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IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY: AMBASSADOR GORDON SONDLAND

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

U.S. House of Representatives,

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence,

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:09 a.m., in Room 1100, Longworth House Office Building, the Honorable Adam Schiff (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Schiff, Himes, Sewell, Carson, Speier, Quigley, Swalwell, Castro, Heck, Welch, Maloney, Demings, Krishnamoorthi, Nunes, Conaway, Turner, Wenstrup, Stewart, Stefanik, Hurd, Ratcliffe, and Jordan.

The Chairman. The committee will come to order.

Good morning, everyone. This is the fifth in a series of public hearings the committee will be holding as part of the House of Representatives' impeachment inquiry. Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time. There is a quorum present.

We will proceed today in the same fashion as our other hearings. I'll make an opening statement, and then Ranking Member Nunes will have the opportunity to make a statement. Then we will turn to our witness for an opening statement, and then to questions.

For audience members, we welcome you and respect your interest in being here. In turn, we ask for your respect as we proceed with today's hearing. It is the intention of the committee to proceed without disruptions. As chairman, I'll make all necessary and appropriate steps to maintain order and to ensure the committee is run in accordance with House rules and House Resolution 660.

With that, I now recognize myself to give an opening statement in the impeachment inquiry into Donald J. Trump, the 45th President of the United States.

This morning, we will hear from Gordon Sondland, the American ambassador to the European Union. We are here today as part of the House of Representatives' impeachment inquiry because President Donald Trump sought to condition military aid to Ukraine and an Oval Office meeting with the new Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, in exchange for politically motivated investigations that Trump believed would help his reelection campaign.

The first investigation was of a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, was responsible for interfering in the 2016 election. The second investigation

that Trump demanded was into a political rival that he apparently feared most, Joe Biden.

Trump sought to weaken Biden and to refute the fact that his own election campaign in 2016 had been helped by a Russian hacking and dumping operation and Russian social media campaign directed by Vladimir Putin to help Trump.

Trump's scheme undermined military and diplomatic support for a key ally and undercut U.S. anticorruption efforts in Ukraine. Trump put his personal and political interests above those of the United States. As Ambassador Sondland would later tell career Foreign Service Officer David Holmes immediately after speaking to the President, Trump "did not give a [expletive]" about Ukraine. He cares about "big stuff" that benefits him, like the "Biden investigations" that Rudy Giuliani was pushing.

Ambassador Sondland was a skilled dealmaker, but in trying to satisfy a directive from the President found himself increasingly embroiled in an effort to press the new Ukrainian President that deviated sharply from the norm in terms of both policy and process.

In February, Ambassador Sondland traveled to Ukraine on his first official trip to that country. While in Kyiv, he met with then U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch and found her to be an excellent diplomat with a deep command of Ukrainian internal dynamics.

On April 21st, Zelensky was elected President of Ukraine and spoke to President Trump, who congratulated him and said he would "look into" attending Zelensky's inauguration, but pledged to send someone at a "very, very high level."

Between the time of that call and the inaugural on May 20, Trump's attitude towards Ukraine hardened. On May 13th, the President ordered Vice President Mike Pence not to attend Zelensky's inauguration, opting instead to dispatch the self-dubbed "Three Amigos": Energy Secretary Rick Perry, Ambassador Sondland, and Ambassador

Kurt Volker, the special representative for Ukraine negotiations.

After returning from the inauguration, members of the U.S. delegation briefed President Trump on their encouraging first interactions with the new Ukrainian administration. They urged the President to meet with Zelensky, but the President's reaction was decidedly hostile. The President's order was clear, however: "Talk with Rudy."

During this meeting, Ambassador Sondland first became aware of what Giuliani and the President were really interested in. "This whole thing was sort of a continuum," he testified at his deposition, "starting at the May 23rd meeting, ending up at the end of the line when the transcript of the call came out." It was a continuum, he would explain, that became more insidious over time.

The Three Amigos were disappointed with Trump's directive to engage Giuliani, but vowed to press ahead. Ambassador Sondland testified, "We could abandon the goal of a White House meeting for President Zelensky," which the group deemed "crucial" for U.S.-Ukrainian relations, "or we could do as President Trump directed and talk to Mr. Giuliani to address the President's concerns. We chose the latter path."

In the coming weeks, Ambassador Sondland got more clearly involved in Ukraine policymaking, starting with the June 4 U.S. mission to the EU Independence Day event in Brussels 1 month early. Secretary Perry, Ulrich Brechbuhl, the State Department counselor, and Sondland met with President Zelensky, whom Sondland had invited personally, on the margins of the event.

On June 10, 2019, Secretary Perry organized a conference call with Sondland, then National Security Advisor John Bolton, Volker, and others. They reviewed Ukraine's strategy with Bolton and decided that Perry, Sondland, and Volker would assist Ambassador Bill Taylor, the new acting ambassador in Kyiv, on Ukraine and discuss

Trump's desire for Rudy Giuliani to be somehow involved.

At the end of the call, according to Sondland, "we all felt very comfortable with the strategy moving forward."

Two weeks later, on June 27th, Ambassador Sondland called Taylor to say that, quote, "Zelensky needed to make clear to President Trump that he was not standing in the way of investigations."

On July 10th, Ambassador Sondland and other U.S. officials met at the White House with a group of U.S. and Ukrainian officials. Participants in the meeting have told us that Ambassador Sondland invoked Acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and said that the White House meeting sought by the Ukrainian President with Trump would happen only if Ukraine undertook certain investigations. National Security Advisor Bolton abruptly ended the meeting upon hearing this.

Undeterred, Sondland brought the Ukrainian delegation downstairs to another part of the White House and was more explicit. According to witnesses, Ukraine needed to investigate the Bidens or Burisma and the 2016 election interference if they wanted to get a meeting at all.

Following this meeting in July, Bolton said that he would not "be part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up on this."

Sondland continued to press for a meeting, but he and others were willing to settle for a phone call as an intermediate step. On July 21, Taylor texted Sondland that, quote, "President Zelensky is sensitive about Ukraine being taken seriously, not merely as an instrument of Washington domestic reelection politics."

Sondland responded, "Absolutely. But we need to get the conversation started and the relationship built, irrespective of the pretext," so that Zelensky and Trump could meet and "all of this will be fixed."

On July 25th, the day of the Trump-Zelensky call, Volker had lunch in Kyiv with a senior aide to Ukrainian President Zelensky and later texted the aide to say that he had "heard from the White House -- assuming President Z convinces Trump he will investigate, get to the bottom of what happened in 2016, we will nail down date for visit to Washington. Good luck."

Ambassador Sondland spoke to President Trump a few minutes before the call was placed, but was not on the call.

During that now infamous phone call with Zelensky, Trump responded to the Ukrainian expression of appreciation for U.S. defense support and request to buy more Javelin antitank missiles by saying, "I would like you to do us a favor, though."

Trump asked Zelensky to investigate the discredited 2016 conspiracy theory and, even more ominously, look into the Bidens. Neither had been part of the official preparatory material for the call, but they were in Donald Trump's personal interest and the interests of his reelection campaign. And the Ukrainian President knew about both in advance, in part because of Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Sondland's efforts to make him aware of what the President was demanding.

Around this time, Ambassador Sondland became aware of the suspension of security assistance to Ukraine, which had been announced on a secure interagency videoconference on July 18th, telling us that it was "extremely odd" that nobody involved in making and implementing policy towards Ukraine knew why the aid had been put on hold.

During August, Sondland participated in conference calls and text messages with Volker and Giuliani and said that "the gist of every call was what was going to go in the press statement."

In an August 9 text message with Volker, Sondland stated, "I think POTUS really

wants the deliverable," which was, according to Sondland, a deliverable public statement that President Trump wanted to see or hear before a White House meeting could happen.

On September 1, Ambassador Sondland participated in Vice President Pence's bilateral meeting with Zelensky in Warsaw, during which Zelensky raised the suspended security assistance. Following that meeting, Sondland approached a senior Ukrainian official to tell him that he believed "what could help them move the aid was if the Ukrainian prosecutor general would go to the mike and announce that he was opening the Burisma investigation."

Sondland told Taylor that he had "made a mistake" by telling the Ukrainians that an Oval Office meeting "was dependent on a public announcement of investigations. In fact, everything was dependent on such an announcement, including security assistance."

But even the announcement by the prosecutor general would not satisfy the President. On September 7, Sondland spoke to the President and told Tim Morrison and Bill Taylor about the call shortly thereafter. The President said that although this was "not a quid pro quo," if President Zelensky did not clear things up in public, we would be at a stalemate.

Moreover, an announcement by the prosecutor general would not be enough. President Zelensky must personally -- must announce personally that he would open the investigations.

Sondland told Taylor that President Trump is a businessman. When a businessman is about to sign a check to someone who owes him something, he said, the businessman asks that person to pay up before signing the check. The "check" referred to here was the U.S. military assistance to Ukraine, and Ukraine had to pay up with investigations.

Throughout early September, Volker and Sondland sought to close the deal on an

agreement that Zelensky would announce investigations. After Taylor texted Sondland on September 9, 2019, that "I think it's crazy to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign."

Sixteen days later, the transcript of the July 25th call was made public and the American people learned the truth of how our President tried to take advantage of a vulnerable ally.

Now it is up to Congress, as the people's representatives, to determine what response is appropriate. If the President abused his power and invited foreign interference in our elections, if he sought to condition, coerce, extort, or bribe an ally into conducting investigations to aid his reelection campaign and did so by withholding official acts, a White House meeting or hundreds of millions of dollars of needed military aid, it will be up to us to decide whether those acts are compatible with the office of the Presidency.

Finally, I want to say a word about the President and Secretary Pompeo's obstruction of this investigation.

We have not received a single document from the State Department, and, as Ambassador Sondland's opening statement today will make clear, those documents bear directly on this investigation and this impeachment inquiry.

I think we know now, based on a sample of the documents attached to Ambassador Sondland's statement, that the knowledge of this scheme was far and wide, and included, among others, Secretary of State Pompeo, as well as the Vice President.

We can see why Secretary Pompeo and President Trump have made such a concerted and across-the-board effort to obstruct this investigation and this impeachment inquiry. And I will just say this: They do so at their own peril. I remind the President that Article 3 of the impeachment articles drafted against President Nixon

was his refusal to obey the subpoenas of Congress.

And with that, I recognize Ranking Member Nunes for any remarks that he would wish to make.

[The statement of The Chairman follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

Mr. Nunes. I thank the gentleman.

As we learned last night, story time last night, we get story time first thing this morning.

Ambassador Sondland, welcome. I'm glad you're here. I'm really not glad you are here, but welcome to the fifth day of this circus.

As I've noted before, the Democrats on this committee spent 3 years accusing President Trump of being a Russian agent. In March 2018, after a year-long investigation, Intelligence Committee Republicans issued a 240-page report describing in detail how the Russians meddled in the 2016 elections and making specific recommendations to improve our election security.

Denouncing the report as a whitewash and accusing Republicans of subverting the investigation, the Democrats issued their own report, focusing on their now-debunked conspiracy theory that the Trump campaign colluded with Russia to hack the elections.

Notably, the Democrats vowed at the time to present a further, quote, "comprehensive report," unquote, after they finished their investigation into Trump's treasonous collusion with Russia. For some completely inexplicable reason, after the implosion of their Russia hoax the Democrats failed to issue that comprehensive report. We're still waiting.

This episode shows how the Democrats have exploited the Intelligence Committee for political purposes for 3 years, culminating in these impeachment hearings. In their mania to attack the President, no conspiracy theory is too outlandish for the Democrats. Time and time again they floated the possibility of some farfetched malfeasance by Trump, declared the dire need to investigate it, and then suddenly dropped the issue and moved on to their next asinine theory.

A sampling of their accusations and insinuations includes these: Trump is a long-time Russian agent, as described in the Steele dossier. The Russians gave Trump advance access to emails stolen by the DNC and the Hillary Clinton campaign. The Trump campaign based some of its activities on these stolen documents. Trump received nefarious materials from the Russians through a Trump campaign aide. Trump laundered Russian money through real estate deals. Trump was blackmailed by Russia through his financial exposure with Deutsche Bank. Trump had a diabolical plan to build a Trump Tower in Moscow. Trump changed the Republican National Committee platform to hurt Ukraine and benefit Russia. The Russians laundered money through the NRA for the Trump campaign. Trump's son-in-law lied about his Russian contacts while obtaining his security clearance.

It's a long list of charges, all false, and I could go on and on and on, but I will spare you for these moments.

Clearly, these ludicrous accusations don't reflect committee members who are honestly searching for the truth. They are the actions of partisan extremists who hijacked the Intelligence Committee, transformed it into the impeachment committee, abandoned its core oversight functions, and turned it into a beachhead for ousting an elected President from office.

You have to keep that history in mind as you consider the Democrats' latest catalog of supposed Trump outrages. Granted, a friendly call with the Ukrainian President wouldn't seem to rise to the same level as being a Russian agent, but the Democrats were running out of time. If they waited any longer, their impeachment circus would intervene with their own candidates' 2020 campaigns. So you have to give them points for creativity in selling this absurdity as an impeachable offense.

All this explains why the Democrats have gathered zero Republican support in the

House of Representatives for their impeachment crusade. In fact, the vote we held was a bipartisan vote against this impeachment inquiry.

Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Schiff, and Chairman Nadler, the key figures behind this impeachment crusade, all proclaimed that impeachment is so damaging to the country that it can only proceed with bipartisan support.

Are those declarations suddenly no longer true? Did impeachment become less divisive? Of course not. They know exactly what kind of damage they're inflicting on this Nation, but they've passed the point of no return.

After 3 years of preparation work, much of it spearheaded by the Democrats on this committee, using all the tools of Congress to accuse, investigate, indict, and smear the President, they stoked a frenzy amongst their most fanatical supporters that they can no longer control.

Ambassador Sondland, you are here today to be smeared. You'll make it through it, and I appreciate your service to this country, and I am sorry that you've had to go through this.

In closing, the Democrats have zeroed in on an anonymous whistleblower complaint that was cooked up in cooperation with the Democrats on this very committee. They lied to the American people about that cooperation and refused to let us question the whistleblower to discover the truth.

Meanwhile, the Democrats lash out against anyone who questions or casts doubt on this spectacle. When Ukrainian President Zelensky denies anything improper happened on the phone call, the Democrats say that he's a liar. When journalists report on Ukraine election meddling and Hunter Biden's position on the board of corrupt Ukrainian companies, the Democrats label them conspiracy theorists. When the Democrats can't get any traction for their allegations of quid pro quo, they move the

goalposts and accuse the President of extortion, then bribery, and at last resort, obstruction of justice.

The American people sent us to Washington to solve problems, not to wage scorched earth political warfare against the other party. This impeachment is not helping the American people, it's not a legitimate use of taxpayer dollars, and it's definitely not improving our national security.

Finally, the Democrats' fake outrage that President Trump used his own channel to communicate with Ukraine. I remind my friends on the other side of the aisle that our first President, George Washington, directed his own diplomatic channel to secure a treaty with Great Britain. If my Democratic colleagues were around in 1794, they'd probably want to impeach him, too.

Mr. Chairman, this morning we have transmitted to you a letter exercising our rights under H. Res. 660 to subpoena documents and witnesses. We take this step because you have failed to ensure fairness and objectivity in this inquiry. As such, we need to subpoena Hunter Biden and the whistleblower for closed door depositions as well as relevant documents from the DNC, Hunter Biden's firm, Rosemont Seneca, and the whistleblower. In the interest of some basic level of fairness, we expect you to concur with these subpoenas.

And I will submit that letter for the record, and yield back the balance of my time.

[The statement of Mr. Nunes follows:]

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The Chairman. I thank the gentleman.

We are joined this afternoon by Ambassador Gordon Sondland -- I'm sorry, this morning. It was a long day yesterday. Gordon Sondland is the U.S. Representative to the European Union with the rank of ambassador.

Before joining the State Department, Ambassador Sondland was the founder and CEO of Provenance Hotels, a national owner and operator of full-service hotels. Also prior to his government service, Ambassador Sondland was engaged in charitable enterprises.

Two final points before our witness is sworn.

First, witness depositions as part of this inquiry were unclassified in nature, and all open hearings will also be held at the unclassified level. Any information that may touch on classified information will be addressed separately.

