Ukraine as a way of getting
23 that aid unfrozen?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They did not.

25 MR. MALINOWSKI: Are you aware that any other State

1 Department official was asked to deliver this message to the
2 Europeans?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not aware.

4 MR. MALINOWSKI: Thank you.

5 The third issue, it's been -- we've gone back and forth
6 on the general practice of conditioning U.S. assistance
7 around the world, and certainly, I think we would all
8 acknowledge it's very commonly done. We condition all kinds
9 of things on what we want from other countries. My
10 colleagues may know I used to be the Assistant Secretary for
11 DRL, for the Democracy Human Rights Bureau, and I would have
12 been on your case to condition aid in many cases on human
13 rights and corruption issues.

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You wouldn't have needed to.

15 MR. MALINOWSKI: Well, thank you. But, in that context,
16 are you aware that the State Department, through all this
17 time, has had a comprehensive set of asks to the Ukrainian
18 Government with regard to what it should do to improve its
19 record on corruption?

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Anecdotally, yes. I've never seen
21 a formal list, though.

22 MR. MALINOWSKI: So you haven't familiarized yourself
23 with what we have been asking the Ukrainians to do?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No. That is exactly in the
25 bilateral Ambassador's center lane.

1 MR. MALINOWSKI: Got it.

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They would not be happy if I
3 interfered in that.

4 MR. MALINOWSKI: But you've heard conversations -- so
5 would it be -- would it sound right to you to hear that we
6 were asking them to strengthen the prosecutor's office, to
7 clean up corruption in the defense sector, you know, defense
8 procurement, there was corruption there, that we wanted them
9 to do more prosecutions of oligarchs and, you know,
10 high-level corrupt individuals, such things as that?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: None of that would surprise me.

12 MR. MALINOWSKI: And were any of those things in, in
13 your experience, ever linked to the aid or the desire of the
14 Ukrainians to have a meeting with the President?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Only in the sense of the rubric of
16 general corruption, when we were at that part of the
17 continuum.

18 MR. MALINOWSKI: But those things weren't specifically
19 presented to the Ukrainians as needing to be addressed?

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not by me.

21 MR. MALINOWSKI: By anybody, to your knowledge?

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not to my knowledge, but I don't
23 know.

24 MR. MALINOWSKI: And presumably, if we wanted a country
25 to do something on corruption to get a benefit from us, we

1 would want to tell them what to do specifically, right?

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Presumably.

3 MR. MALINOWSKI: Presumably, okay. So ultimately,
4 again, it just came down to Burisma and 2016. And with
5 regard to that, it all came to a head, you testified, with
6 the negotiation, attempted negotiation of a press statement
7 in which they were asked, you know, through Rudy Giuliani, to
8 reference those specific things.

9 With regard to the reference to 2016 that was desired
10 from the Ukrainians, was that ever framed -- in terms of
11 Ukraine specifically, was that ever framed in terms of
12 Ukraine cooperating with an ongoing Department of Justice
13 investigation?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall that. It may have
15 been, but I don't recall that wording.

16 MR. MALINOWSKI: So the draft press statement -- and I
17 think we heard a draft -- as I recall it, it had the
18 Ukrainians say that they would investigate these issues. It
19 didn't refer to cooperating with the Attorney General or
20 working through an MLAT to help DOJ conduct its own
21 investigation into those issues.

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. All of the anecdotal
23 information through Ambassador Volker from presumably
24 Mr. Giuliani had to do with the Ukrainians conducting their
25 own investigations.

1 MR. MALINOWSKI: Understood. Well, thank you.

2 And I yield back.

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Representative Hill.

5 MS. HILL: Thank you. Good to see you. I met you at
6 the Speaker's delegation.

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Right. Nice to see you again.

8 MS. HILL: Thank you for this. This is a lot of
9 patience and I know this is a marathon.

10 So my questions are really just kind of -- I want to
11 center on what the -- when you're talking about your
12 continuum, you sort of -- you clarified four phases. The
13 third is when you know that we're discussing Burisma and the
14 2016 supposed intervention, right, or interference in the
15 election, right? Is that what you would consider kind of
16 three of four phases?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's right.

18 MS. HILL: Okay. So during August, really around August
19 9th on is when it seems to escalate, based on the text
20 messages that I've seen. And on August 9th, I just, again,
21 wanted to clarify a few things. It looks like you had the
22 initial conversation with where Kurt Volker wanted to -- he
23 had a chat with Yermak and he wanted to get on the phone to
24 talk about what we needed to advise him on with Giuliani,
25 right?

1 So you said you don't remember a lot of the details of
2 the call with Giuliani, but then later in the day, you said
3 specifically that to avoid misunderstandings, it might be
4 helpful to ask Andrey for a draft statement.

5 So it seems like -- and then when you were talking about
6 that earlier, you said that you were concerned that whatever
7 Ukraine produced wouldn't be good enough for what apparently
8 earlier in the day, I would assume, Giuliani had said. Does
9 that sound right?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think what I said was that this
11 was the point where we went from a draft statement that was
12 just going to be a press statement, a written statement, to
13 some type of television interview or television broadcast.

14 And I was asking that whatever he was proposing to say
15 would be put down on paper ahead of time so that we wouldn't
16 put Zelensky in a position of where he does this on
17 television and it's not good enough.