Second, Congress will not tolerate any reprisal, threat of reprisal, or attempt to retaliate against any U.S. Government official for testifying before Congress, including you or any of your colleagues.

If you would please rise and raise your right hand, I will begin by swearing you in.

Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Ambassador Sondland. I do.

The Chairman. Let the record show the witness has answered in the affirmative.

Thank you, and please be seated.

The microphone is sensitive, so please speak directly into it. Without objection, your written statement will be made part of the record.

And with that, Ambassador Sondland, you are now recognized for your opening

statement.

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Nunes. I appreciate the opportunity to speak again to the members of this committee.

First, let me offer my thanks to the men and women of the U.S. Department of State who have committed their professional lives to support the foreign policy work of the United States.

In particular, I want to thank my staff at the U.S. Mission to the European Union. Your integrity, dedication, and hard work, often performed without public acclaim or recognition, serve as a shining example of true public service, and I am personally grateful to work beside you each and every day.

It is my honor to serve as the U.S. ambassador to the European Union. The U.S. Mission to the EU is the direct link between the United States and the European Union and its members, America's longest standing allies and one of the largest economic blocs in the world.

Every day, I work to support a strong, united, and peaceful Europe. Strengthening our ties with Europe serves both American and European goals as we together promote political stability and economic prosperity around the world.

I expect that few Americans have heard my name before these events, so before I begin my substantive testimony, please let me share some of my personal background.

My parents fled Europe during the Holocaust. Escaping the atrocities of that time, my parents left Germany for Uruguay, and then in 1953 emigrated to Seattle, Washington, where I was born and raised.

Like so many immigrants, my family was eager for freedom and hungry for opportunity. They raised my sister and me to be humble, hardworking, and patriotic,

and I am forever grateful for the sacrifices they made on our behalf.

Public service has always been important to me. As a lifelong Republican, I have contributed to initiatives of both Republican and Democratic administrations.

In 2003, I served as a member of the transition team for Oregon Democratic Governor Ted Kulongoski. Governor Kulongoski also appointed me to serve on various statewide boards.

In 2007, President George W. Bush appointed me as a member of the Commission on White House Fellows. I worked with President Bush on charitable events for his foundation's military service initiative, and I also worked briefly with former Vice President Joe Biden's office in connection with the Vice President's nationwide anticancer initiative at a local Northwest hospital.

And of course, the highest honor in my public life came when President Trump asked me to serve as the United States ambassador to the European Union. The Senate confirmed me as an ambassador on a bipartisan voice vote, and I assumed the role in Brussels on July 9th, 2018.

Although today is my first public testimony on the Ukraine matters, this is not my first time cooperating with this committee. As you know, I've already provided 10 hours of deposition testimony, and I did so despite directives from the White House and the State Department that I refuse to appear, as many others have done. I agreed to testify because I respect the gravity of the moment and I believe I have an obligation to account fully for my role in these events.

But I also must acknowledge that this process has been challenging and in many respects less than fair. I have not had access to all of my phone records, State Department emails, and many, many other State Department documents. And I was told I could not work with my EU staff to pull together the relevant files and information.

Having access to the State Department materials would have been very helpful to me in trying to reconstruct with whom I spoke and met and when and what was said. As ambassador, I've had hundreds of meetings and calls with individuals, but I'm not a notetaker or a memo writer, never have been.

My job requires that I speak with heads of state, senior government officials, members of the Cabinet, the President, almost each and every day. Talking with foreign leaders might be memorable to some people, but this is my job. I do it all the time.

My lawyers and I have made multiple requests to the State Department and the White House for these materials, yet these materials were not provided to me, and they have also refused to share these materials with this committee. These documents are not classified and, in fairness -- and in fairness -- should have been made available.

In the absence of these materials, my memory, admittedly, has not been perfect, and I have no doubt that a more fair, open, and orderly process of allowing me to read the State Department records and other materials would have made this process far more transparent.

I don't intend to repeat my prior opening statement or attempt to summarize 10 hours of previous deposition testimony. However, a few critical points have been obscured by noise over the last few days and weeks, and I'm worried that the bigger picture is being ignored. So let me make a few key points.

First, Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, and I worked with Mr. Rudy Giuliani on Ukraine matters at the express direction of the President of the United States. We did not want to work with Mr. Giuliani. Simply put, we were playing the hand we were dealt. We all understood that if we refused to work with Mr. Giuliani, we would lose a very important opportunity to cement relations between the United States and Ukraine. So we followed the President's orders.

Second, although we disagreed with the need to involve Mr. Giuliani, at the time we did not believe that his role was improper. As I previously testified, if I had known of all of Mr. Giuliani's dealings or his associations with individuals, some of whom are now under criminal indictment, I personally would not have acquiesced to his participation. Still, given what we knew at the time, what we were asked to do did not appear to be wrong.

Third, let me say, precisely because we did not think that we were engaging in improper behavior, we made every effort to ensure that the relevant decisionmakers at the National Security Council and the State Department knew the important details of our efforts. The suggestion that we were engaged in some irregular or rogue diplomacy is absolutely false.

I have now identified certain State Department emails and messages that provide contemporaneous support for my view. These emails show that the leadership of the State Department, the National Security Council, and the White House were all informed about the Ukraine efforts from May 23rd, 2019, until the security aid was released on September 11th, 2019. I will quote from some of those messages with you shortly.

Fourth, as I testified previously -- as I testified previously -- Mr. Giuliani's requests were a quid pro quo for arranging a White House visit for President Zelensky. Mr. Giuliani demanded that Ukraine make a public statement announcing the investigations of the 2016 election, DNC server, and Burisma. Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the President of the United States, and we knew these investigations were important to the President.

Fifth, in July and August of 2019, we learned that the White House had also suspended security aid to Ukraine. I was adamantly opposed to any suspension of aid -- I was adamantly opposed to any suspension of aid -- as the Ukrainians needed those

funds to fight against Russian aggression. I tried diligently to ask why the aid was suspended, but I never received a clear answer. I still haven't to this day.

In the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I later came to believe that the resumption of security aid would not occur until there was a public statement from Ukraine committing to the investigations of the 2016 elections and Burisma, as Mr. Giuliani had demanded. I shared concerns of the potential quid pro quo regarding the security aid with Senator Ron Johnson, and I also shared my concerns with the Ukrainians.

Finally, at all times I was acting in good faith -- I was acting in good faith. As a Presidential appointee, I followed the directions of the President. We worked with Mr. Giuliani because the President directed us to do so.

We had no desire to set any conditions -- we had no desire to set any conditions on the Ukrainians. Indeed, my own personal view, which I shared repeatedly with others, was that the White House and security assistance should have proceeded without preconditions of any kind.

We were working to overcome the problems, given the facts as they existed. Our only interest -- and my only interest -- was to advance longstanding U.S. policy and to support Ukraine's fragile democracy.

Now, let me provide additional details specifically about Ukraine and my involvement.

First, my very first days as ambassador to the EU, which was starting back in July of 2018, Ukraine has featured prominently in my broader portfolio. Ukraine's political and economic development are critical to the longstanding and long-lasting stability of Europe.

Moreover, the conflict in eastern Ukraine and Crimea remains one of the most

significant security crises for Europe and the United States. Our efforts to counterbalance an aggressive Russia depend in substantial part on a strong Ukraine.

On April 21st, 2019, Volodymyr Zelensky was elected President of Ukraine in an historic election. With the express support of Secretary Pompeo, I attended President Zelensky's inauguration on May 20th as part of the U.S. delegation, which was led by Energy Secretary Rick Perry. The U.S. delegation also included Senator Johnson, Ukraine Special Envoy Volker, and Lieutenant Colonel Alex Vindman of the National Security Council.

My attendance at President Zelensky's inauguration was not my first involvement with Ukraine. As I testified previously, just 4 days after assuming my post as ambassador in July of 2018, I received an official delegation from the government of then-Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko. The meeting took place at the U.S. Mission in Brussels and was prearranged by my career EU mission staff, and I've had several meetings since then in Brussels.

Later, in February of 2019, I worked well with U.S. Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch in making my first official visit to Ukraine for a U.S. Navy visit to the strategic Black Sea port of Odessa.

The reason I raise these prior Ukraine activities -- the meetings in Brussels, my visit to Odessa -- is to emphasize that Ukraine has been a part of my portfolio from my very first days as the U.S. Ambassador. Any claim that I somehow muscled my way into the Ukraine relationship is simply false.

During the Zelensky inauguration on May 20th, the U.S. delegation developed a very positive view of the Ukraine Government. We were impressed by President Zelensky's desire to promote a stronger relationship with the United States. We admired his commitment to reform, and we were excited about the possibility of Ukraine

making the changes necessary to support a greater Western economic investment. And we were excited that Ukraine might, after years and years of lip service, finally get serious about addressing its own well-known corruption problems.

With that enthusiasm, we returned to the White House on May 23rd to brief President Trump. We advised the President of the strategic importance of Ukraine and the value of strengthening the relationship with President Zelensky.

To support this reformer, we asked the White House for two things: first, a working phone call between Presidents Trump and Zelensky; and second, a working Oval Office visit. In our view, both were vital to cementing the U.S.-Ukraine relationship, demonstrating support for Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression, and advancing broader U.S. foreign policy interests.

Unfortunately, President Trump was skeptical. He expressed concerns that the Ukrainian Government was not serious about reform, and he even mentioned that Ukraine tried to take him down in the last election.

In response to our persistent efforts in that meeting to change his views, President Trump directed us to, quote, "Talk with Rudy." We understood that "talk with Rudy" meant talk with Mr. Rudy Giuliani, the President's personal lawyer.

Let me say again, we weren't happy with the President's directive to talk with Rudy. We did not want to involve Mr. Giuliani. I believed then, as I do now, that the men and women of the State Department, not the President's personal lawyer, should take responsibility for Ukraine matters.

Nonetheless, based on the President's direction, we were faced with a choice. We could abandon the efforts to schedule the White House phone call and a White House visit between Presidents Trump and Zelensky, which was unquestionably in our foreign policy interest, or we could do as President Trump had directed and talk with Rudy.

We chose the latter course, not because we liked it, but because it was the only constructive path open to us.

Over the course of the next several months, Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, and I were in communication with Mr. Giuliani. Secretary Perry volunteered to make the initial calls with Mr. Giuliani, given their prior relationship. Ambassador Volker made several of the early calls and generally informed us of what was discussed.

I first communicated with Mr. Giuliani in early August, several months later. Mr. Giuliani emphasized that the President wanted a public statement from President Zelensky committing Ukraine to look into the corruption issues. Mr. Giuliani specifically mentioned the 2016 election, including the DNC server, and Burisma as two topics of importance to the President.

We kept the leadership of the State Department and the NSC informed of our activities, and that included communications with Secretary of State Pompeo; his counselor, Ulrich Brechbuhl; his executive secretary, Lisa Kenna, and also communications with Ambassador Bolton, Dr. Hill, Mr. Morrison, and their staff at the NSC. They knew what we were doing and why.

On July 10th, 2019, senior Ukrainian national security officials met with Ambassador Bolton, Ambassador Volker, Dr. Hill, Secretary Perry, myself, and several others in Washington, D.C. During that meeting, we all discussed the importance of the two action items I identified earlier: one, a working phone call; and two, a White House meeting between Presidents Trump and Zelensky.

From my perspective, the July 10th meeting was a positive step toward accomplishing our shared goals. While I am now aware of accounts of the meeting from Dr. Hill and Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, their recollections of those events simply don't square with my own or with those of Ambassador Volker or Secretary Perry.

I recall mentioning the prerequisite of investigations before any White House call or meeting, but I do not recall any yelling or screaming or abrupt terminations, as others have said. Instead, after the meeting, Ambassador Bolton walked outside with our group and we all took some great pictures together outside on the White House lawn.

More important, those recollections of protest do not square with the documentary record of our interactions with the NSC in the days and weeks that followed. We kept the NSC apprised of our efforts, including specifically our efforts to secure a public statement from the Ukrainians that would satisfy President Trump's concerns.

For example, on July 13th -- and this is 3 days after that July 10th meeting -- I emailed Tim Morrison. He had just taken over Dr. Hill's post as the NSC Eurasia director, and I met him that day for the first time.

I wrote to Mr. Morrison with these words: "The call between Zelensky and POTUS," President of the United States, "should happen before 7/21," which is the parliamentary elections in Ukraine. "Sole purpose is for Zelensky to give POTUS assurances of 'new sheriff' in town, corruption ending, unbundling moving forward, and" -- and I emphasize -- "any hampered investigations will be allowed to move forward transparently. Goal is for POTUS to invite him to Oval. Volker, Perry, Bolton and I strongly recommend."

Mr. Morrison acknowledged and said, "Thank you," and specifically noted that he was "tracking" these issues.

Again, there was no secret regarding moving forward and the discussion of investigations. Moreover, I've reviewed other State Department documents, some of which are not currently in the public domain, detailing Mr. Giuliani's efforts.

For example, on July 10th, the very same day that Ambassador Volker, Secretary

Perry, and I were meeting with the Ukraine officials in Washington, Ambassador Taylor received a communication that Mr. Giuliani was still talking with Ukrainian Prosecutor Yuriy Lutsenko.

In WhatsApp messages with Ambassador Volker and I, Ambassador Taylor wrote to us as follows: "Just had a meeting with Andriy and Vadym," referring to Ukraine Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko. Taylor said the Ukrainians were, quote, "very concerned about what Lutsenko told them, that according to RG," meaning Rudy Giuliani, "the Zelensky-POTUS meeting will not happen."

Volker responded: "Good grief. Please tell Vadym to let the official U.S. Government representatives speak for the U.S. Lutsenko has his own self-interest here."

Taylor confirmed that he had communicated that message to the Ukrainians, and he added, "I briefed Ulrich this afternoon on this," referring to State Department Counselor Ulrich Brechbuhl. Again, everyone's in the loop.

Three things are critical about this WhatsApp exchange.

First, while the Ukrainians were in Washington at the White House, Mr. Giuliani was communicating with the Ukrainians without our knowledge. Ambassador Taylor, Ambassador Volker, and I were all surprised by this.

Second, Mr. Giuliani was communicating with the reportedly corrupt Ukrainian prosecutor Lutsenko and discussing whether a Zelensky-Trump meeting was going to happen, again without our knowledge.

And third, with this alarming news, Ambassador Taylor briefed Ulrich Brechbuhl, who is the counselor to Secretary of State Pompeo. And even as late as September 24th of this year, Secretary Pompeo was directing Kurt Volker to speak with Mr. Giuliani. In a WhatsApp message, Kurt Volker told me, in part, "Spoke with Rudy per guidance from S."

S is the State Department's official designator for the Secretary. "Spoke with Rudy per guidance from S."

Look, we tried our best to fix the problem, while keeping the State Department and the NSC closely apprised of the challenges we faced.

On July 25th, Presidents Trump and Zelensky had their official call. I was not on the call and I don't think I was invited to be on the call. In fact, I first read the transcript on September 25th, the day it was publicly released. All I had heard at that time was that the call had gone well.

Looking back, I find it very odd -- very odd -- that neither I nor Ambassador Taylor nor Ambassador Volker ever received a detailed readout of that call with the Biden references. Now, there are people who say they had concerns about the call, but no one shared any concerns about the call with me at the time, which, frankly, would have been very helpful to know.

On July 26th, Ambassador Taylor, Ambassador Volker, and I were all in Kyiv to meet with President Zelensky. The timing of that trip, immediately after the call between Presidents Trump and Zelensky, was entirely, entirely coincidental. The Kyiv meetings had been scheduled well before the date that the White House finally fixed the call.

During our Kyiv meeting, I do not recall President Zelensky discussing the substance of his July 25th call with President Trump, nor did he discuss any request to investigate Vice President Biden, which we all later learned was discussed on the July 25th call. And this is consistent with the reported comments from Ambassadors Volker and Taylor.

After the Zelensky meeting, I also met with Zelensky's senior aide, Andriy Yermak. I don't recall the specifics of our conversation, but I believe the issue of investigations was

probably a part of that agenda or meeting.

Also, on July 26th, shortly after our Kyiv meetings, I spoke by phone with President Trump. The White House, which has finally, finally shared certain call dates and times with my attorneys, confirms this. The call lasted 5 minutes.

I remember I was at a restaurant in Kyiv, and I have no reason to doubt that this conversation included the subject of investigations. Again, given Mr. Giuliani's demand that President Zelensky make a public statement about investigations, I knew that investigations were important to President Trump. We did not discuss any classified information.

Other witnesses have recently shared their recollection of overhearing this call. For the most part, I have no reason to doubt their accounts. It's true that the President speaks loudly at times, and it's also true I think we primarily discussed A\$AP Rocky.

It's true that the President likes to use colorful language. Anyone who has met with him any reasonable amount of time knows this.

While I cannot remember the precise details, again, the White House has not allowed me to see any readouts of that call and the July 26th call did not strike me as significant at the time.

Actually, actually, I would have been more surprised if President Trump had not mentioned investigations, particularly given what we were hearing from Mr. Giuliani about the President's concerns. However, I have no recollection of discussing Vice President Biden or his son on that call or after the call ended.

I know that members of this committee frequently frame these complicated issues in the form of a simple question: Was there a quid pro quo? As I testified previously with regard to the requested White House call and the White House meeting, the answer is yes.

Mr. Giuliani conveyed to Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, and others that President Trump wanted a public statement from President Zelensky committing to investigations of Burisma and the 2016 election.

Mr. Giuliani expressed those requests directly to the Ukrainians, and Mr. Giuliani also expressed those requests directly to us. We all understood that these prerequisites for the White House call and the White House meeting reflected President Trump's desires and requirements.

Within my State Department emails, there is a July 19th email. This email was sent -- this email was sent to Secretary Pompeo; Secretary Perry; Brian McCormack, who was Secretary Perry's chief of staff at the time; Ms. Kenna, who is the acting -- pardon me, who is the executive secretary for Secretary Pompeo; Chief of Staff Mulvaney; and Mr. Mulvaney's senior adviser, Rob Blair. A lot of senior officials, a lot of senior officials.

Here is my exact quote from that email: "I talked to Zelensky just now. He is prepared to receive POTUS' call. Will assure him that he intends to run a fully transparent investigation and will 'turn over every stone.' He would greatly appreciate a call prior to Sunday so that he can put out some media about a 'friendly and productive call' -- no details -- prior to Ukraine election on Sunday."

Chief of Staff Mulvaney responded: "I asked the NSC to set it up for tomorrow."

Everyone was in the loop. It was no secret. Everyone was informed via email on July 19th, days before the Presidential call. As I communicated to the team, I told President Zelensky in advance that assurances to run a fully transparent investigation and turn over every stone were necessary in his call with President Trump.

On July 19th, in a WhatsApp message between Ambassador Taylor, Ambassador Volker, and me, Ambassador Volker stated: "Had breakfast with Rudy this morning." That's Ambassador Volker and Rudy Giuliani. "Teeing up call with Yermak Monday."

That's Senior Adviser Andriy Yermak. "Must have helped. Most important is for Zelensky to say that he will help investigation -- and address any specific personnel issues -- if there are any."

On August 10th, the next day, Mr. Yermak texted me: "Once we have a date," which is a date for the White House meeting, we "will call for a press briefing, announcing upcoming visit and outlining vision for the reboot of the U.S.-Ukraine relationship, including, among other things, Burisma and election meddling in investigations." This is from Mr. Yermak to me.

The following day, August 11th, and this is critical, I sent an email to Counselor Brechbuhl and Lisa Kenna. Lisa Kenna was frequently used as the pathway to Secretary Pompeo, as sometimes he preferred to receive his emails through her. She would print them out and put them in front of him.

With the subject "Ukraine," I wrote: "Mike," referring to Mike Pompeo, "Kurt and I negotiated a statement from Zelensky to be delivered for our review in a day or two. The contents will hopefully make the boss happy enough," the boss being the President, "to authorize an invitation. Zelensky plans to have a big presser," press conference, "on the openness subject (including specifics) next week," all of which referred to the 2016 and the Burisma.

Ms. Kenna replied: "Gordon, I'll pass to [the Secretary.] Thank you."

Again, everyone was in the loop.

Curiously, and this was very interesting to me, on August 26th, shortly before his visit to Kyiv, Ambassador Bolton's office requested Mr. Giuliani's contact information from me. I sent Ambassador Bolton the information directly. They requested Mr. Giuliani's contact information on August 26th.

I was first informed that the White House was withholding security aid to Ukraine

during conversations with Ambassador Taylor on July 18th, 2019. However, as I testified before, I was never able to obtain a clear answer regarding the specific reason for the hold, whether it was bureaucratic in nature, which often happens, or reflected some other concern in the interagency process.

I never participated in any of the subsequent DOD or DOS review meetings that others have described, so I can't speak to what was discussed in these meetings.

Nonetheless, before the September 1st Warsaw meeting, the Ukrainians had become aware that security funds had yet to be disbursed. In the absence of any credible explanation for the hold, I came to the conclusion that the aid, like the White House visit, was jeopardized.

In preparation for the September 1 Warsaw meeting, I asked Secretary Pompeo whether a face-to-face conversation between Trump and Zelensky would help to break the logjam, and this was when President Trump was still intending to travel to Warsaw.

RPTR ZAMORA

EDTR HUMKE

[10:08 a.m.]

Ambassador Sondland. Specifically, on August 22, I emailed Secretary Pompeo directly copying Secretariat Kenna. I wrote -- and this is my email to Secretary Pompeo -- "should we block time in Warsaw for a short pull-aside for POTUS to meet Zelensky? I would ask Zelensky to look him in the eye and tell him that once Ukraine's new justice folks are in place in mid-September that Zelensky, he Zelensky, should be able to move forward publicly and with confidence on those issues of importance to POTUS and the U.S. Hopefully that will break the log jam." The Secretary replied, "yes."

I followed up the next day asking to get 10 to 15 minutes on the Warsaw schedule for this. I said, "we would like to know when it's locked so that I can tell Zelensky and brief him." Executive Secretary Kenna replied, I will try for sure.

Moreover, given my concerns about the security aid, I have no reason to dispute that portion of Senator Johnson's recent letter in which he recalls conversations he and I had on August 30. By the end of August, my belief was that if Ukraine did something to demonstrate a serious intention to fight corruption, and specifically addressing Burisma and the 2016, then the hold on military aid would be lifted.

There was a September 1 meeting with President Zelensky in Warsaw. Unfortunately, President Trump's attendance at the Warsaw meeting was canceled due to Hurricane Dorian. Vice President Pence attended instead.

I mentioned to Vice President Pence before the meetings with the Ukrainians that I had concerns that the delay in aid had become tied to the issue of investigations. I recall mentioning that before the Zelensky meeting. During the actual meeting, President Zelensky raised the issue of security assistance directly with Vice President

Pence, and the Vice President said that he would speak to President Trump about it.

Based on my previous communication with Secretary Pompeo, I felt comfortable sharing my concerns with Mr. Yermak. It was a very, very brief pull-aside conversation that happened within a few seconds. I told Mr. Yermak that I believed that the resumption of U.S. aid would likely not occur until Ukraine took some kind of action on the public statement that we had been discussing for many weeks.

As my other State Department colleagues have testified, this security aid was critical to Ukraine's defense and should not have been delayed. I expressed this view to many during this period, but my goal at the time was to do what was necessary to get the aid released, to break the log jam. I believed that the public statement we had been discussing for weeks was essential to advancing that goal.

You know, I really regret that the Ukrainians were placed in that predicament, but I do not regret doing what I could to try to break the log jam and to solve the problem. I mentioned at the outset that throughout these events we kept State Department leadership and others apprised of what we were doing. State Department was fully supportive of our engagement in Ukraine efforts and was aware that a commitment to investigations was among the issues we were pursuing.

To provide just two examples, on June 5, the day after the U.S. EU mission hosted our Independence Day -- we did it a month early -- Acting Assistant Secretary Phil Reeker sent an email to me, to Secretary Perry, and to others forwarding some positive media coverage of President Zelensky's attendance at our event.

Mr. Reeker wrote, and I quote, "this headline underscores the importance and timeliness of Zelensky's visit to Brussels and the critical -- and the critical -- perhaps historic role of the dinner and engagement Gordon coordinated. Thank you for your participation and dedication to this effort."

Months later, on September 3, I sent Secretary Pompeo an email to express my appreciation for his joining a series of meetings in Brussels following the Warsaw trip. I wrote, "Mike, thanks for schlepping to Europe. I think it was really important and the chemistry seems promising. Really appreciate it." Secretary Pompeo replied the next day, on Wednesday, September 4, quote, "all good. You're doing great work. Keep banging away." State Department leadership expressed total support for our efforts to engage the new Ukrainian administration.

Look, I have never doubted the strategic value of strengthening our alliance with Ukraine, and at all times -- at all times -- our efforts were in good faith and fully transparent to those tasked with overseeing them. Our efforts were reported and approved, and not once do I recall encountering an objection.

It remains an honor to serve the people of the United States as their United States Ambassador to the European Union. I look forward to answering the committee's questions. Thank you.

[The statement of Ambassador Sondland follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

The Chairman. We'll now proceed to the first round of questions. As detailed in the memo provided to committee members, there will be 45 minutes of questions conducted by the chairman and majority counsel followed by 45 minutes for the ranking member or minority counsel.

Following that, unless I specify additional equal time for extended questioning, we'll proceed under the 5-minute rule, and every member will have the chance to ask questions.

I recognize myself or majority counsel for the first round of questions.

Ambassador Sondland, there's a lot of new material in your opening statement for us to get through, but I want to start with a few top-line questions before passing it over to Mr. Goldman. In your deposition you testified that you found yourself on a continuum that became more insidious over time. Can you describe what you mean by this continuum of insidiousness?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, Mr. Chairman, when we left the Oval Office, I believe on May 23, the request was very generic for an investigation of corruption in a very vanilla sense and dealing with some of the oligarch problems in Ukraine, which were longstanding problems.

And then as time went on, more specific items got added to the menu, including the Burisma and 2016 election meddling, specifically the DNC server specifically. And over this continuum it became more and more difficult to secure the White House meeting because more conditions were being placed on the White House meeting.

The Chairman. And then, of course, on July 25, although you were not privy to the call, another condition was added, that being the investigation of the Bidens?

Ambassador Sondland. I was not privy to the call, and I did not know that the

condition of investigating the Bidens was a condition, correct.

The Chairman. You saw that in the call record, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. It was not in any record I received.

The Chairman. But when you did receive --

Ambassador Sondland. Yes. I saw that in September, correct.

The Chairman. So on this continuum, the beginning of the continuum begins on May 23 when the President instructs you to talk to Rudy?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And you understood that as a direction by the President that you needed to satisfy the concerns that Rudy Giuliani would express to you about what the President wanted in Ukraine?

Ambassador Sondland. Not to me, to the entire group, Volker, Perry, and myself, correct.

The Chairman. Now, in your opening statement you confirm that there was a quid pro quo between the White House meeting and the investigations into Burisma and the 2016 election that Giuliani was publicly promoting. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And, in fact, you say that other senior officials in the State Department and the chiefs of staff's office, including Mick Mulvaney, Secretary Pompeo, were aware of this quid pro quo that in order to get the White House meeting there were going to have to be these investigations the President wanted?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And those, again, are investigations into 2016 and Burisma slash the Bidens?

Ambassador Sondland. 2016, Burisma. The Bidens did not come up.

The Chairman. But you would ultimately learn that Burisma meant the Bidens when you saw the call record, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Of course. Today I know exactly what it means. I didn't know at the time.

The Chairman. And then on July 26 you confirm you did indeed have the conversation with President Trump from a restaurant in Kyiv that David Holmes testified about last week. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And you have no reason to doubt Mr. Holmes' recounting of your conversation with the President?

Ambassador Sondland. The only part of Mr. Holmes' recounting that I take exception with is I do not recall mentioning the Bidens. That did not enter my mind. It was Burisma and 2016 elections.

The Chairman. You have no reason to believe that Mr. Holmes would make that up if that's what he recalls you saying? You have no reason to question that, do you?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall saying Biden. I never recalled saying Biden.

The Chairman. But the rest of Mr. Holmes' recollection is consistent with your own?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I can't testify as to what Mr. Holmes might or might not have heard through the phone. I don't know how he heard the conversation.

The Chairman. Are you familiar with his testimony?

Ambassador Sondland. Vaguely, yes.

The Chairman. And the only exception you take is to the mention of the name "Biden"?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And I think you said in your testimony this morning that not only is it correct that the President brought up with you investigations on the phone the day after the July 25 call, but you would have been surprised had he not brought that up. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Right. Because we had been hearing about it from Rudy and we presumed Rudy was getting it from the President, so it seemed like a logical conclusion.

The Chairman. Mr. Holmes also testified that you told him President Trump doesn't care about Ukraine. He only cares about big stuff that relates to him personally. I take it from your comment, you don't dispute that part of the conversation?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, he made that clear in the May 23 meeting, that he was not particularly fond of Ukraine, and we had a lot of heavy lifting to do to get him to engage.

The Chairman. So you don't dispute that part of Mr. Holmes' recollection?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

The Chairman. In August, when you worked with Rudy Giuliani and a top Ukrainian aide to draft a public statement for President Zelensky to issue that includes the announcement of investigations into Burisma, you understood that was required by President Trump before he would grant the White House meeting to President Zelensky?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

The Chairman. And the Ukrainians understood that as well?

Ambassador Sondland. I believe they did.

The Chairman. And you informed Secretary Pompeo about that statement as well?

Ambassador Sondland. I did.

The Chairman. Later in August, you told Secretary Pompeo that President Zelensky would be prepared to tell President Trump that his new justice officials would be able to announce matters of interest to the President, which could break the logjam. When you say matters of interest to the President, you mean the investigations that President Trump wanted. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And that involved 2016 and Burisma or the Bidens?

Ambassador Sondland. 2016 and Burisma.

The Chairman. And when you're talking here about breaking the logjam, you're talking about the logjam over the security assistance, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I was talking logjam generically because nothing was moving.

The Chairman. But that included the security assistance, did it not?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And based on the context of that email, this was not the first time you had discussed these investigations with Secretary Pompeo, is it?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

The Chairman. He was aware of the connections that you were making between the investigations and the White House meeting and the security assistance?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

The Chairman. Did he ever take issue with you and say, no, that connection is not there or you're wrong?

Ambassador Sondland. Not that I recall.

The Chairman. Now, you mentioned that you also had a conversation with Vice

President Pence before his meeting with President Zelensky in Warsaw, and that you raised the concern you had as well that the security assistance was being withheld because of the President's desire to get a commitment from Zelensky to pursue these political investigations. What did you say to the Vice President?

Ambassador Sondland. I was in a briefing with several people, and I just spoke up and I said, it appears that everything is stalled until this statement gets made, something -- words to that effect, and that's what I believed to be the case based on, you know, the work that the three of us had been doing, Volker, Perry, and myself. And the Vice President nodded like, you know, he heard what I said, and that was pretty much it, as I recall.

The Chairman. And you understood that the Ukrainians were going to raise the security assistance with the Vice President at this meeting?

Ambassador Sondland. I didn't know what they were going to raise, but they, in fact, did raise it, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. Well, it was public by that point that there was a hold on the security assistance, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. But I didn't know what they were going to raise. I didn't get a pre-brief from the Ukrainians.

The Chairman. Well, you knew certainly they were concerned about the hold on the security assistance, right?

Ambassador Sondland. They were concerned obviously.

The Chairman. And you wanted to help prepare the Vice President for the meeting by letting him know what you thought was responsible for the hold on the security assistance?

Ambassador Sondland. That's fair.

The Chairman. Do you recall anything else the President -- the Vice President said other than nodding his head when you made him aware of this fact?

Ambassador Sondland. No. I don't have a readout of that meeting, so I can't remember anything else.

The Chairman. And it was immediately after this meeting between the Vice President and Zelensky that you went to speak with Yermak and you told him similarly that in order to release the military assistance they were going to have to publicly announce these investigations?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. Much has been made of that meeting, and it really wasn't a meeting. What happened was everyone got up after the bilateral meeting between President Zelensky and Vice President Pence, and people do what they normally do. They get up, they mill around, they shake hands. And I don't know if I came over to Yermak or he came over to me, but he said, you know, what's going on here? And I said, I don't know. It might all be tied together now. You know, I have no idea. I was presuming that it was. But it was a very short conversation.

The Chairman. Well, in that short conversation, as you would later relay to Mr. Morrison and Ambassador Taylor, you informed Mr. Yermak that they would need to announce these investigations in order to get the aid. Did you not?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, Mr. Yermak was already working on those investigation -- or on the statement about the investigations.