18 MS. HILL: Got it, okay. So then on the next day, you
19 were forwarded something from Volker that was conversation
20 from Yermak saying: Hi, Kurt, please let me know when you
21 can talk. I think it's possible to make this declaration and
22 mention all of these things which we discussed yesterday, but
23 it would be logic to do after we receive confirmation of
24 date.

25 So it sounds like they are getting -- Ukraine might be

1 getting frustrated and wanting to nail down a date before
2 they put anything out publicly. Does that sound right?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That sounds right.

4 MS. HILL: And what is -- given kind of what I saw when
5 we went on the trip, the importance of Ukraine and Russia and
6 our relationship with the EU, did that escalate the sense of
7 urgency for you to kind of get this meeting on the books, to
8 really move things forward with -- if Ukraine is getting more
9 frustrated, does that -- did that raise any flags for you?
10 Did that make you want to move?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. I mean, we were jerking
12 Ukraine around, and I didn't like it.

13 MS. HILL: Okay. What do you mean by that?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I mean we were -- we were
15 continually putting new conditions on a meeting which should
16 have occurred, because they had already issued an
17 unconditional invitation.

18 MS. HILL: Got it, okay. And at that point, it looks
19 like on the same date, Yermak says that -- he specifically
20 states that they will announce the upcoming visit once
21 there's a date locked in for the meeting and outlining the
22 vision for the reboot of the U.S.-Ukraine relationship,
23 including, among other things, Burisma and the election
24 meddling investigations.

25

1 MS. HILL: So at that stage, on August 10th, you knew
2 about Burisma and the meddling, the supposed meddling, that
3 that was the condition that the White House wanted, right?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Presumably, that's when we got to
5 that phase of the continuum.

6 MS. HILL: Through Giuliani, right?

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

8 MS. HILL: That was how it was indicated? Okay.

9 So if you continue on, then it gets to -- it looks like
10 there's a shift in who is kind of leading things, in my
11 opinion, on the text messages. And I'm not sure if this is
12 right, but, given escalation, I would assume it might be,
13 where suddenly it looks like Kurt Volker sends something to
14 you, the statement -- this is on the text messages from
15 August 13th.

16 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Can you give me a page?

17 MS. HILL: I'm not looking at something with the same
18 page numbers as you, so maybe --

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: August 13th?

20 MS. HILL: August 13th at 10:26 in the morning.

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh.

22 MR. LUSKIN: Which text chain?

23 MS. HILL: Ambassador -- let's see. Yeah, it was Volker
24 and Sondland. Yeah. So it looks like it was just you and
25 Sondland -- I mean you and Volker.

1 Okay. Well, either way, he sends the statement to you
2 that to me seems --

3 MR. LUSKIN: Hold on. Give us 1 second.

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: One second. Okay. Okay, what
5 date, again?

6 MS. HILL: August 13th.

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: At what time?

8 MS. HILL: At 10:26 a.m.

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Wait a minute. This is all --
10 this is Yermak and me on page 23. It's the wrong page.
11 Yermak and Volker and me.

12 MS. HILL: What I'm looking at is a longer message from
13 Kurt Volker that says "special attention" --

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, okay, I've got that. That's
15 the last text. Got it.

16 MS. HILL: Okay. And so it's a long statement, right?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yep.

18 MS. HILL: And so it looks to me like he might be
19 sending that to you for approval. Does that sound right?
20 Because you say afterwards: "Perfect, let's send to Andrey
21 after our call."

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Can I just interrupt, Representative
23 Hill? And I don't know if you were here at the time, but we
24 went through all these text messages. If you still need
25 further clarification, but --

1 MS. HILL: Yes. It was mainly the approval part that I
2 wanted to clarify, because that's where it seems to me like
3 things are starting to shift where you're taking more of a
4 lead role than Volker. And I just wanted to know if you had
5 any -- if this was related to your concerns perhaps
6 escalating.

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm trying to find the followup
8 where you say I said "perfect."

9 Oh, okay, got it, got it, got it. Okay.

10 MS. HILL: I'm not going to grill you on the specifics
11 of those anyway.

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I mean, again, this was -- this
13 was not a question of who was or wasn't in charge. This was
14 sort of a collaborative effort. I think what we were trying
15 to do here was to get something on paper that we could
16 tentatively say, yeah, that sounds like something Giuliani
17 would be okay with, and Yermak could say, yeah, I think
18 Zelensky would be okay with it.

19 And then -- again, I'm speculating -- once we got to
20 some language, we would send the language off to our
21 respective principals and figure out if we had a statement we
22 could agree on. Not unlike negotiating a lot of different
23 statements.

24 MS. HILL: Okay. And, sorry, because the reason I was
25 asking is that by the 17th you were having direct

1 conversations with Yermak, whereas it looked more previously
2 like Volker was talking with Yermak and it was coming to you.

3 So I was wondering if that was kind of -- that might be
4 the crisis mitigation that we were talking about when Ukraine
5 is getting more upset, when you're having to kind of step in
6 and take more of a leadership role.

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I will take the compliment, but I
8 don't think that that really was the case. I think this was
9 just circumstantial. Sometimes Yermak could reach me.
10 Sometimes he could reach Volker. Sometimes Volker was at the
11 McCain Institute, because he wasn't working full time. He
12 had other duties. So I think it was catch as catch can.

13 MS. HILL: So by the time you had the visit -- or the
14 President canceled the trip to Poland and you went, right?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did.