The Chairman. And you confirmed for him that he needed to get it done if they were going to get the military aid?

Ambassador Sondland. I likely did.

The Chairman. Mr. Morrison and Ambassador Taylor have also related a conversation you had with the President following the Warsaw meeting in which the

President relayed to you that there was no quid pro quo, but nevertheless, unless Zelensky went to the mike and announced these investigations, they would be a stalemate over the aid. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

The Chairman. And that was an accurate reflection of your discussion with the President?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, that email was not artfully written. I'm the first to admit. What I was trying to convey to Ambassador Taylor after his frantic emails to me and to others about the security assistance -- which, by the way, I agreed with him. I thought it was a very bad idea to hold that money.

I finally called the President. I believe it was on the 9th of September. I can't find the records and they won't provide them to me. But I believe I just asked him an open-ended question, Mr. Chairman. What do you want from Ukraine? I keep hearing all these different ideas and theories and this and that. What do you want?

And it was a very short, abrupt conversation. He was not in a good mood. And he just said, I want nothing. I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. Tell Zelensky to do the right thing, something to that effect.

So I typed out a text to Ambassador Taylor, and my reason for telling him this was not to defend what the President was saying, not to opine on whether the President was being truthful or untruthful, but simply to relay, I've gone as far as I can go. This is the final word that I heard from the President of the United States. If you're still concerned, you, Ambassador Taylor, are still concerned, please get a hold of the Secretary. Maybe he can help.

The Chairman. Ambassador, I'm not asking you about your text message. I'm asking about your conversations with Mr. Morrison and Ambassador Taylor after you

spoke with the President, either in that call or in a different call.

Ambassador Sondland. I'm confused, Mr. Chairman. Which conversations with Mr. Morrison and Mr. Taylor?

The Chairman. Well, Mr. Morrison testified that you related a conversation you had with the President in which the President told you no quid pro quo, but President Zelensky must go to a microphone and announce these investigations and that he should want to.

Similarly, you told Ambassador Taylor that while the President said no quid pro quo, unless Zelensky announced these investigations they would be at a stalemate, presumably a stalemate over the military assistance. Do you have any reason to question those conversations that Mr. Morrison and Ambassador Taylor took notes about?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I think it's tied to my text, Mr. Chairman, because in my text I think I said something to the effect that he wants Zelensky to do what he ran on, I believe is transparency, et cetera, et cetera, which was my clumsy way of saying he wanted these announcements to be made.

The Chairman. Again, Ambassador, I'm not asking you about your text message. I'm asking you about what you relayed to Ambassador Taylor and Mr. Morrison about your conversation with the President. Do you have any reason to question their recollection of what you told them?

Ambassador Sondland. All I can say is that I expressed what I told or what the President told me in that text, and if I had relayed anything other than what was in that text, I don't recall.

The Chairman. You don't recall?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall.

The Chairman. You have no reason to question Ambassador Taylor or Mr. Morrison of what they wrote in their notes about your conversation with them?

Ambassador Sondland. Could you kindly repeat what they wrote?

The Chairman. I'll have Mr. Goldman go through that with you.

Ambassador Sondland. That'd be great.

The Chairman. But let me get to the very -- the top line here, Ambassador Sondland.

Ambassador Sondland. Okay.

The Chairman. You've testified that the White House meeting that President Zelensky desperately wanted -- and that was very important to President Zelensky, was it not?

Ambassador Sondland. Absolutely.

The Chairman. You testified that that meeting was conditioned, was a quid pro quo, for what the President wanted, these two investigations. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And that everybody knew it?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. Now, that White House meeting was going to be an official meeting between the two Presidents, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Presumably.

The Chairman. It would be an Oval Office meeting, hopefully?

Ambassador Sondland. A working meeting, yes.

The Chairman. A working meeting. So an official act, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah.

The Chairman. And in order to perform that official act, Donald Trump wanted

these two investigations that would help his reelection campaign, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I can't characterize why he wanted them. All I can tell you is this is what we heard from Mr. Giuliani.

The Chairman. But he had to get those two investigations if that official act was going to take place, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. He had to announce the investigations. He didn't actually have to do them, as I understood it.

The Chairman. Okay. President Zelensky had to announce the two investigations the President wanted, make a public announcement, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And those were of great value to the President. He was quite insistent upon them and his attorney was insistent upon them?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't want to characterize whether they were of value or not value. Again, through Mr. Giuliani, we were led to believe that that's what he wanted.

The Chairman. Well, and you said that Mr. Giuliani was acting at the President's demand, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Right. When the President says talk to my personal lawyer, Mr. Giuliani, we followed his direction.

The Chairman. And so that official act of that meeting was being conditioned on the performance of these things the President wanted as expressed both directly and through his lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. As expressed through Rudy Giuliani, correct.

The Chairman. And you've also testified that your understanding, it became your clear understanding that the military assistance was also being withheld pending Zelensky

announcing these investigations, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That was my presumption, my personal presumption based on the facts at the time. Nothing was moving.

The Chairman. And, in fact, you had a discussion, communication with the Secretary of State in which you said that logjam over aid could be lifted if Zelensky announced these investigations, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I did not -- I don't recall saying the logjam over aid. I recall saying the logjam. I don't know that --

The Chairman. That's what you meant, right, Ambassador?

Ambassador Sondland. I meant that whatever was holding up the meeting, whatever was holding up our deal with Ukraine, I was trying to break. Again, I was presuming --

The Chairman. Well, here's what you said in your testimony a moment ago --

Ambassador Sondland. Okay.

The Chairman. -- page 18: But my goal at the time was to do what was necessary to get the aid released to break the logjam. Okay. That's still your testimony, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah.

The Chairman. So the military aid is also an official act, am I right?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

The Chairman. This is not President Trump's personal bank account he's writing a check from. This is \$400 million of U.S. taxpayer money. Is it not?

Ambassador Sondland. Absolutely.

The Chairman. And there was a logjam in which the President would not write that U.S. check you believed until Ukraine announced these two investigations the

President wanted, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That was my belief.

The Chairman. Mr. Goldman.

Mr. Goldman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In your opening statement, Ambassador Sondland, you detailed the benefits that you have gained from obtaining some additional documents over the past few weeks. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. In terms of refreshing my recollection.

Mr. Goldman. Right. Because reviewing these documents has helped you to remember the events that we're asking about. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Goldman. Because you acknowledge, of course, that when you can place a document and a date and a context, it helps to jog your memory?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. And so you would agree that for people unlike yourself who take notes that that is very helpful to their own recollection of events, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I think you asked your question backwards. Are you saying people that take notes it's helpful to have those documents, or people that don't take notes it's helpful to have those documents?

Mr. Goldman. No. No. You are not a note taker, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I am not a note taker, never have been.

Mr. Goldman. But you would agree that people who do take contemporaneous notes generally are more able to remember things than people who don't?

Ambassador Sondland. Some, yes.

Mr. Goldman. And there are additional documents that you've been unable to

obtain. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. And I think you even said in your opening statement that the State Department prevented you and your staff from trying to gather more documents.

Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Certain documents, yes.

Mr. Goldman. Which documents?

Ambassador Sondland. Documents that I didn't have immediate access to.

Mr. Goldman. And who at the State Department prevented you from doing that?

Ambassador Sondland. You'll have to ask my counsel. He was dealing with them.

Mr. Goldman. But certainly based on the additional memory that you have gained over the past few weeks from reading the testimony of others based on their notes and reviewing your own documents, you have remembered a lot more than you did when you were deposed. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. And one of the things that you now remember is the discussion that you had with President Trump on July 26 in that restaurant in Kyiv, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. What triggered my memory was someone's reference to A\$AP Rocky, which was, I believe, the primary purpose of the phone call.

Mr. Goldman. Certainly. So that's one way a memory works, isn't it?

And you were sitting in a restaurant with David Holmes in Kyiv, right, having lunch?

Ambassador Sondland. I think I took the whole team out to lunch after the

meeting, yeah.

Mr. Goldman. And it was a meeting, a one-on-one meeting you had with Andriy Yermak?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, trying to reconstruct a very busy day without the benefit, but if someone said I had a meeting and I went to the meeting, then I am not going to dispute that.

Mr. Goldman. And particularly if that person took notes at that meeting?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Goldman. Or sat outside the door when you didn't let them in?

Ambassador Sondland. I have no control over who goes into a meeting in Ukraine. That was the Ukrainians that didn't let them in.

Mr. Goldman. And you had also met with President Zelensky among others that day. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Mr. Goldman. And you called President Trump from your cell phone from the restaurant. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

Mr. Goldman. And this was not a secure line, was it?

Ambassador Sondland. No. It was an open line.

Mr. Goldman. Did you worry that a foreign government may be listening to your phone call with the President of the United States?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I have unclassified conversations all the time from landlines that are unsecured and cell phones. If the topic is not classified and it's up to the President to decide what's classified and what's not classified, and we were having -- he was aware that it was an open line as well.

Mr. Goldman. And you don't recall the specifics of holding your phone outside -- far away from your ear as Mr. Holmes testified, but you have no reason to question his recollection of that, do you?

Ambassador Sondland. I mean, it seems a little strange I would hold my phone here. I probably had my phone close to my ear, and he claims to have overheard part of the conversation, and I'm not going to dispute what he did or didn't hear.

Mr. Goldman. Well, he also testified that you confirmed to President Trump that you were in Ukraine at the time and that President Zelensky, quote, "loves your ass," unquote. Do you recall saying that?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. That sounds like something I would say. That's how President Trump and I communicate, a lot of four-letter words, in this case three letter.

Mr. Goldman. Holmes then said that he heard President Trump ask, quote, "is he," meaning Zelensky, "going to do the investigation?" To which you replied, "he's going to do it." And then you added that President Zelensky will do anything that you, meaning President Trump, ask him to. Do you recall that?

Ambassador Sondland. I probably said something to the effect because I remember the meeting -- the President -- or President Zelensky was very -- "solicitous" is not a good word. He was just very willing to work with the United States and was being very amicable. And so putting it in Trump speak by saying he loves your ass, he'll do whatever you want, meant that he would really work with us on a whole host of issues.

Mr. Goldman. He was not only willing. He was very eager, right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's fair.

Mr. Goldman. Because Ukraine depends on the United States as its most significant ally. Isn't that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. One of its most, absolutely.

Mr. Goldman. So just so we understand, you were in Kyiv the day after President Trump spoke to President Zelensky on the phone. And you now know from reading the call record that in that phone call he requested a favor for President Zelensky to do investigations related to the Bidens and the 2016 election, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I do now know that, yes.

Mr. Goldman. And you met with President Zelensky and his aides on the day after that phone call. And then you had a conversation with President Trump from your cell phone from a restaurant terrace, and he asked you whether President Zelensky will do the investigations. And you responded that he's going to do them -- or it. And that President Zelensky will do anything you ask him to do. Is that an accurate recitation of what happened there?

Ambassador Sondland. It could have been words to that effect. I don't remember my exact response.

Mr. Goldman. But you don't have any reason to dispute Mr. Holmes' recollection, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I won't dispute it, but, again, I don't recall.

Mr. Goldman. After you hung up with the President, Mr. Holmes testified about a conversation that you and he had where he says that you told Mr. Holmes that the President does not care about Ukraine, but the President used the more colorful language, including a four-letter word that you just referenced to -- you've just referenced. Do you recall saying that to Mr. Holmes?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I don't recall my exact words, but clearly the President, beginning on May 23, when we met with him in the Oval Office, was not a big fan.

Mr. Goldman. But he was a big fan of the investigations?

Ambassador Sondland. Apparently so.

Mr. Goldman. And, in fact, Mr. Holmes said that you said that President Trump only cares about the, quote, big stuff that benefits himself. Is that something that you would have said at the time?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't think I would have said that. I would have honestly said that he was not a big fan of Ukraine, and he wants the investigations that we had been talking about for quite some time to move forward. That's what I would have said because that's the fact.

Mr. Goldman. Mr. Holmes also remembers that you told him in, giving an example of the big stuff, the Biden investigation that Rudy Giuliani was pushing. Do you recall that?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't. I recall Burisma, not Biden.

Mr. Goldman. But do you recall saying -- at least referring to an investigation that Rudy Giuliani was pushing? Is that something that you likely would have said?

Ambassador Sondland. I would have, yes.

Mr. Goldman. Now, even if you don't recall specifically mentioning the Biden investigation to David Holmes, we know that it was certainly on President Trump's mind, because just the day before in his call with President Zelensky he mentions specifically the Biden investigation.

And I want to show you that exhibit or that excerpt from the call on July 25 where President Trump says, "The other thing, there's a lot of talk about Biden's son, that Biden stopped the prosecution, and a lot of people want to find out about that. So whatever you can do with the attorney general would be great. Biden went around bragging that he stopped the prosecution, so if you can look into it. It sounds horrible to me."

President Zelensky then responds with a reference to the company that he's referring to, and two witnesses yesterday said that when President Zelensky actually said "the company" he said "Burisma."

So you would agree that regardless of whether you knew about the connection to the Bidens, at the very least that you now know that that's what President Trump wanted at the time through the Burisma investigation?

Ambassador Sondland. I now know it all, of course.

Mr. Goldman. And at this time you were aware of the President's desire, along with Rudy Giuliani, to do these investigations including the 2016 election interference investigation. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. And you said President Trump had directed you to talk -- you and the others to talk to Rudy Giuliani at the Oval Office on May 23. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. If we wanted to get anything done with Ukraine, it was apparent to us we needed to talk to Rudy.

Mr. Goldman. Right. You understood that Mr. Giuliani spoke for the President, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. And, in fact, President Trump also made that clear to President Zelensky. In that same July 25 phone call, he said, Mr. Giuliani is a highly respected man. He was the mayor of New York City, a great mayor, and I would like him to call you. I will ask him to call you along with the attorney general. Rudy very much knows what's happening, and he is a very capable guy. And after this President Trump then mentions Mr. Giuliani twice more in that call.

Now, for Mr. Giuliani, by this point, you understood that in order to get that

White House meeting that you wanted President Zelensky to have and that President Zelensky desperately wanted to have that Ukraine would have to initiate these two investigations. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, they would have to announce that they were going to do it.

Mr. Goldman. Right. Because Giuliani and President Trump didn't actually care if they did them, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I never heard, Mr. Goldman, anyone say that the investigations had to start or had to be completed. The only thing I heard from Mr. Giuliani or otherwise, was that they had to be announced in some form and that form kept changing.

Mr. Goldman. Announced publicly?

Ambassador Sondland. Announced publicly.

Mr. Goldman. And you, of course, recognize that there would be political benefits to a public announcement as opposed to a private confirmation, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, the way it was expressed to me was that the Ukrainians had a long history of committing to things privately and then never following through. So President Trump presumably, again, communicated through Mr. Giuliani, wanted the Ukrainians on record publicly that they were going to do these investigations. That's the reason that was given to me.

Mr. Goldman. But you never heard anyone say that they really wanted them to do the investigations, just that they wanted to announce them?

Ambassador Sondland. I didn't hear either way.

Mr. Goldman. Now, your July 26 call with the President was not the only time that you spoke to the President surrounding that Ukraine trip, was it?

Ambassador Sondland. I believe I spoke to him before his call.

Mr. Goldman. So that would be on July 25, the day before?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. I think I was flying to Ukraine and I spoke with him, if I recall correctly, just before I got on the plane.

Mr. Goldman. So that's two private telephone calls with President Trump in the span of 2 days. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Goldman. You have direct access then to President Trump, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I had occasional access when he chose to take my calls. Sometimes he would. Sometimes he wouldn't.

Mr. Goldman. Well, he certainly took your call twice as it related to Ukraine on these 2 days. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. He did.

Mr. Goldman. Now, the morning of July 25, you texted Ambassador Volker -- and we can bring up the next text exchange -- at 7:54 a.m., and you said call ASAP. Ambassador Volker did not respond to you for another hour and a half, and he said, "Hi, Gordon. Got your message. Had a great lunch with Yermak and then passed your message to him. He will see you tomorrow. Think everything is in place."

Volker though, an hour before that and about a half an hour before the phone call, had texted Andriy Yermak, a top aide for President Zelensky. And he wrote, "Good lunch. Thanks. Heard from White House. Assuming President Z convinces Trump he will investigate, get to the bottom of what happened in 2016, we will nail down date for visit to Washington. Good luck. See you tomorrow."