16 MS. HILL: You met with Zelensky. And --

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The Vice President met with
18 Zelensky. I sat in on the meeting.

19 MS. HILL: Okay, got it. What was your impression by
20 then? This was the escalation. This was the -- to me, this
21 is kind of the critical mass moment where it's all coming to
22 a head. How was it with Zelensky at that point?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh, I think Zelensky, you know, in
24 my opinion, put on a good game face. I think he was
25 disappointed, because I think he thought this was going to be

1 his first meeting with President Trump. I think he
2 understood the hurricane was beyond President Trump's
3 control. You know, he was being gracious, but I think he
4 would have preferred to meet with the President of the United
5 States then the Vice President of the United States. That's
6 just normal.

7 MS. HILL: Do you feel like at this point they felt --
8 Ukraine felt more pressure to kind of accommodate those
9 requests?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know if they felt more
11 pressure. I don't think this was a case of turning up the
12 pressure. I think this was circumstantial. And then, again,
13 we tried to figure out when the next opportunity would be for
14 him to meet with the President, which turned out to be at the
15 UNGA.

16 MS. HILL: Okay. And then the last thing and I'll stop
17 is that you have -- on September 8th, it says -- these are
18 the final text messages that I'm referring to. It's one
19 between you, Taylor, and Volker on September 8th at 11:20
20 a.m.

21 MR. LUSKIN: And, again, we're going to have to try and
22 find it.

23 MS. HILL: I know. I'm sorry.

24 MR. NOBLE: 53.

25 MR. LUSKIN: Thank you. Okay, go ahead

1 MS. HILL: So you say that you have multiple
2 conversations with Zelensky and POTUS at this point, but by
3 now you're aware that the aid had been withheld, right? Yes,
4 that happened on August 29th.

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think I was aware that the aid
6 had been withheld in July when Taylor sent me a text to the
7 effect that I had just got off of a video conference and
8 someone said something about a hold on the aid. I think
9 that's when I became --

10 MS. HILL: In July?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, in July. But I didn't have
12 any reason to know why it was being withheld.

13 MS. HILL: Got it, okay, because I saw the one from
14 Yermak on August 29th, so --

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't think the Ukrainians knew
16 it was being withheld back in July.

17 MS. HILL: Only in August.

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah.

19 MS. HILL: So you knew in July that the aid was being
20 withheld?

21 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I knew what Taylor told me.

22 MS. HILL: Okay. And so by September 8th, you said:
23 Guys, multiple conversations with Zelensky and POTUS, let's
24 talk. Right?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Which time?

1 MS. HILL: That was the 11:20 a.m.

2 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. I don't recall. I see it.
3 I don't recall the -- I don't recall the conversations.

4 MS. HILL: You don't recall the conversations with
5 Zelensky and --

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't -- I don't recall the
7 conversations. I'd need more refreshment to recall the
8 conversations.

9 MS. HILL: Okay. Well, then that same day in that same
10 text message chain, Bill Taylor says: "Gordon and I just
11 spoke. I can brief you" -- I'm assuming this is to Volker --
12 "I can brief you if you and Gordon didn't connect." Does
13 that refresh your memory at all?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. I mean, I obviously must
15 have relayed to Bill Taylor what I talked about, but I don't
16 remember what it is.

17 MS. HILL: Okay. So there's nothing right around this
18 time of September 8th or 9th where you feel like -- is this
19 when the red flag is really hitting for you?

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You know, this is just before I
21 believe that -- this is just before I got the text from
22 Taylor talking about that everything's connected. I believe
23 that's -- this is one day before I got that text.

24 MS. HILL: Okay. And then --

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: And that was the text that said, I

1 hope this isn't being, you know, withheld for political
2 reasons, or something to that effect.

3 MS. HILL: Right.

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: And that's when I made the phone
5 call to --

6 MS. HILL: The President.

7 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: -- the President, yeah.

8 MS. HILL: But that night, on the 8th, you don't recall
9 what you and Taylor were talking about or what you and Volker
10 were talking about?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know if it may have led up
12 to that text. He may have said something to warn, that I'm
13 feeling this, but then I got the text on the 9th, and then I
14 knew conclusively that he was concerned.

15 MS. HILL: But on the 8th is when you said that there
16 were multiple conversations with Zelensky and POTUS. What do
17 you think that was?

18 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know, because I don't
19 think I would have talked to POTUS the day before I talked to
20 him again. I don't think I talked to him twice in 2 days.

21 MS. HILL: So you don't know what you might have been
22 referring to there?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, I don't.

24 MS. HILL: Okay. Okay, thank you.

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you. Sorry.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: I promise you're almost at the end. I
2 just have a couple questions, my staff has a couple of
3 cleanup questions.

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Great.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: And then, unless Mr. Swalwell has a
6 burning question, I think we're done on our side.

7 MR. CASTOR: And I have one or two.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: I wanted to ask you, at the press
9 conference today with Chief of Staff Mulvaney, he was asked:
10 "So he," meaning the President, "was never realistically
11 entertaining a meeting with President Zelensky?"

12 And Mr. Mulvaney's answer was: "I mean, I -- we -- we
13 get asked by foreign leaders all the time to either come
14 visit their country or to have them come visit here, and we
15 go -- try to be courteous and say yes. And some of them
16 we're able to accommodate and some of them we are not, but I
17 do not remember -- excuse me, I'm going to answer her
18 question -- that I don't remember serious conversation about
19 setting up an actual meeting. There were no dates discussed.
20 There was not -- I -- I saw that as one of the typical
21 pleasantries that we have, and I don't think it was dangling
22 a -- a meeting or anything like that."