Ambassador Sondland, was this message that Kurt Volker passed to Andriy Yermak the message you left for Kurt Volker on that voicemail that he referenced?

Ambassador Sondland. You know, I don't remember, Mr. Goldman, but it very well could have been.

Mr. Goldman. You don't have any reason to think it wasn't, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I honestly, honestly don't remember, but seems logical to me.

Mr. Goldman. And if Ambassador Volker testified that he did get that message from you, you have no reason to doubt that, right?

Ambassador Sondland. No. If he testified that he got that message from me then I would concur with that.

Mr. Goldman. So is it fair to say that this message is what you received from President Trump on that phone call that morning?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, if he testified to that, to refresh my own memory, then, yes, likely I would have received that from President Trump.

Mr. Goldman. But the sequence certainly makes sense, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah, it does.

Mr. Goldman. You talked to President Trump.

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah.

Mr. Goldman. You told Kurt Volker to call you. You left a message for Kurt Volker. Kurt Volker sent this text message to Andriy Yermak to prepare President Zelensky and then President Trump had a phone call where President Zelensky spoke very similar to what was in this text message, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Right.

Mr. Goldman. And you would agree that the message in this -- that is expressed here is that President Zelensky needs to convince Trump that he will do the investigations in order to nail down the date for a visit to Washington, D.C. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. Now, I am going to move ahead in time to the end of August and early September when you came to believe, I believe, as you testified, that it wasn't just the White House meeting that was contingent on the announcement of these investigations that the President wanted but security assistance as well.

You testified that, in the absence of any credible explanation for the hold on security assistance, you came to the conclusion that like the White House visit the aid was conditioned on the investigations that President Trump wanted. Is that what you said in your opening statement?

Ambassador Sondland. It is.

Mr. Goldman. So let me break this down with you. By this time you and many top officials knew that that coveted White House meeting for President Zelensky was conditioned on these investigations, right?

Ambassador Sondland. The announcement of the investigations, correct.

Mr. Goldman. Thank you. And that includes Secretary Pompeo, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Many, many people.

Mr. Goldman. Well, Secretary Pompeo?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Goldman. And acting Chief of Staff Mulvaney?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Goldman. And you testified that this was a quid pro quo. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I did.

Mr. Goldman. And you at this point, by the end of August, knew that the aid had been held up for at least 6 weeks. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I believe I found out through Ambassador Taylor that the

aid had been held up around July 18, is when I heard originally.

Mr. Goldman. And even though you searched for reasons, you were never given a credible explanation. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

Mr. Goldman. And no one you spoke to thought that the aid should be held, to your knowledge, is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I never heard anyone advocate for holding the aid.

Mr. Goldman. And now by this point, at the end of August, it went public and the Ukrainians knew about it, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I believe there was some press reports, you know, presuming, or who knows, but I think at that point it became sort of common knowledge that everything might be tied together.

Mr. Goldman. And, in fact, President Zelensky brought it up at that September 1 meeting with Vice President Pence that you were at, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know if he brought it up specifically, but asked where the aid was, I think, was more -- I think he sort of asked, again, very vague recollection because I don't have a readout of the bilateral meeting, but why don't I have my check, essentially.

Mr. Goldman. And you understood the Ukrainians received no credible explanation. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I certainly couldn't give them one.

Mr. Goldman. So is this kind of a two-plus-two-equals-four conclusion that you reached?

Ambassador Sondland. Pretty much.

Mr. Goldman. It's the only logical conclusion to you that given all of these

factors that the aid was also a part of this quid pro quo?

Ambassador Sondland. Yep.

Mr. Goldman. Now, I want to go back to that conversation that you had with Vice President Pence right before that meeting in Warsaw. And you indicated that you said to him that you were concerned that the delay in the aid was tied to the issue of investigations. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know exactly what I said to him. This was a briefing attended by many people, and I was invited at the very last minute. I wasn't scheduled to be there. But I think I spoke up at some point late in the meeting and said, it looks like everything is being held up until these statements get made, and that's my, you know, personal belief.

Mr. Goldman. And Vice President Pence just nodded his head?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I don't recall any exchange or where he asked me any questions. I think he -- it was sort of a duly noted response.

Mr. Goldman. Well, he didn't say, Gordon, what are you talking about?

Ambassador Sondland. No, he did not.

Mr. Goldman. He didn't say, what investigations?

Ambassador Sondland. He did not.

Mr. Goldman. Now, after this meeting you discussed this pull-aside you had with Mr. Yermak where you relayed your belief that they needed to announce these investigations prior to the aid being released. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I said I didn't know exactly why but this could be a reason.

Mr. Goldman. And obviously you had been speaking with Mr. Yermak for quite a while about a public announcement of these investigations, right?

Ambassador Sondland. We had all been working on toward that end, yes.

Mr. Goldman. So you indicated to him that in addition to the White House meeting security aid was now also involved in that --

Ambassador Sondland. As I said, I said it could have been involved, yes.

Mr. Goldman. Now, I'm going to show you another text exchange you had on September 1, where Ambassador Taylor says to you, are we now saying that security assistance and White House meeting are conditioned on investigations? And you respond, call me.

Ambassador Taylor recalls that he did call you and you did have a conversation. And in that conversation you told Ambassador Taylor that the announcement of these investigations by President Zelensky needed to be public and that that announcement was conditioned on -- that announcement would ultimately release the aid. Do you recall that conversation with Ambassador Taylor?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, my conversation with Ambassador Taylor, my conversation with Senator Johnson were all my personal belief just based on, as you put it, two plus two equals four.

Mr. Goldman. Well, in his testimony, Ambassador Taylor says that you said that President Trump had told you that he wanted President Zelensky to state publicly, as of September 1. Do you have any reason to doubt Ambassador Taylor's testimony, which he said was based on his meticulous contemporaneous notes?

Ambassador Sondland. President Trump never told me directly that the aid was conditioned on the meetings. The only thing we got directly from Giuliani was that the Burisma and 2016 elections were conditioned on the White House meeting. The aid was my own personal, you know, guess based again on your analogy two plus two equals four.

Mr. Goldman. So you didn't talk to President Trump when Ambassador Taylor says that that's what you told him? Is that your testimony here?

Ambassador Sondland. My testimony is, I never heard from President Trump that aid was conditioned on an announcement of elections.

Mr. Goldman. So you never heard those specific words --

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Goldman. -- right? But --

Ambassador Sondland. Never heard those words.

Mr. Goldman. Well, let's move ahead because you have another conversation in -- a little bit later that both Tim Morrison and Ambassador Taylor recount. But in this September 1 conversation, Ambassador Taylor also says that -- testified under oath that you said that President Trump wanted Zelensky in a public box. Do you recall using that expression?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. It goes back to my earlier comment that, again, coming from the Giuliani source, because we didn't discuss this specifically with President Trump, that they wanted whatever commitments Ukraine made to be made publicly so that they would be on the record and be held more accountable, whatever those commitments were.

Mr. Goldman. You also testified -- or Ambassador Taylor rather testified that you told him that you had made a mistake in telling the Ukrainians that only the White House meeting was conditioned on the announcement of the investigations and that, in fact, everything was, including the security assistance. Do you remember saying that?

Ambassador Sondland. When I referenced a mistake, what I recall was I thought that a statement made by the new Ukrainian prosecutor that these investigations would be started up again or commenced would be sufficient to satisfy

Mr. Giuliani/President Trump.

As I recall, my mistake was someone came back through Volker or otherwise and said, no, it's not going to do if the prosecutor makes these statements. The President wants to hear it from Zelensky directly. That's the mistake I think I made.

Mr. Goldman. Do you have any reason to question Ambassador Taylor's testimony based on his meticulous and careful contemporaneous notes?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm not going to question or not question. I'm just telling you what I believe I was referring to.

Mr. Goldman. Let me fast forward a week and show you another text exchange, which may help refresh your recollection. On September 8 you had a -- you sent a text to Ambassador Taylor and Ambassador Volker. Can you read what you wrote there?

Ambassador Sondland. "Guys, multiple convos with Zelensky, POTUS. Let's talk."

Mr. Goldman. And so this was September 8 at 11:20 in the morning?

Ambassador Sondland. Uh-huh.

Mr. Goldman. And Ambassador Taylor responds immediately, "Now is fine with me."

And if we could go to the next exchange. Ambassador Taylor then 15 minutes later says, "Gordon and I just spoke" -- or 20 minutes later rather. "I can brief you if you and Gordon don't connect," speaking to Ambassador Taylor.

Then Ambassador Taylor an hour later says, "The nightmare is they give the interview and don't get the security assistance, the Russians love it, and I quit."

You would agree that in this text message after you had spoken earlier, an hour earlier with Ambassador Taylor, that he is linking the security assistance to this interview, this public announcement by President Zelensky. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Absolutely.

Mr. Goldman. And, in fact, Ambassador Taylor testified that you did have a conversation with him at that point and he did -- and that you told him that just as your text message indicates, you did have a conversation with President Trump prior to that text message. Does that help to refresh your recollection that you, in fact, spoke to President Trump at that time?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I don't recall President Trump ever talking to me about any security assistance ever. What this tells me, refreshing my memory, is that by the 8th of September it was abundantly clear to everyone that there was a link, and that we were discussing the chicken and egg issue of should the Ukrainians go out on a ledge and make the statement that President Trump wanted them to make and then they still don't get their White House visit and their aid, that would be really bad for our credibility. I think that's what he was referring to.

Mr. Goldman. So you do acknowledge you spoke to President Trump as you indicated in that text, right?

Ambassador Sondland. If I said I did, I did.

Mr. Goldman. And that after that conversation you were still under the impression that the aid was contingent on these public announcements?

Ambassador Sondland. I did not get that from President Trump, but I was under the impression that absolutely it was contingent.

Mr. Goldman. Well, you weren't dissuaded then, right, because you still thought that the aid was conditioned on the public announcement of the investigations after speaking to President Trump?

Ambassador Sondland. By September 8 I was absolutely convinced it was.

Mr. Goldman. And President Trump did not dissuade you of that in the

conversation that you acknowledge you had with him?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't ever recall -- because that would have changed my entire calculus. If President Trump had told me directly, I'm not --

Mr. Goldman. That's not what I'm asking, Ambassador Sondland. I'm just saying, you still believed that the security assistance was conditioned on the investigation after you spoke to President Trump. Yes or no?

Ambassador Sondland. From a timeframe standpoint, yes.

Mr. Goldman. Now, Ambassador Taylor also testified that -- and Mr. Morrison, both of them testified that you told them that President Trump said there was no quid pro quo, which you also included in that text message that you referred, but then you went on -- and they had slight variations as to what you told them, but then you said that, to Ambassador Taylor, that President Zelensky himself, not the prosecutor general, needed to clear things up in public or there would be a stalemate. And Mr. Morrison recounted something similar. You don't have any reason to doubt that both of their very similar recollections of the conversations they had with you, do you, Ambassador Sondland?

Ambassador Sondland. Let me break that down, Mr. Goldman. The text, as I said, about the no quid pro quo was my effort to respond to Ambassador Taylor's concerns to go to President Trump. Apparently Ambassador Taylor had access to Secretary Pompeo. He did not have access to President Trump. So I made the phone call. I said, what do you want? President Trump responded with what I put in the text. And then I strongly encouraged Ambassador Taylor to take it up with the Secretary, and he responded, "I agree," when I said that.

As far as the other part of your question relating to whether or not the prosecutor could make the statement or Zelensky could make the statement, I don't recall who told

me, whether it was Volker, whether it was Giuliani, or whether it was President Trump, it has got to be Zelensky. It can't be the prosecutor. But that's what I relayed. Whoever I got that information from I relayed that to, I believe, both Mr. -- or excuse me, Ambassador Taylor and to Mr. Morrison.

Mr. Goldman. But as of September 9 you understood, did you not, that President Trump either himself or through his agents required that President Zelensky make a public announcement of the two investigations that President Trump cared about in order to get both the White House meeting and to release the security assistance. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I believe that is correct.

Mr. Goldman. Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The Chairman. That concludes our 45 minutes. I now recognize Mr. Nunes. Oh, okay. Why don't we take a 5 or 10-minute break?

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you.

[Recess.]

RPTR BRYANT

EDTR HUMKE

[11:20 a.m.]

The Chairman. The committee will come to order. I now recognize Ranking Member Nunes and minority counsel for 45 minutes of questions.

Mr. Nunes. I thank the gentleman. For those of you watching at home, that was not a bathroom break. That was actually a chance for the Democrats to go out and hold a press conference, Ambassador, for all the supposed bombshells that were in your opening testimony.

I want to get back to the facts of the matter here. And the thing that the Democrats have been unwilling to accept is that their operatives got campaign dirt from Ukrainians in the 2016 election. Now, they know it. They know it's true, because we have financial records that show it. So they were -- the Democrats were heavily involved working with Ukrainians to dirty up the Trump campaign in 2016.

So, Ambassador, I want to go through just a few of the incidents that we know. I know you may not know all about them. You may know about them now. But I want to walk through some of those examples of why the President may be very upset with Ukraine and think that they're a country that's out to get him, as I think both you've said that and Ambassador Volker have said that from that May 23rd meeting.

The first question I have is, were you aware of the anti-Trump efforts by DNC operative Alexandra Chalupa?

Ambassador Sondland. I am not aware of it.

Mr. Nunes. So in 2000 -- there was a 2017 article that also quotes a Ukrainian Parliamentarian Artemenko saying, quote, it was clear that they were supporting, meaning Ukraine, supporting Hillary Clinton's candidacy, and they did everything from

organizing meetings with the Clinton team to publicly supporting her to criticizing Trump. I think that they simply didn't meet with the Trump campaign because they thought Hillary would win.

Do you know that Ukrainian official, by any chance, that stated that?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't.

Mr. Nunes. Were you aware that then-Ukrainian Ambassador to U.S. Chaly wrote an op-ed in The Hill during the 2016 Presidential campaign criticizing then-candidate Trump?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm not aware.

Mr. Nunes. But you know that now after the last few months?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Nunes. So probably one of the more disturbing ones is the Ukraine Internal Affairs Minister Avakov mocked and disparaged then-candidate Trump on Facebook and Twitter.

Were you aware that Serhiy Leshchenko, a Ukrainian parliamentarian, admitted that part of his motivation in spreading the information about the so-called black ledger, a disputed document purporting to reveal corruption by a former Trump campaign official, was to undermine the Trump candidacy?

Ambassador Sondland. I wasn't aware.

Mr. Nunes. So you may be familiar the black ledger was used in the 2016 election to dirty up a campaign associate, and later Mueller didn't use that as evidence in his report on election meddling.

So, knowing all these facts from high-ranking Ukrainian officials, Ambassador, it probably makes a little more sense now as to why the President may think that there's problems with Ukraine and that Ukraine was out to get him. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I understand your -- I understand your point, yes, Chairman -- or Ranking Member.

Mr. Nunes. Because you said in your deposition, and I'm just going to make sure this was your -- just read it back to you. On page 279, for your legal team. Quote: "They are all corrupt." This is what you said about your conversation with the President. So this is your words about what the President told you.

Ambassador Sondland. This is the May 23rd meeting?

Mr. Nunes. That is correct.

They are all corrupt. They are all terrible people and, you know, I don't want to spend any time with that. And he also said, they tried to take me down.

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Mr. Nunes. When they tried to take him down, I think any logical person that wants to do two plus two equals four games would say that that was in the 2016 election, wasn't it?

Ambassador Sondland. I believe that's what he was referring to, yes, Ranking Member.

Mr. Nunes. Right. So during all this time -- and remember, in the spring the Democrats' Russia hoax witch hunt is still ongoing. They're still claiming that President Trump is a Russian agent. They're out to get -- they're out to get President Trump at the time.

His personal attorney is then interested in trying to figure out who are these Ukrainians that are trying to get to my candidate? As those of us, the Republicans on this committee, who are also trying to get to the bottom of who were the sources in the Steele dossier that the Democrats had paid for? The House Republicans wanted to know that all through the spring and even the summer of -- and even as of today, we'd

still like to know.

That's why we've subpoenaed the DNC operatives that they refuse to subpoena. We sent a letter this morning. I doubt we'll see those subpoenas. We want to know exactly -- get to the bottom of exactly who were these Democratic operatives that were dirtying up the Trump campaign in 2016. And they just can't get over that the President would send his personal attorney over there to try to get to the bottom of that.