23 I take it, Ambassador, that was not your understanding
24 of the situation when that letter went out?

25 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not at all.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Noble.

2 BY MR. NOBLE:

3 Q Ambassador, going back to September 1st, the
4 meetings in Warsaw, the bilat between Vice President Pence
5 and President Zelensky.

6 A Yes.

7 Q So this was after the July 25th call between
8 President Trump and President Zelensky, correct?

9 A What was the Warsaw date?

10 Q September 1st.

11 A Yes.

12 Q And it's also after the Politico article made
13 public that the U.S. had frozen the aid to Ukraine on August
14 28th.

15 A I think that's right.

16 Q A few days later after that, right?

17 A Yeah.

18 Q Do you recall any conversation between Vice
19 President Pence and President Zelensky about the frozen aid
20 or the White House visit?

21 A I sat in, as I said, I sat in on a bilat with about
22 20 people, at least, on each side, so maybe 30 or 40 people
23 total. And I'm sure there were contemporaneous notes taken
24 of the meeting. And as I also testified, I don't believe
25 there was a private pull-aside. I think it was one of these

1 large bilats.

2 And I don't -- I don't remember if President Zelensky
3 did one of his quips like, "When am I going to get my date?"
4 which he did when he and the President had their bilat in New
5 York. He may have done that. He's been -- he was a little
6 snarky about it, because it had been withheld for so long.
7 And this is new news to me about Chief of Staff Mulvaney.

8 As far as the aid is concerned, I don't remember him
9 bringing it up, at least in the big bilat. Now, again, I
10 don't know if he and Vice President Pence had a private
11 conversation afterwards, but I don't recall.

12 Q So you don't recall Vice President Pence saying
13 something to the effect that the U.S. was not going to lift
14 the freeze at that time to President Zelensky?

15 A I don't -- again, he may have done -- I don't
16 remember it. I honestly don't.

17 Q Do you know whether Vice President Pence had been
18 briefed or had read the transcript of the July 25th call at
19 that point?

20 A I don't know. I never asked him.

21 Q And then the next day, September 2nd, I believe you
22 said Secretary Pompeo traveled to Brussels and you had
23 meetings with Secretary Pompeo.

24 A Correct.

25 Q So that's the day after you had that text message

1 exchange with Ambassador Taylor where he said or asked: "Are
2 we now saying that security assistance and White House
3 meeting are conditioned on investigations?"

4 Did you discuss Ambassador Taylor's concerns with
5 Secretary Pompeo about the linkage?

6 A No. And the reason I didn't was we were so
7 consumed with the meetings, which were very fragile, getting
8 those meetings scheduled, and then potentially losing them
9 after President Trump decided not to travel to Warsaw,
10 because we were all going to travel together, that I was
11 totally focused on the EU meetings. And I didn't discuss
12 anything with Secretary Pompeo that I can recall other than
13 the EU meetings with the four leaders.

14 Q Did you ever discuss with Secretary Pompeo the
15 linkage between security assistance, White House meeting, and
16 the investigations?

17 A I think the only thing I did was encourage
18 Ambassador Taylor to deal with it and to call Secretary
19 Pompeo.

20 Q You never had any direct discussions with Secretary
21 Pompeo?

22 A I don't recall any. I mean, I do recall I was
23 highly focused on the four leaders when we were there. It
24 was a very tight schedule.

25 Q Did you ever discuss Rudy Giuliani with Secretary

1 Pompeo?

2 A Only in general terms.

3 Q And what did you discuss?

4 A That he's involved in affairs. And Pompeo rolled
5 his eyes and said: Yes, it's something we have to deal with.

6 Q What about his counselor, Ulrich Brechbuhl? You
7 said you had lots of conversations with Mr. Brechbuhl?

8 A On and off, yes.

9 Q Did you discuss the linkage between the security
10 assistance, the White House meeting, and the investigations
11 with him?

12 A I don't believe I did, but I don't recall.

13 Q What about Rudy Giuliani, did you discuss Giuliani
14 with Brechbuhl?

15 A I may have. Again, people usually smiled when they
16 heard Rudy's name because he was always swirling around
17 somewhere.

18 Q Yeah, but, I mean, he was causing serious issues in
19 the U.S. relationship with Ukraine. Did you raise those
20 concerns with --

21 A Listen, the State Department was fully aware of the
22 issues, and there was very little they could do about it if
23 the President decided he wanted his lawyer involved.

24 Q And does that include Secretary Pompeo and his
25 counselor, Ulrich Brechbuhl?

1 A My speculation is yes, that they hit a brick wall
2 when it came to getting rid of Mr. Giuliani.

3 Q I just want to ask you about whether you know of
4 anything about a September 17th phone call between Secretary
5 Pompeo and the Ukrainian Foreign Minister?

6 A Would that be with Mr. Prystaiko?

7 Q I believe so. You can pronounce it, I can't.

8 A What was the question?

9 Q Are you familiar with the September 17th call
10 between the Secretary and the Foreign Minister?

11 A I'm aware they had a call. I don't believe I ever
12 saw a readout.

13 Q So you don't know what the content --

14 A I don't.

15 Q What about a September 18th call between Vice
16 President Pence and President Zelensky?

17 A Again, don't recall. Again, this was the
18 disorganization. We weren't kept in the loop that the call
19 was going to occur. We weren't asked to listen in. So a lot
20 of this was catchup.

21 Q Okay. You've had some testimony today about the
22 United Nations General Assembly and the meeting between
23 President Trump and President Zelensky. Could you just
24 describe for us kind of their interactions during UNGA?

25 A Yeah. I mean, it was a typical bilat where you had

1 a press scrum prior to the formal meeting and a lot of
2 questions shouted. And, you know, we all know what President
3 Trump said. It was widely reported. No pressure, it was a
4 perfect meeting, you heard all of that. Then the press was
5 ushered out.

6 And President Trump and President Zelensky had sort of a
7 colloquy back and forth, and President Zelensky jokingly
8 said: When am I going to get my date for the White House?
9 I'm still -- I had my invitation, where's the date? And
10 President Trump sort of deferred the -- you know, punted on
11 the question, didn't answer it.

12 Q Is that -- are you referring to the press
13 conference they held together on television, or was this the
14 conversation that also occurred in private?

15 A I think it occurred in private as well, yeah.
16 Private, I mean, there were 30 people in the room, probably.

17 Q Was there any discussion during the private session
18 about the July 25th call or President Trump's interest in
19 Ukraine pursuing the investigations that he discussed during
20 that call?

21 A I don't recall that.

22 Q What about -- did they have -- were there any
23 discussions about the investigations with any other officials
24 on the side that President Trump had?

25 A I wasn't with President Trump for any other

1 discussions. I came into the bilat and then I left.

2 Q Just for the -- with President Zelensky?

3 A Yes.

4 Q What about you, did you have any discussions with
5 other officials regarding the July 25th call?

6 A I don't recall, no. I don't recall having.

7 Q I just have some final questions about, of all
8 things, recordkeeping.

9 So you say you used your personal -- or you had a dual
10 cell phone for personal and business. Are you familiar with
11 the Federal Records Act and its requirements for
12 recordkeeping?

13 A I am.

14 Q So, obviously, you used WhatsApp to communicate
15 with other U.S. officials. Did you also use WhatsApp to
16 communicate with foreign officials?

17 A Yeah, it's very customary in Europe. Everyone uses
18 WhatsApp. That's one of the only mediums that foreign
19 leaders use in Europe.

20 Q Did you also use -- did you ever use personal email
21 to communicate with foreign leaders or U.S. Government
22 officials?

23 A I tried to avoid it, but when I did I also tried to
24 copy my State email, because the State email is really hard
25 to send attachments or forward. It's just -- it's really a

1 cumbersome system.

2 Q So did you not always follow that requirement to
3 copy your State email?

4 A When I didn't, I tried to remedy the situation by
5 moving it over. But as far as my counsel is concerned, I
6 think I'm now in complete compliance with that act.

7 Is that correct?

8 MR. LUSKIN: That is correct.

9 BY MR. NOBLE:

10 Q Did you do it within 20 days --

11 A I don't recall.

12 Q -- of when you initially sent the message or
13 communication?

14 A I don't recall.

15 Q What did you do to comply with the recordkeeping
16 requirements as it pertains to your WhatsApp messages?

17 MR. LUSKIN: They've all been forwarded to the State
18 Department electronically.

19 MR. NOBLE: Did that occur within 20 days of the
20 communication?

21 MR. MEADOWS: Counsel, with all due respect --

22 MR. SWALWELL: He's asking the question. No, no, no.
23 Mark, he gets to ask the questions.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, gentlemen, gentlemen.

25 MR. MEADOWS: If we're going to get into the 20 days,

1 Adam, let me just tell you what's good for the goose is good
2 for the gander. Okay? And I promise you if you want --

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the gander endured 2-1/2 years of
4 Benghazi over emails, so --

5 MR. MEADOWS: I'm looking for 30,000 emails, Adam,
6 30,000 emails.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: I think it is appropriate to --

8 MR. MEADOWS: You want to talk about 20 days? Come on.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: I think it is appropriate to ask --
10 excuse me.

11 MR. MEADOWS: It is 9 hours and now we're getting into
12 this kind of crap, and that's what it is.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. I think it is appropriate to
14 ask whether the Ambassador provided his text messages --

15 MR. MEADOWS: And he said yes.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Let me finish. Contemporaneously when
17 they were produced or only recently when this matter became
18 under investigation.

19 So would you please respond, Ambassador?

20 MR. MEADOWS: Listen, it's under my committee. I know
21 it. If you want to go back and forth --

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, then you should want to hear the
23 answer.

24 MR. MEADOWS: I want to hear it. He said they were
25 preserved, and now we're going to try to talk about 20 days.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: No. His counsel said that they were in
2 compliance now. The question is --

3 MR. MEADOWS: Did you have a personal server, Ambassador
4 Sondland?

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me, Mr.
6 Meadows.

7 Ambassador, did you contemporaneously provide your
8 WhatsApp messages to the State Department, per the
9 requirements of the Federal Records Act, or was that done
10 only recently upon the initiation of the investigation?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I was told that because of my
12 phone having a dual SIM that everything wound up on the State
13 server because one of the SIMs is my State SIM, my State
14 email. That was not correct. And none of those texts or
15 those WhatsApps wound up on the State server. They wound up
16 just staying on the phone. So I did recently comply and put
17 them on the State server.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: And how recently?