And, Ambassador, you had very few dealings with Rudy Giuliani and a few text messages.

Ambassador Sondland. A few text messages and a few phone calls.

Mr. Nunes. All right. So the whistleblower, we're trying to put together here with their timeline. They seem to have a timeline problem, because the whistleblower that only they know, who they won't subpoena, who clearly Mr. Vindman knows who they blocked testimony yesterday from -- would not allow Mr. Vindman to answer our questions, that whistleblower says on July 25th that there were all these promises being made.

Yet, the -- I forget what they call it. The drug deal that the Three Amigos were cooking up seems to be their latest. You're part of the Three Amigos and the drug deal, Ambassador. Were you aware of any drug deal on July 25th, when the phone call actually occurred?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know about any drug deal.

Mr. Nunes. Right. And did you know you were part of the Three Amigos?

Ambassador Sondland. I am. I'm a proud part of the Three Amigos.

Mr. Nunes. And that's the same thing Ambassador Volker said yesterday, because by the time that the phone call that supposedly the whistleblower claims was the reason, was the original quid pro quo, has now got down to -- we're now a month later

where you're involved, and their quid pro quo has gotten down to the low level of, well, they want a statement. And you didn't even know about anything to do with -- on July 25th, you knew nothing about military aid being withheld.

Ambassador Sondland. I knew military aid was withheld beginning I believe on July 18th, when Ambassador Taylor told both of us that that was the case.

Mr. Nunes. But on July -- but you don't know about -- you were not on the July 25th call.

Ambassador Sondland. I was not.

Mr. Nunes. Where the aid doesn't come up at all.

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I just read the readout when everyone else did.

Mr. Nunes. Everybody has testified that was on the July 25th call that there was no aid discussed on the July 25th call.

So then you're in the process. You have no idea that this is tied to Burisma or anybody else. You say you don't realize this until the end of August.

Ambassador Sondland. I didn't realize that aid was tied. The Burisma and 2016 piece was much earlier, Mr. -- or Ranking Member.

Mr. Nunes. I'm glad you bring up Burisma, because this is another issue that the Democrats don't want to go into. They refuse to call in Hunter Biden. Hunter Biden could get to the bottom of all of this. He could come in and talk about whether or not it was appropriate for him to receive over \$50,000 a month while his dad was Vice President and when they -- they actually were able to stop and get an investigator fired. They could call in Hunter Biden, but they don't want to do it.

But let's talk about Burisma, Ambassador. I know you're the Ambassador to the EU, and I think some of the members later will get into whether or not it was appropriate for you to be in Ukraine or not. I believe it was. I think you have a clear mandate to do

it.

But you wouldn't be the first Ambassador to actually be interested in Burisma. Did you know that in September 2015, then Ambassador to Ukraine, Jeffrey Pyatt, publicly called for an investigation into Zlochevsky, the president of Burisma? This was the Ukrainian Ambassador appointed by President Obama in Ukraine.

Ambassador Sondland. I wasn't aware of that, no.

Mr. Nunes. You were not aware of it?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Nunes. So you would not be the first one to be mentioning that investigations should be done on Burisma, because it happened during the Obama administration.

Did you know that financial records show Burisma routed more than \$3 million to the American accounts tied to Hunter Biden?

Ambassador Sondland. I did not know that.

Mr. Nunes. Did you know that Burisma's American lawyers tried to secure a meeting with the new state prosecutor the same day his predecessor, Viktor Shokin, who the Vice President wanted fired, was announced?

Ambassador Sondland. I did not know that.

Mr. Nunes. Well, we're not going to get to the answer to many of these questions, because the witnesses that need to come in and clarify exactly what the Democrats were doing in 2016, we're not going to be able to visit with those witnesses.

And so it's an inconvenient truth that the Democrats don't want to admit. Their operatives that were dirtying up the Trump campaign using Ukrainian sources in 2016 and they do not want us to get to the bottom of it. They don't want you, Ambassador, to get to the bottom of it. They don't want the President's personal attorney, even though

he's under a special counsel investigation that they fed into the FBI, that we've dealt with for over 3 years, they don't want to get to the bottom of that, Ambassador.

I think Mr. Castor has some questions for you.

Mr. Castor. Thank you, Mr. Nunes.

Good morning, Ambassador, how are you?

Ambassador Sondland. Good morning, Mr. Castor.

Mr. Castor. Welcome back. You were here all day on the 17th late into the night, so thank you for your cooperation with the investigation.

Did the President ever tell you personally about any preconditions for anything?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Castor. Okay. So the President never told you about any preconditions for the aid to be released?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Castor. The President never told you about any preconditions for a White House meeting?

Ambassador Sondland. Personally, no.

Mr. Castor. You said you didn't have your records or your documents from the State Department, but if you did, there wouldn't be any document or record that ties President Trump personally to any of this, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Boy, I don't want to speculate what would be on --

Mr. Castor. Your documents or records.

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall anything like that, no.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Good heavens. Okay.

You testified Mr. Giuliani's requests for a quid pro quo for the White House meeting, and you indicated that you believe that was -- he was evincing President

Trump's interests, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. My contact with Mr. Giuliani began, as I said, very late in the process, after August 1st, when I was first introduced to him by a text from Ambassador Volker. So we had already begun those discussions, I believe, with the Ukrainians prior to August 1st. So everything was being funneled through others, including Mr. Volker.

Mr. Castor. Okay. You testified that Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the President, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That's our understanding, yes.

Mr. Castor. But how did you know that? Who told you?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, when the President says, talk to my personal attorney, and then Mr. Giuliani, as his personal attorney, makes certain requests or demands, we assume it's coming from the President. I don't -- I don't -- I'm not testifying that I heard the President tell Mr. Giuliani to tell us. So if that's your question.

Mr. Castor. But at your deposition, you said -- the question was, at the May 23rd meeting, when the President said go talk to -- go talk to Rudy, you responded, he didn't even say go talk. He said, talk to Rudy. You subsequently said, it was sort of like I don't want to talk about this. So it wasn't an order or a direction to go talk with Mr. Giuliani, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Our conclusion and the conclusion of the three of us was that if we did not talk to Rudy, nothing would move forward on Ukraine.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And that was May 23rd. And then you never had any personal communications with Giuliani until August, right?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Mr. Castor. And Volker was handling -- Ambassador Volker was the primary --

Ambassador Sondland. Volker, Perry, and others.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Ambassador Volker, you testified he's a professional diplomat, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes, he is.

Mr. Castor. And you said you had a great relationship with him?

Ambassador Sondland. I do, yes.

Mr. Castor. You said he was a very smart guy.

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Castor. Ambassador Yovanovitch said he's a brilliant diplomat, in fact. Do you agree with that?

Ambassador Sondland. He's pretty smart.

Mr. Castor. You stated that he's one of those people I'd hand my wallet to.

Ambassador Sondland. I would.

Mr. Castor. And so did you hear his testimony yesterday?

Ambassador Sondland. I did not.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Because --

Ambassador Sondland. I was busy getting ready for you.

Mr. Castor. He didn't have any -- he didn't have any evidence of any of these preconditions. And he was the one most engaged with the Ukrainians, wasn't he?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Castor. Okay. I mean, you testified, you know, this was his full-time job, although he was doing it for free.

Ambassador Sondland. He was the special envoy.

Mr. Castor. And you testified you came in and out of the events, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Mr. Castor. Okay. At your deposition, we asked you about your communications with the President, and we asked you whether there were so many that it would be impossible to chronicle. And you said, no, it wasn't that many. And we went down the path of building a list of communications you remember with the President, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Castor. We talked about May 23rd in the Oval Office.

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Castor. You mentioned on July 25th, before you went to Ukraine, you called the President, but there was no material information on the 25th call, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Not that I recall.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Then last Friday, Mr. Holmes came in, and I guess his testimony refreshed your recollection?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. What refreshed my recollection was when he mentioned A\$AP Rocky. Then all of a sudden it came back to me.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And talking about President Zelensky loving the President and so forth?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, the whole thing sort of came back to me after he mentioned A\$AP Rocky.

Mr. Castor. And then the next time -- you know, we tried to unpack this. The next time you talk with the President was -- on the telephone was September 9th, according to your deposition, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I may have even spoken to him on September 6th, but, again, I just don't have all the records. I wish I could get them. Then I could answer your questions very easily.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But on September 9th, at least at your deposition, you were extremely clear. You called the President. You said he was feeling cranky that day, right?

Ambassador Sondland. He seemed very cranky to me.

Mr. Castor. And you said in no uncertain terms -- and this is on the heels of the Bill Taylor text, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Right.

Mr. Castor. And why don't you tell us, what did the President say to you on September 9th that you remember?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, words to the effect -- I decided to ask the President the question in an open-ended fashion, because there were so many different scenarios floating around as to what was going on with Ukraine.

So, rather than ask the President nine different questions, is it this, is it this, is it that, I just said, what do you want from Ukraine? I may have even used a four-letter word. And he said, I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. I just want Zelensky to do the right thing, to do what he ran on, or words to that effect.

And that gave me the impetus to respond to Ambassador Taylor with the text that I sent. As I said to Mr. Goldman, it was not an artfully written text. I should have been more specific, put it in quotes, something like that. But, basically, I wanted Mr. Taylor, Ambassador Taylor to pick up the ball and take it from there. I had gone as far as I could go.

Mr. Castor. And you believed the President, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. You know what, I'm not going to characterize whether I believed or didn't believe. I was just trying to convey what he said on the phone.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And at that point in time, the pause in the aid, the aid was

paused for 55 days. There was a news article in Politico on August 28th talking about it. So by that point in time, the President had been receiving calls from Senators. He had been getting pressure to lift the aid, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That's what I understand, yes.

Mr. Castor. I want to turn back to your opener on page 5, under -- when you talk about, in the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I later came to believe that the resumption of security aid would not occur until there was a public statement from Ukraine committing to the investigations, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Castor. And you acknowledge that this is speculation, right?

Ambassador Sondland. It was a presumption.

Mr. Castor. Okay. It was a guess, in fact, I think you even said this morning.

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I want to say that it goes back to Mr. Goldman's point or Chairman Schiff's two plus two equaled four in my mind at that point.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But you didn't have any evidence of that, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Other than the aid wasn't being released and we weren't getting anywhere with the Ukrainians.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But did Ambassador Volker clue you in that that was the issue? I mean, this is a pretty high -- I mean, this is a pretty serious conclusion you've reached without precise evidence.

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I sent that email to Secretary Pompeo to set up a potential meeting between President Trump and President Zelensky in Warsaw. And when I referred to the logjam, I referred to the logjam in a very inclusive way. Everything was jammed up at that point. And Secretary Pompeo essentially gave me the green light to brief President Zelensky about making those announcements.

Mr. Castor. Okay. We can turn to that. And that was your email dated what date?

Ambassador Sondland. Do you have the page there?

Mr. Castor. Your email to Secretary Pompeo, was that August 11th?

Ambassador Sondland. August 22nd.

Mr. Castor. Okay. So you're asking Secretary Pompeo whether we should block time -- I mean, is there any discussion of specific investigations? Is there any discussion of Biden or Burisma or anything linking to aid in this email that you sent to Pompeo, Secretary Pompeo?

Ambassador Sondland. No. This was a proposed briefing that I was going to give President Zelensky, and I was going to call President Zelensky and ask him to say what is in this email. And I was asking essentially President Pompeo's permission to do that, which he said yes.

Mr. Castor. But at that point in time, we're talking about investigations into the origins of the 2016 election. We're not talking about anything to do with Joe Biden.

Ambassador Sondland. Joe Biden did not come up.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Stepping back a page to your email to the State Department on August 11th, you email Secretary Pompeo and you say: Kurt and I negotiated a statement from Zelensky to be delivered for our review in a day or two.

And the question I have here is that, I mean, that statement never was issued and, in fact, Ambassador Volker has testified that he didn't think it was a good idea and ultimately the Ukrainians didn't think it was a good idea, and so the statement never reached a finalized state.

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Mr. Castor. But even if it had, it doesn't talk about Bidens or Burisma or anything

insidious, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, the statement, as I recall, would have mentioned the 2016 election/DNC server and Burisma. It would not have mentioned the Bidens.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And have you heard Ambassador Volker, how he talks about what might be an investigation into Burisma?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Castor. Okay. I mean, he has said that if there were Ukrainians engaged in violations of Ukrainian law, then the prosecutor general with the new administration ought to investigate that. Did Ambassador Volker ever relate that to you?

Ambassador Sondland. No. We just talked in generic terms about, quote, "investigating Burisma."

Mr. Castor. But it had nothing to do with Vice President Biden?

Ambassador Sondland. I had never heard Vice President Biden come up until very late in the game.

Mr. Castor. When?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall the exact date, but when it all sort of came together. Maybe after the transcript of the July 25th call. I don't know. I don't know the exact date when I made the connection.

Mr. Castor. Okay.

Ambassador Sondland. Apparently, a lot of people did not make the connection.

Ambassador Sondland. I want to turn to the letter from Senator Johnson. When he heard about some of these issues and the hold on the aid, he called the President. He called the President on August 31st. It's page 6 of his letter.

Senator Johnson states, or he writes: I asked him, the President, whether there was some kind of arrangement where Ukraine would take some action and the hold

would be lifted. Without hesitation, President Trump immediately denied such an arrangement existed. Senator Johnson quotes the President saying, no, and he prefaced it with a different word. No way. I would never do that. Who told you that? I have -- Senator Johnson says, I have accurately characterized the President's reaction as adamant, vehement, and angry.

Senator Johnson's telephone call with the President wasn't a public event. It was capturing a genuine, you know, moment with the President. And he had -- at this point in time on August 31st, he was adamant, vehement, and angry that there was no connections to aid, there were no preconditions.

Ambassador Sondland. I had my meeting with Senator Johnson where, again, I had made the presumption that I had made to both Mr. Yermak and the email I had sent to Secretary Pompeo. And we were sort of ruminating about what was going on, and Senator Johnson, I believe, said, I'm going to call President Trump, you know, and find out. And then he obviously had that phone call. I wasn't involved in that phone call.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But you have no reason to disbelieve that wasn't the way it went down, right?

Ambassador Sondland. No, no reason to disbelieve Senator Johnson.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And now that you've had some time since your deposition and you submitted an addendum relating to the Warsaw get-together with Mr. Yermak, as you sit here today, I mean, are we missing a lot of your communications with the President?

Ambassador Sondland. I haven't had that many communications with the President and, in fact, a bunch of the call records that I have had access to, just the short period of time on the call indicates I never got through. In other words, I was put on hold for 1 or 2 minutes and the call never connected.

So I really can't give you an accurate count of how many conversations. Plus, Mr. Castor, I've had a lot of conversations with the President about completely unrelated matters that have nothing to do with Ukraine.

Mr. Castor. But you don't think we're missing any material conversations that you had with the President?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall any material conversations today as I'm sitting here.

Mr. Castor. Or with Rudy Giuliani?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. My memory about the conversations with Rudy Giuliani, whether they were direct, whether they were conference calls with Ambassador Volker or Secretary Perry, is really vague without seeing the -- you know, the call logs.

Mr. Castor. Are there any other key fact witnesses that would help us get to the bottom of whether there was any link to the aid and the --

Ambassador Sondland. Maybe Brian McCormack, the chief of staff for Secretary Perry, who was involved in and out as well.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Now, the aid was ultimately lifted on September 11th, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I believe that is correct.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And Senator Johnson, in his letter on page 6, quotes the President on August 31st: Ron, I understand your position. We're reviewing it now and you'll probably like my final decision.

So even on August 31st -- and this is before any congressional investigation started -- the President was signaling to Senator Johnson that he was going to lift the aid, lift the --

Ambassador Sondland. Sounds like it, yeah.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And most of the other witnesses we talked to, whether it's from the Department of Defense or OMB or -- you know, have told us that all along during this 55-day period, they genuinely believed the hold would be lifted. Was that your feeling too at the time?

Ambassador Sondland. I didn't know, because every time I asked about the hold, I was never given a straight answer as to why it had been put in place to begin with.

Mr. Castor. Now, what do you know about the Ukrainians' knowledge of the hold?

Ambassador Sondland. Oh, that's very vague. I don't know if the Politico article triggered it. I don't know if they were told by Mr. Giuliani. It would be pure, you know, guesswork on my part, speculation. I don't know.

Mr. Castor. Okay. I mean, during your deposition, you testified that you did not believe the Ukrainians believed the -- were aware of the hold until the Politico article.

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. Again, I think -- I think I testified that I was not clear on the exact dates of when these things -- when the light went on. There were a lot of conversations going on with the Ukrainians by a lot of people, so I don't know who communicated what to them.

Mr. Castor. We have testimony from several witnesses that the President was concerned about foreign aid generally, and so he had an appetite to put holds on aid, because he was trying to be a good steward of U.S. taxpayer dollars. Do you agree with that?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm aware that that's been his position on aid in other matters, yes.

Mr. Castor. And are you aware that he was also interested in better understanding the contributions of our European allies?

Ambassador Sondland. That I'm definitely aware of.

Mr. Castor. And there was some back-and-forth between the State Department officials trying to better understand that information for the President?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Castor. And how do you know that wasn't the reason for the hold?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't.

Mr. Castor. But yet, you speculate that there was, you know, a link to this announcement.

Ambassador Sondland. I presumed it, yes.

Mr. Castor. Okay. I want to turn quickly to the July 10th meeting. The July 10th meeting in Ambassador Bolton's office involving Ambassador Volker, Mr. Danylyuk, Mr. Yermak, has been the subject of some controversy.

Ambassador Volker yesterday testified that it wasn't until the end of the meeting -- Mr. Danylyuk he said was going through some real detailed -- some real detailed information about some of the plans he had, but it wasn't until the end of the meeting Ambassador Volker recalls that you mentioned something general about investigations.

What do you remember from that meeting?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, again, I'm not going to dispute Ambassador Volker's recollection, particularly if he had notes. I know that the desire to have the 2016 election, DNC server, and Burisma were already being discussed by them. Again, I had no direct contact with Mr. Giuliani on July 10th but through Ambassador Volker. And I probably mentioned that this needs to happen in order to move the process forward. That seemed to be the conventional wisdom at the time.

I don't recall any abrupt ending of the meeting or people storming out or anything

like that. That would have been very memorable if someone had stormed out of a meeting, based on something I said.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And nobody accused you at that point in time of being involved with some sort of drug deal?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Castor. Did Dr. Hill ever relate to you her concerns about you being involved in a drug deal?

Ambassador Sondland. Never.

Mr. Castor. Okay. So you were surprised when testimony emerged that she thought there was a drug deal going on?

Ambassador Sondland. I was shocked.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And, in fact, after the meeting, you went out and you took a picture, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. We -- Ambassador Bolton -- or his assistant indicated that he was out of time, that he needed -- he had another meeting to attend. And we all walked out of the White House. Everyone was smiling, everyone was happy, and we took a picture on the lawn on a nice sunny day.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Then did you retire to the Ward Room?

Ambassador Sondland. I think Secretary Perry asked to use the Ward Room to continue the conversation. And the real subject that was under debate -- and it wasn't an angry debate, it was a debate -- should the call from President Trump to President Zelensky be made prior to the parliamentary elections in Ukraine or after the parliamentary elections? And there was good reason for both.

We felt -- Ambassador Perry, Ambassador Volker, and I thought it would help President Zelensky to have President Trump speak to him prior to the parliamentary

elections, because it would give President Zelensky more credibility, and ultimately he would do better with his people in the parliamentary elections.

Others, I believe, pushed back and said, no, it's not appropriate to do it before. It should be done after. And ultimately, it was done after.

Mr. Castor. Okay. There was no mention of Vice President Biden in the Ward Room?

Ambassador Sondland. Not that I remember, no.

Mr. Castor. Or any specific investigation?

Ambassador Sondland. Just the generic investigations.

Mr. Castor. Okay. When, again, did the Vice President Biden nexus come to your attention?

Ambassador Sondland. Very late. Again, I don't -- I can't recall the exact date the light bulb went on. It could have been as late as once the transcript was out. But it was always Burisma to me, and I didn't know about the connection between Burisma and Biden.

Mr. Castor. To the best of your knowledge, you never understood that anyone was asking Ukrainians to investigate U.S. persons, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Ukrainians to investigate U.S. persons?

Mr. Castor. Right.

Ambassador Sondland. No, no.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And just to sort of be clear here, ultimately, the aid was lifted on September 11th. There was never any announcement by the Ukrainians about any investigations they were going to do, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Castor. The Ukrainians never, to your knowledge, started any of these

investigations, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Castor. And consequently, these allegations that there was a quid pro quo that had to be enforced before the aid is released, that never came to fruition, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't believe so.

Mr. Castor. I want to just step back a little bit and just verify with you that the President had some genuinely deep-rooted concerns about corruption in Ukraine, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That's what he expressed to us, yes.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And you believed him, right, given his business dealings in the region?

Ambassador Sondland. When we had the conversation, I did.

Mr. Castor. And when you first started discussing the concerns the President had with corruption, Burisma wasn't the only company that was mentioned, right?

Ambassador Sondland. It was a generic -- as I think I testified to Chairman Schiff, it was a generic corruption, oligarchs, just bad stuff going on in Ukraine.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But other companies came up, didn't they?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know if they were mentioned specifically. It might have been Naftogaz, because we were working on another issue with Naftogaz. So that might have been one of them.

Mr. Castor. At one point in your deposition, I believe you said, yeah, Naftogaz comes up at every conversation. Is that fair?

Ambassador Sondland. Probably.

Mr. Castor. Okay. You had -- I guess Dr. Hill at one point attributed to you the terminology that the President has given you a large remit. Are you familiar with her

assertion of that?

Ambassador Sondland. I didn't understand what she was talking about.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But you have -- and we got into this a little bit in your deposition. You know, you said that the President gave you a special assignment with regard to Ukraine, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, when the President appointed me to the -- as the U.S. Ambassador to the European Union, Ukraine was part of my portfolio. What made my assignment larger than just being part of my portfolio were the unique circumstances where there was no current sitting Ambassador in Ukraine and there was a new President in Ukraine.

And the discussions that we had, the Three Amigos, Perry, Volker, and I, was that Ukraine needed extraordinary, as high-level support as it could get from the United States during this period, which we cleared with both Ambassador Bolton and with Chief of Staff Mulvaney to continue working on it.

So, by extension, yes, if the National Security Advisor and the chief of staff approve your remit, it really is coming from the President.

Mr. Castor. Okay. When we asked you that at the deposition, you said, I was spinning a little bit.

Ambassador Sondland. I was spinning about something else I think in the interview in Kyiv.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And you further testified: So when I said the President gave me an assignment, it wasn't really the President, it was the Secretary through the President, and that's where I received my direction, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Did Ambassador Taylor ever bring any concerns to your

attention about the so-called -- the channel he dubbed irregular?

Ambassador Sondland. No. In fact, the opposite. When he came to post, I think -- I know I called him or he called me. I think he spoke with Secretary Perry and Ambassador Volker separately. And in the course of the first few weeks, he was highly appreciative that a new Ambassador coming to post like himself was getting the kind of support he was getting from all three of us.

Having a Cabinet member, a Special Envoy, and a fellow Ambassador all helping to raise the profile of Ukraine, he was highly appreciative and highly complimentary.

Mr. Castor. And you maintained an open line with him, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct. I think there are a number of texts, some of which I have and some of which I don't, where he is reaching out constantly to me and to the others for advice and help.

Mr. Castor. Okay. We had, I think -- we tried to count them up. There's 215 or something text messages between you, Volker, and Ambassador Taylor, you know, during the early August timeframe. Does that make sense to you?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. I think he -- I think Taylor started in late June or early July was when he first took post, and I think we began communicating fairly shortly thereafter.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And he never communicated any concerns to you during this timeframe that he had issues with what was going on?

Ambassador Sondland. What do you mean by "what was going on"?

Mr. Castor. This request for some sort of investigation.

Ambassador Sondland. Not in the early stages. You know, as his -- as time went on, his emails began to be a little more pointed and frantic. And that's when we had very little visibility as to what was going on either. I think it had to do more with the

aid and as to why the aid was suspended.

Mr. Castor. Right. And ultimately, you put a period on that issue by having the September 9th communication with the President, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Mr. Castor. And when you shared that feedback with Ambassador Taylor, was he satisfied that this issue was now behind them?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't really know, because he responded -- when I said, you know, get a hold of the Secretary, he said, I agree. And I never knew whether he reached out to the Secretary or not. That was sort of the end of that --

Mr. Castor. At one point in your text, you said, let's get on the phone, right? And you said you're an individual that doesn't like to walk through these issues on text when you can talk about it on the telephone, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I say that to everybody when something becomes more substantive than just a few lines of text. I say, let's talk.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And did you talk with Ambassador Taylor?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall. I mean, I don't recall whether we spoke right after that, whether he called the Secretary. I basically, Mr. Castor, wanted to get the notion across that I've gone as far as I can go with this. You need to pick up the -- you're the Ambassador. You need to pick up the ball and run with it at this point.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Just getting back to the irregular channel, did anyone else express any concerns to you about this so-called irregular channel?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm not sure how someone could characterize something as an irregular channel when you're talking to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, the chief of staff of the White House, the Secretary of Energy. I don't know how that's irregular.

If a bunch of folks that are not in that channel are aggrieved for some reason for not being included, I don't know how they can consider us to be the irregular channel and they to be the regular channel when it's the leadership that makes the decisions.

Mr. Castor. And so the concerns, you know, raised were never brought to -- were never brought to a head?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, they were never raised. They were never raised. No one said, back off of Ukraine, this is dangerous, you're doing something that's untoward. We have concerns. There was a bad phone call on July 25th. There's talk about a drug cocktail or something. No one ever said that to me by phone, by text, by email.

I don't remember anybody sounding any alarm bell, because, of course, had someone mentioned it, I would have sat up and taken notice. Everyone's hair was on fire, but no one decided to talk to us.

Mr. Castor. Okay. When you talk in your statement about in the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I later came to believe, it was your speculation, it was your guess that the resumption of security aid would not occur until there was a public statement from Ukraine committing to the investigations of 2016. And I believe you said that at this point you believed everyone, everyone knew this. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I think once that Politico article broke, it started making the rounds that, you know, if you can't get a White House meeting without the statement, what makes you think you're going to get a, you know, \$400 million check? I mean, again, that was my presumption.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But you had no evidence to prove that, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Mr. Castor. You've stated that you haven't been able to access your records. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Not all of them. And there are lots of notes, records, readouts of calls. Can't get to them.

Mr. Castor. But you've also stated that you don't take notes, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't take notes, but there are a lot of others out there.

Mr. Castor. And you freely admit that -- you know, when asked at your deposition, we put together a list of all the times you said you don't recall. It's like two pages long. So --

Ambassador Sondland. Is that all?

Mr. Castor. So, you know, you don't -- on a lot of these questions, I mean, there's nuance, there are ambiguities. And we don't have records, we don't have notes, and we don't have recollections, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Right. I mean, it's situational things that sort of trigger memory, especially when I'm -- you know, I'm dealing with the European Union. I'm dealing with the 28 member countries. I'm dealing with other countries that are not in the European Union that are part of my mandate. I'm dealing with the White House leadership. There's a lot of stuff to juggle.

And, as I said in my opening statement, a phone call for me with the President of the United States or the President of fill in the blank country, while people who get a call like that maybe once in a lifetime, a call like that might be very memorable. They might remember every single thing about it. I'm doing that all day long. And I'm not saying it in a way of being braggadocio or anything like that, but it's part of my routine day.

So all of these calls, these meetings with very important people tend to sort of blend together until I have someone that can show me what we discussed, what the

subject was, then all of a sudden it comes back.

Mr. Castor. I mean, we're trying to get to the facts here. We're trying to find out what actually happened, what's reliable, what's accurate. Bill Taylor kept notes. He brought a little notebook in his pocket at his deposition and he held it up and he says, when I'm not at my desk and I'm on the phone, I use this notebook. When I'm at my desk, I use a notebook. George Kent said he wrote just innumerable memos to the file. Catherine Croft, she testified that she didn't believe George Kent's notes would be accurate.

And so, you know, we have all this, you know, back-and-forth, but, you know, as we get to the end here, you don't have records, you don't have your notes, because you didn't take notes. You don't have a lot of recollections. I mean, this is like the trifecta of unreliability. Isn't that true?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, what I'm trying to do today is to use the limited information I have to be as forthcoming as possible with you and the rest of the committee. And as these recollections have been refreshed by subsequent testimony, by some texts and emails that I've now had access to, I think I filled in a lot of blanks.

Mr. Castor. But a lot of it's speculation, a lot of it is your guess. And we're talking about, you know, an impeachment of the President of the United States. So the evidence here ought to be pretty darn good.

Ambassador Sondland. I've been very clear as to when I was presuming, and I was presuming on the aid.

On the other things, Mr. Castor, I did have some texts that I read from. So when it comes to those, I'll rely on those texts, because I don't have any reason to believe that those texts were, you know, falsely sent or that there's some subterfuge there. They are what they are. They say what they say.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Thank you, sir.

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you.

The Chairman. The time of the gentleman has expired. We'll now move to a second staff-led round of 30 minutes.

Mr. Volker, I just have a few questions before I turn it back to Mr. Goldman. You testified in response to my colleagues in the minority something along the lines of a lot of people did not make the connection between Burisma and Biden. I think a lot of people have real difficulty understanding that. Tim Morrison testified that I think it took him all of doing a Google search to find out, oh, this is the significance of Burisma, it involves the Bidens.

Are you saying during all this time up until the call, you never made the connection between Burisma and the Bidens? You just thought that the President and Rudy Giuliani were interested in this one particular Ukrainian company?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, my role, Mr. Chairman, was just to get the meeting.

The Chairman. I understand that, but my question is, are you saying that for months and months, notwithstanding everything Rudy Giuliani was saying on TV and all the discussion with Rudy Giuliani, that you never put Burisma together with the Bidens?

Ambassador Sondland. I didn't. And I wasn't paying attention to what Mr. Giuliani was saying on TV. We were talking to him directly.

The Chairman. Let me ask you this: Ambassador Volker testified yesterday to a similar epiphany, for lack of a better word. This is what he said: In hindsight, I now understand that others saw the idea of investigating possible corruption involving Ukrainian company Burisma as equivalent to investigating former Vice President Biden. I saw them very different, as very different, the former being appropriate and

unremarkable, the latter being unacceptable. In retrospect, I should have seen that connection differently, and had I done so, I would have raised my own objections.

Does that sum up your views as well?

Ambassador Sondland. It does.

The Chairman. Now, I think you were asked a question with a bit of an incorrect premise by my colleagues in the minority about Fiona Hill saying that -- referring to a drug deal between you and Mr. Mulvaney. It was Ambassador Bolton who made the comment that he didn't want to be part of any drug deal that Ambassador Sondland and Mulvaney were cooking up.

No one thinks they're talking about a literal drug deal here or a drug cocktail. The import I think of the Ambassador's comments is quite clear, that he believed that this bargain, this quid pro quo, as you've described it, over a meeting, the investigations to get the meeting, was not something he wanted to be a part of.

What I want to ask you about is, he makes reference in that drug deal to a drug deal cooked up by you and Mulvaney. It's the reference to Mulvaney that I want to ask you about. You've testified that Mulvaney was aware of this quid pro quo, of this condition that the Ukrainians had to meet, that is, announcing these public investigations to get the White House meeting. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. A lot of people were aware of it. And --

The Chairman. Including Mr. Mulvaney?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And including the Secretary of State?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. Now, have you seen the acting chief of staff's press conference, in which he acknowledged that the military aid was withheld, in part, because of a desire

to get that 2016 investigation you've talked about?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't think I saw it live. I saw it later, yeah.

The Chairman. So you saw him acknowledge publicly what you have confirmed too, that Mr. Mulvaney understood that two plus two equals four. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, again, I didn't know that the aid was conclusively tied. I was presuming. He was in a position to say yes, it was, or no, it wasn't, because --

The Chairman. And he said, yes, it was, did he not?

Ambassador Sondland. He said, yes, it was.

The Chairman. Mr. Goldman.

Mr. Goldman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you again, Ambassador Sondland. We do appreciate your efforts to refresh your recollection through the documents, and we understand, we share your frustration in not having the documents to help guide this investigation. So we do appreciate those efforts.