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: In the last week or 2, I think.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

21 BY MR. NOBLE:

22 Q One other question on the text messages. Did you
23 delete any of your text messages after that exchange with
24 Ambassador Taylor on September 9th, or your WhatsApp messages
25 or emails?

1 A Did I delete any --

2 Q Did you delete any of your WhatsApp messages, text
3 messages, or emails after September 9th when you had that
4 exchange with Ambassador Taylor?

5 A I may have, but I don't recall. I occasionally
6 delete texts that are personal texts. I don't recall.

7 Q Anything pertaining to Ukraine?

8 A I'd have to go back and look. I don't recall.

9 Q Do you know whether those were preserved?

10 A Everything that's there was preserved.

11 Q But some may have been deleted before you turned
12 over your messages?

13 A Again, I don't want to swear to it, because I get a
14 lot of texts. So --

15 Q I mean, do you have any specific -- I mean, so at
16 that point, right, you're sending this email that President
17 Trump is claiming there is no quid pro quo. You're like
18 let's stop talking about this over text message. At that
19 point, did you delete any of your messages?

20 A No, at that point I did not delete anything on that
21 stream.

22 Q Well, any other stream relating to Ukraine?

23 A Again, I don't recall. I will get back to you if
24 you'd like me to look into it.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Swalwell.

1 MR. SWALWELL: Thank you, Chairman.

2 Do you have a daily read book as an Ambassador?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sorry?

4 MR. SWALWELL: Do you have a daily read book? Like, you
5 mentioned cables that come across your desk.

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I get them electronically, and
7 sometimes I get a read book, depending on where I am.

8 MR. SWALWELL: Do you get press clippings every day?

9 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I get a summary.

10 MR. SWALWELL: Who compiles that for you?

11 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The staff.

12 MR. SWALWELL: Who was compiling that for you in the
13 spring of 2019?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall.

15 MR. SWALWELL: Okay. And that would -- did those press
16 clippings, do they relate to Ukraine as well?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't read a lot of the press
18 clippings. I have way too much to do to sit and read. I
19 could read press clippings all day long.

20 MR. SWALWELL: Okay. But they are routinely customarily
21 provided for you?

22 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They are provided for everyone.
23 There is a press clipping summary for the entire mission.

24 MR. SWALWELL: But on a daily basis, you will receive
25 press clippings?

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No. No, it's all done
2 electronically for the mission.

3 MR. SWALWELL: Okay. But I'm asking, your email
4 address, on a daily basis you receive press clippings as it
5 relates to your duties?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do, along with everyone else.

7 MR. SWALWELL: Okay.

8 I yield back.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Over to the minority if they have any
10 additional questions.

11 MR. JORDAN: Ambassador, President Zelensky wins his
12 election, I think, April 21st, 2019, overwhelmingly, and then
13 shortly thereafter gets a call from President Trump, a
14 congratulatory call. Is that right?

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I understand that happened, yes.

16 MR. JORDAN: And then sort of the next -- I'm looking at
17 your timeline -- the next event is the inauguration
18 approximately a month later, May 20th, 2019.

19 Did you start working on -- I mean, based on the 8, 9
20 hours you've been here, you've talked about your focus was
21 getting a second call and an official meeting between the
22 Presidents.

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: My preference would have been just
24 to go right to a meeting, but when I found out that the
25 meeting was going to be problematic as it kept getting

1 delayed, I pushed for a call at a minimum.

2 MR. JORDAN: Yeah. And I think you described it as you
3 wanted to arrange a working phone call.

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

5 MR. JORDAN: Okay.

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The congratulatory call was
7 probably a very short, "great job, talk to you soon."

8 MR. JORDAN: We've all got them.

9 So did you start working on that pretty soon in this
10 whole continuum, as you've described it? Did you start like
11 late April, early May, start, like, you know, we need to get
12 these guys together?

13 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think the delegation when we
14 came back from the inauguration -- are you talking about
15 after the inauguration or between the election and the
16 inauguration?

17 MR. JORDAN: I'm talking whenever you decided it was
18 time to get a working -- to arrange a working phone call.

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think -- I don't know how much
20 activity we really had between the election and the
21 inauguration, because the inauguration was fairly soon after
22 the election.

23 MR. JORDAN: Okay. So is it fair to say you started
24 thinking about putting together the second phone call between
25 President Trump and President Zelensky when you had the

1 delegation there in Ukraine on May 20th, 2019, for President
2 Zelensky's inauguration?

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think we really started that in
4 earnest after the briefing with President Trump on the 23rd.

5 MR. JORDAN: Was there any discussion on May 20th, 2019,
6 with the folks who were part of the delegation in Ukraine at
7 the inauguration?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: About a meeting or a phone call?

9 MR. JORDAN: Yes.

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: There may have been. I mean, we
11 had a lot of dinners and lunches, and it probably came up,
12 but I don't remember specifically.

13 MR. JORDAN: Okay. And, again, and the folks at the
14 inauguration were Mr. Perry, Secretary Perry, Senator
15 Johnson, Ambassador Volker, Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, those
16 were the individuals that were part of the delegation?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: And myself.

18 MR. JORDAN: And yourself.

19 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

20 MR. JORDAN: Okay. And so you think you started talking
21 about we need to get these guys together on a working phone
22 call and at some kind of meeting, you think that started May
23 20th?

24 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It could have.

25 MR. JORDAN: Okay. Then the next meeting is at the

1 White House a few days later, where you're debriefing and
2 you're talking about the situation, what happened a few days
3 earlier at the inauguration, correct?

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

5 MR. JORDAN: All right. And you started to talk then to
6 President Trump and amongst yourselves again about the idea
7 to get this phone call, get this meeting?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, we only had the one
9 conversation with President Trump, which, as I testified,
10 didn't go very well, when he said talk to Rudy.

11 MR. JORDAN: Right.

12 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Then we regrouped afterwards and
13 said we need to really start pushing for the meeting or the
14 phone call, because then we found out 3 or 4 days later that
15 an invitation had been issued, which was unusual, considering
16 President Trump's attitude toward Ukraine, that he would
17 issue an invitation.

18 MR. JORDAN: Okay. So then I get to -- and that was --
19 and was everyone in agreement?

20 Everyone wanted this phone call to happen starting clear
21 back May 20th at the inauguration. The President didn't want
22 it.

23 MR. LUSKIN: Who do you mean by everyone, so we can be
24 clear?

25 MR. JORDAN: Let me say it this way. Let's just jump to

1 the July 10th meeting.

2 So you wanted a phone call.

3 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: July 10th meeting?

4 MR. JORDAN: Moving ahead now.

5 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh, gotcha, gotcha, gotcha.

6 MR. JORDAN: You wanted a phone call. Ambassador Volker
7 wanted a phone call. Ambassador Taylor wanted a phone call.
8 Secretary Perry wanted a phone call. And you wanted a phone
9 call with no preconditions. Is that right?

10 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

11 MR. JORDAN: All right. But you get to this July 10th
12 meeting, and you made that argument, and then at the end of
13 that paragraph in your testimony where you described that
14 meeting, you said the NSC did not.

15 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

16 MR. JORDAN: And why?

17 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They would never really articulate
18 it other than there's no reason to have a call.

19 MR. JORDAN: Okay.

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That was the only -- the only
21 thing I could get out of them was: Why aren't we having this
22 call? There's no reason to have a call.

23 MR. JORDAN: What I don't understand is the NSC was part
24 of the inauguration, the delegation who was there for
25 President Zelensky's inauguration. Lieutenant Colonel --

1 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, Mr. Vindman was there, and
2 he was a, you know, low-level NSC person. Dr. Hill wasn't
3 there. Ambassador Bolton wasn't there.

4 MR. JORDAN: Did Mr. Vindman express any reservations to
5 a second phone call in the time you spent with him at the
6 inauguration or any subsequent meetings or discussions you
7 may have had with him?

8 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know. I didn't -- I
9 didn't consider him to be a champion of the phone call. I
10 thought everyone else in the delegation was a strong champion
11 of the phone call.

12 MR. JORDAN: Was Mr. Vindman opposed to the phone call
13 clear back in May? Did you get any indication of that?

14 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't remember when he was
15 opposed, but I think it became apparent during the meeting --
16 one of the meetings on June -- July 10th that he didn't think
17 it was a good idea because there was no reason for it.

18 MR. JORDAN: And he hadn't expressed any concern in any
19 other interactions you had?

20 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not prior to that, no.

21 MR. JORDAN: Not prior to that, and not at the May 20th
22 inauguration in Ukraine?

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't think he -- you know, to
24 answer your question exactly, I don't think he expressed an
25 opinion that we should have one or that we shouldn't have one

1 until the July 10th meeting.

2 MR. JORDAN: And was Mr. Vindman -- my understanding is
3 he was not in the May 23rd meeting at the White House.

4 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: He was not in the Oval, correct.

5 MR. JORDAN: He was not in that meeting?

6 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

7 MR. JORDAN: Okay.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Ambassador, I want to thank you.

9 MR. JORDAN: If I could ask one thing, Mr. Chairman?

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

11 MR. JORDAN: Just before we close, I just want to ask
12 you some questions. Do we know the schedule? Is there a
13 deposition tomorrow?

14 THE CHAIRMAN: I think we have released the schedule,
15 have we not?

16 MR. BITAR: There's nothing tomorrow.

17 MR. JORDAN: Nothing tomorrow, okay. And then --

18 MR. BITAR: There's a formal notice that has gone to all
19 committee members and staff.

20 MR. CASTOR: I'm in the SCIF.

21 MR. BITAR: No, it was already entered earlier today.

22 MR. JORDAN: And can I just ask, Mr. Chairman, for next
23 week, are there any days where there are two -- we had heard
24 rumblings of this -- any days where there are two depositions
25 going on the same day?

1 THE CHAIRMAN: I think the short answer is at the moment
2 we think there's only one, but there are witnesses that we --

3 MR. NOBLE: We have noticed two for 2 days.
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1 [6:51 p.m.]

2 THE CHAIRMAN: So we have noticed two? Oh, okay.

3 MR. NOBLE: When we get confirmation, we will let the
4 minority know right away.

5 MR. JORDAN: I'm guess I'm asking --

6 MR. ZELDIN: On 2 days.

7 MR. JORDAN: If two people agree to come the same day, I
8 guess I'm asking are they going to be be simultaneous?

9 MR. GOLDMAN: You can't be in two places at once?

10 THE CHAIRMAN: We will have to decide if that should be
11 the case, whether to move one of them, or whether to do them
12 concurrently in different rooms.

13 MR. JORDAN: Mr. Chairman, I point out you guys have got
14 a few more staff than we've got. So we would I think be a
15 little reluctant to have two depositions happening at the --
16 simultaneously. If we could stack the -- - we're willing to
17 stay all day.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: You know, I would just say, first of all,
19 that -- let me go back to thanking the Ambassador for his
20 willingness to answer the subpoena, and for his long
21 testimony today. We appreciate your coming in and you are
22 excused.

23 AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
24 you for conducting a very pleasant hearing.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

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[Whereupon, at 6:53 p.m., the deposition was concluded.]

PAUL

HASTINGS

robertluskin@paulhastings.com

November 4, 2019

Adam B. Schiff
Chairman
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Sworn Testimony of Ambassador Gordon Sondland

Dear Chairman Schiff:

Pursuant to Rule 8 of the 116th Congress Regulations for Use of Deposition Authority and Rule 8(e)(2)(B) of the Rules for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, please find attached the Declaration of Ambassador Gordon Sondland, which supplements his testimony of October 17, 2019. In accordance with the House and Committee rules, this letter and the attached Declaration should be included as an appendix to his sworn testimony.

Ambassador Sondland has reviewed and approved the attached Declaration and his sworn testimony. His signature on the attached Declaration shall serve, in accordance with the relevant rules, as his affirmation that he has also reviewed and approved the transcript of his testimony.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Luskin
Kwame J. Manley

PAUL HASTINGS LLP

DECLARATION OF AMBASSADOR GORDON D. SONDLAND

I, Gordon Sondland, do hereby swear and affirm as follows:

1. I have reviewed the October 22, 2019, opening statement of Ambassador William Taylor. I have also reviewed the October 31, 2019, opening statement of Tim Morrison. These two opening statements have refreshed my recollection about certain conversations in early September 2019.

2. Ambassador Taylor recalls that I told Mr. Morrison in early September 2019 that the resumption of U.S. aid to Ukraine had become tied to a public statement to be issued by Ukraine agreeing to investigate Burisma. Ambassador Taylor recalls that Mr. Morrison told Ambassador Taylor that I told Mr. Morrison that I had conveyed this message to Mr. Yermak on September 1, 2019, in connection with Vice President Pence's visit to Warsaw and a meeting with President Zelensky. Mr. Morrison recalls that I said to him in early September that resumption of U.S. aid to Ukraine might be conditioned on a public statement reopening the Burisma investigation.

3. In my October 17, 2019 prepared testimony and in my deposition, I made clear that I had understood sometime after our May 23, 2019, White House debriefing that scheduling a White House visit for President Zelensky was conditioned upon President Zelensky's agreement to make a public anti-corruption statement. This condition had been communicated by Rudy Giuliani, with whom President Trump directed Ambassador Volker, Secretary Perry, and me, on May 23, 2019, to discuss issues related to the President's concerns about Ukraine. Ambassador Volker, Secretary Perry, and I understood that satisfying Mr. Giuliani was a condition for scheduling the White House visit, which we all strongly believed to be in the mutual interest of the United States and Ukraine.

4. With respect to the September 1, 2019, Warsaw meeting, the conversations described in Ambassador Taylor's and Mr. Morrison's opening statements have refreshed my recollection about conversations involving the suspension of U.S. aid, which had become public only days earlier. I always believed that suspending aid to Ukraine was ill-advised, although I did not know (and still do not know) when, why, or by whom the aid was suspended. However, by the beginning of September 2019, and in the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I presumed that the aid suspension had become linked to the proposed anti-corruption statement. As I said in my prepared testimony, security aid to Ukraine was in our vital national interest and should not have been delayed for any reason. And it would have been natural for me to have voiced what I had presumed to Ambassador Taylor, Senator Johnson, the Ukrainians, and Mr. Morrison.

5. Also, I now do recall a conversation on September 1, 2019, in Warsaw with Mr. Yermak. This brief pull-aside conversation followed the larger meeting involving Vice President Pence and President Zelensky, in which President Zelensky had raised the issue of the suspension of U.S. aid to Ukraine directly with Vice President Pence. After that large meeting, I now recall speaking individually with Mr. Yermak, where I said that resumption of U.S. aid would likely not occur until Ukraine provided the public anti-corruption statement that we had been discussing for many weeks. I also recall some question as to whether the public statement could come from the newly appointed Ukrainian Prosecutor General, rather than from President Zelensky directly.

6. Soon thereafter, I came to understand that, in fact, the public statement would need to come directly from President Zelensky himself. I do not specifically recall how I learned this, but I believe that the information may have come either from Mr. Giuliani or from

Ambassador Volker, who may have discussed this with Mr. Giuliani. In a later conversation with Ambassador Taylor, I told him that I had been mistaken about whether a public statement could come from the Prosecutor General; I had come to understand that the public statement would have to come from President Zelensky himself.

7. Finally, as of this writing, I cannot specifically recall if I had one or two phone calls with President Trump in the September 6-9 time frame. Despite repeated requests to the White House and the State Department, I have not been granted access to all of the phone records, and I would like to review those phone records, along with any notes and other documents that may exist, to determine if I can provide more complete testimony to assist Congress. However, although I have no specific recollection of phone calls during this period with Ambassador Taylor or Mr. Morrison, I have no reason to question the substance of their recollection about my September 1 conversation with Mr. Yermak.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the aforementioned is true.

Executed on November 4, 2019.



The Honorable Gordon D. Sondland
United States Ambassador to the European Union