One of the documents that you provided to us goes back to the conversation you and the chairman were having about Mr. Mulvaney. And you had been trying for some time before the July 25th call to set up that call. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. To set up the call between President Trump and President Zelensky, yes.

Mr. Goldman. Correct, yes.

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Goldman. And I want to show you an email that you reference in your opening statement that is a July 19th email. And who is this from?

Ambassador Sondland. It looks like it's -- is it from me? I don't know.

Mr. Goldman. It's from you, I believe.

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah it's from me to the group.

Mr. Goldman. Now, who is the group?

Ambassador Sondland. People mentioned on the email: Blair, Kenna, McCormack, Mulvaney, Perry, Pompeo.

Mr. Goldman. And who's Robert Blair?

Ambassador Sondland. I believe he's a deputy chief of staff or an adviser to the chief of staff.

Mr. Goldman. And you've already told us that Lisa Kenna is the Executive Secretary for Secretary Pompeo. Who's Brian McCormack?

Ambassador Sondland. The chief of staff for -- he was the chief of staff for Secretary Perry.

Mr. Goldman. And then we see Mr. Mulvaney, Secretary Perry, and Secretary Pompeo.

Can you read what you wrote on July 19th to this group, please?

Ambassador Sondland. He is prepared to receive POTUS call. Will assure him that he intends to run a fully transparent investigation. Will turn over every stone. He would greatly appreciate a call prior to Sunday so he can put out some media about a friendly and productive call, no details, prior to Ukraine election on Sunday.

Mr. Goldman. So Sunday was the 21st, which was the date of the parliamentary elections in Ukraine. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

Mr. Goldman. When you say, will assure him that he intends to run a fully transparent investigation and will, quote, "turn over every stone," unquote, what do you mean there?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm referring to the Burisma and the 2016/DNC server investigations.

Mr. Goldman. Later that evening, Secretary Perry responds just to you and Brian McCormack, saying, Mick just confirmed the call being set up for tomorrow by NSC. RP. And then a little later, Mr. Mulvaney replies to all, saying: I asked NSC to set it up for tomorrow.

Were these the only responses that you received to this email?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know. If I have them, I would show them. I don't -- I don't know.

Mr. Goldman. No one wrote back to you and said, what are you talking about, in terms of these investigations and turning over every stone?

Ambassador Sondland. No. There was a chain, and I don't know if it's part of this email or a subsequent email, where I believe Ambassador Bolton pushed back and said he did not want a call to President Zelensky made by President Trump until after the parliamentary elections.

Mr. Goldman. So that would explain why it was moved from the next day, July 20th, to the 25th, right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

Mr. Goldman. But Ambassador Bolton is not on this email, is he?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't think he is, no.

Mr. Goldman. Now, you were asked by Mr. Castor if there are any other key witnesses who might be able to help with our investigation. And you mentioned Brian McCormack, right, the chief of staff for Secretary Perry?

Ambassador Sondland. I did.

Mr. Goldman. You are aware that the committee subpoenaed him, are you not?

Ambassador Sondland. I wasn't aware of that.

Mr. Goldman. And that he refused to come testify. Are you also aware that Mr. Mulvaney was subpoenaed by the committee and refused to come testify?

Ambassador Sondland. I did read that in the newspaper, yes.

Mr. Goldman. Are you also aware that Robert Blair was subpoenaed and refused to come testify?

Ambassador Sondland. I think I'm aware of that.

Mr. Goldman. And that Secretary Perry was asked to come testify and refused?

Ambassador Sondland. I am aware of that as well.

Mr. Goldman. So would you include them as well as Secretary Pompeo as key witnesses that would be able to provide some additional information on this inquiry?

Ambassador Sondland. I think they would.

Mr. Goldman. Now, this was not the first time, as you indicated, that Mr. Mulvaney heard about these investigations into Burisma and the 2016 election. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know what Mr. Mulvaney heard or didn't hear. I think there's been a huge amount of exaggeration over my contact with Mr. Mulvaney. It was actually quite limited.

Mr. Goldman. Well, he certainly didn't indicate -- he certainly indicated a familiarity with what you were talking about in this July 19th email. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Right. Because I think Mr. Mulvaney was in the May 23rd briefing with President Trump. I don't remember, because there were people sitting behind us that were coming and going when we were sitting in front of President Trump's desk.

Mr. Goldman. Okay. Now, you've said that you don't have a recollection of

saying -- referencing Mulvaney in the July 10th meeting in Ambassador Bolton's office.

Is that right or --

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall.

Mr. Goldman. So when both Fiona Hill and Colonel Vindman testify that in response to a question from Ukrainian officials at that July 10th meeting about scheduling a White House visit that you said, well, I spoke with Mr. Mulvaney and it will be scheduled after they announce these investigations, do you have any reason to dispute that characterization?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't have any reason to agree or dispute. I just don't remember.

Mr. Goldman. So if they both remembered it and they both then went and spoke to the NSC legal adviser about it, you would trust that whatever they relayed to the NSC legal adviser would likely be an accurate reflection?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I trust that they relayed it to the NSC legal adviser. I don't know whether I said it, and I don't know which conversation -- again, I've had very, very limited conversations with Mr. Mulvaney.

Mr. Goldman. This email indicates that you spoke to President Zelensky and were relaying what he said to very senior officials. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Which email, again?

Mr. Goldman. Sorry. The July 19th email, where you say, the subject is: I talked to Zelensky just now.

Ambassador Sondland. Yes, I've got it.

Mr. Goldman. Was there some sort of assurance that President Zelensky needed to provide about what he would say to President Trump in order just to get the phone call?

Ambassador Sondland. I think that part was verbal. And then there were a lot of communications going around back and forth with the Ukrainians, and that's when someone -- and I don't remember who -- came up with the idea of a draft statement so there would be no misunderstanding about what, in fact, the Ukrainians would say and would be willing to say that we could rely on and negotiate, something on a piece of paper.

Mr. Goldman. So just to place you in time, we're going to get to that draft statement, which was in August. This is July 19th, before the July 25th call. Do you remember whether there was a need from any of the White House officials or other national security officials for President Zelensky to provide some assurance of what he would say to President Trump before a phone call, not the meeting but a phone call was scheduled?

Ambassador Sondland. There was initially apparently a condition, but that condition was obviously dropped, because the phone call took place and there was no such statement made. The phone call took place, as you said, on the 25th of July.

Mr. Goldman. When you say there was no such statement that took place, what do you mean?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, the Ukrainians never made their public statement prior to the phone call on the 25th of July.

Mr. Goldman. Right. But we're not talking about a public statement. What I was asking is whether President Zelensky needed to relay to you or the other American officials that he would assure President Trump that he would do these investigations in a phone call. That is --

Ambassador Sondland. Well, in my email, I obviously had just spoken with him, and he, "he" being Zelensky, and he said that he was prepared to receive the call, and he

would make those assurances to President Trump on that call, and then presumably that would then lead to the White House meeting.

RPTR ZAMORA

EDTR CRYSTAL

[12:19 p.m.]

Mr. Goldman. And you had been discussing this phone call for quite -- for several weeks now. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes, with -- I think with Volker, with Perry, with Giuliani through Volker and Perry.

Mr. Goldman. And then right after you sent this email assuring the others that he will discuss the investigations and will turn over every stone, the Burisma and 2016 election investigations, Mr. Mulvaney responded that he asked to set up the call for the next day. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's what it says.

Mr. Goldman. Now, let's go to that press statement that you were discussing in August. And you testified, I believe, that you understood that Rudy Giuliani was representing the President's interests with regard to Ukraine. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's what we all understood.

Mr. Goldman. And you all. Who do you mean "we all"?

Ambassador Sondland. Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, myself.

Mr. Goldman. In August, you and Ambassador Volker were coordinating with Andriy Yermak, the Zelensky aide, about a press statement. And I want to pull up some of the text exchanges that you are referring to, which, as you acknowledge, helps you refresh your recollection. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. And I think Taylor was involved in those initial discussions as well.

Mr. Goldman. Well, he's not on any of these text messages, so perhaps he was.

He does not remember that.

But let's go to the first one on August 9th. There's an exchange between Ambassador Volker and you where you are discussing setting up -- we'll try to bring it up in a second, but I'll just summarize for you.

You're discussing trying to set up a White House meeting -- here it is -- and you say, "Morrison ready to get dates as soon as Yermak confirms."

Mr. Volker -- Ambassador Volker says, "Excellent. How did you sway him?"

You said, "Not sure I did. I think POTUS really wants the deliverable."

What did you mean there?

Ambassador Sondland. The commitment to do the investigations.

Mr. Goldman. And how did you know that the President wanted the deliverable?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall. I may have had a conversation with him, or I may have heard it from someone else. But I don't recall, again, without all these records.

Mr. Goldman. Going to the next exhibit, exhibit 10, where -- or August 10 rather -- this is between you and Andriy Yermak. What did you say initially in this exchange?

Ambassador Sondland. "Hello. Good." Oh, no, that's Yermak. "How was your conversation?"

Mr. Goldman. And Mr. Yermak responds, "Hello. Good. My proposal, we receive date and then we make general statement with discussed things. Once we have a date will call for a press briefing announcing upcoming visit and outlining vision for the reboot of U.S.-Ukraine relationship, including, among other things, Burisma and election meddling in investigations."

And you respond, "Got it."

That was your understanding of what this statement had to say to satisfy

Mr. Giuliani. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Goldman. And then ultimately to satisfy the POTUS deliverable?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Goldman. Now, the next day you write an email to Ulrich Brechbuhl and Lisa

Kenna. Are you able to see that on your --

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah, I can see it on the screen, yeah.

Mr. Goldman. Okay. What is the subject of the email?

Ambassador Sondland. Ukraine.

Mr. Goldman. And can you read what you wrote there?

Ambassador Sondland. "Mike," and I'm referring to Secretary Pompeo, "Kurt and I negotiated a statement from Zelensky to be delivered for our review in a day or two. The contents will hopefully make the boss happy enough to authorize an invitation. Zelensky plans to have a big presser on the openness subject, including specifics, next week."

Mr. Goldman. And in your opening statement you said that the specifics -- what did the specifics represent?

Ambassador Sondland. The 2016 and the Burisma.

Mr. Goldman. And when you say "the boss," who do you mean by that?

Ambassador Sondland. President Trump.

Mr. Goldman. And the invitation is what?

Ambassador Sondland. To the White House meeting.

Mr. Goldman. And Lisa Kenna responds, "Gordon, I'll pass to S." And "S" is

Secretary Pompeo?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Goldman. "Thank you. Lisa."

Now, 2 days later you have a text exchange with Ambassador Volker again, and this is at the end of it, but the earlier text, which we don't have here, you may recall includes the press statement, the revised press statement that includes Burisma and the 2016 election. Is that -- do you recall that?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes. If I could see it, that would be helpful, but yes.

Mr. Goldman. So but you ultimately remembered that after your conversation with Mr. Giuliani you did pass along a statement to the Ukrainians that included Burisma and the 2016 election. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I think there were statements being passed back and forth between Volker, the Ukrainians, and others to try and negotiate acceptable language.

Mr. Goldman. And ultimately that statement was not issued, was it?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Goldman. And the White House meeting did not --

Ambassador Sondland. Still hasn't occurred.

Mr. Goldman. Still hasn't occurred.

But you certainly understood at that time, did you not, that it was the President's direction and instruction that a White House meeting with President Zelensky would not occur until President Zelensky announced publicly the investigations that the President wanted. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. And you now know that the investigations the President wanted

was an investigation into the Bidens and an investigation into the 2016 election?

Ambassador Sondland. I know that now, yes.

Mr. Goldman. I'm going to move ahead to August 22nd. And you wrote an email to Secretary Pompeo, directly to Secretary Pompeo, cc'ing Lisa Kenna, with the subject of Zelensky. And could you please read what you wrote to Secretary Pompeo?

Ambassador Sondland. "Mike, should we block time in Warsaw for a short pull-aside for POTUS to meet Zelensky? I would ask Zelensky to look him in the eye and tell him that once Ukraine's new Justice folks are in place mid-September, Zelensky should be able to move forward publicly and with confidence on those issues of importance to POTUS and to the U.S. Hopefully that will break the logjam."

Mr. Goldman. And Secretary Pompeo responds to you 3 minutes later, "Yes."

Now, I want to unpack this a little bit. You said that -- in the middle -- "once Ukraine's new Justice folks are in place." What did you mean by that?

Ambassador Sondland. The new prosecutor that was going to be working for President Zelensky. The old prosecutor, I believe his term was up or he was being let go. He was the Poroshenko prosecutor, and Zelensky wanted to wait until his person was in place.

Mr. Goldman. So once that new prosecutor was in place then Z, "President Zelensky, should be able to move forward publicly and with confidence on those issues of importance to POTUS."

What did you mean by "those issues of importance to POTUS"?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, the 2016 election and Burisma investigation.

Mr. Goldman. Were you aware at this time that Secretary Pompeo had listened into the July 25th phone call?

Ambassador Sondland. I was not.

Mr. Goldman. If he had, do you believe that he would fully understand what the issues of importance to POTUS related to Ukraine would be?

Ambassador Sondland. I mean, I can't characterize his state of mind. He listened in on the phone call and he concluded what he concluded.

Mr. Goldman. But now that you've read the phone call, it's quite clear what the issues of importance to POTUS are?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Goldman. Biden investigation --

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Goldman. -- and the 2016 election investigation. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. Then it says, "Hopefully that will break the logjam."

Now, by this point you were aware that security assistance had been on hold for about 5 weeks. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I became aware on the 18th of July.

Mr. Goldman. And you understood that there was a lot of activity within the State Department and elsewhere to try to get that hold lifted. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

Mr. Goldman. Just about everybody in the interagency, meaning the national security apparatus, wanted to lift the hold and wanted the aid to go to Ukraine?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Goldman. So what did you mean here when you said logjam?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, as I said to Chairman Schiff, I meant inclusively anything that was holding up moving forward on the meeting and the Ukraine-U.S. relationship.

Mr. Goldman. And what was holding that up?

Ambassador Sondland. At that point it was the statements about Burisma and the 2016 election.

Mr. Goldman. But what was being held up?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, the aid was being held up obviously.

Mr. Goldman. Four days later, you said in your opening statement, that you sent Rudy Giuliani's contact information to John Bolton. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I did.

Mr. Goldman. Did you know why he asked for that?

Ambassador Sondland. No idea.

Mr. Goldman. Did you know that he was going to Ukraine the next day?

Ambassador Sondland. I knew he was about to go to Ukraine. I didn't know exactly when his trip was, but I thought it was kind of an odd request given that the White House can pretty much get anyone's phone number they want.

Mr. Goldman. Now, in this email to Secretary Pompeo you reference a trip to Warsaw. Ultimately, the Vice President went on that trip?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. And that was the conversation that you talked about -- or you testified earlier to that -- where you said that we really need to get these investigations from Ukraine in order to release the aid in the pre-meeting?

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

Mr. Goldman. And Vice President Pence just nodded?

Ambassador Sondland. He heard what I said.

Mr. Goldman. And didn't respond in any way?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall any substantive response.

Mr. Goldman. But you never specifically referenced the Bidens or Burisma in that meeting, did you?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't remember ever mentioning the Bidens. I may have mentioned Burisma.

Mr. Goldman. And that meeting was with a group. You were not alone with Vice President Pence. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. And you know that at that bilateral meeting with President Zelensky, I believe you testified earlier, that Vice President Pence did not mention these investigations at all, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall him mentioning the investigations.

Mr. Goldman. So that -- your testimony is just simply in a pre-meeting with a group of Americans before the bilateral meeting you referenced the fact that Ukraine needed to do these investigations in order to lift the aid. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I think I referenced -- I didn't say that Ukraine had to do the investigations. I think I said that we heard from Mr. Giuliani that that was the case.

Mr. Goldman. So that helps inform your presumption, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Goldman. So it wasn't really a presumption. You heard from Mr. Giuliani?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I didn't hear from Mr. Giuliani about the aid. I heard about the Burisma and 2016.

Mr. Goldman. And you understood at that point, as we discussed, two plus two equals four --

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

Mr. Goldman. -- that the aid was there as well?

Ambassador Sondland. That was the problem, Mr. Goldman. No one told me directly that the aid was tied to anything. I was presuming it was.

Mr. Goldman. Right. Well, I want to go ahead to -- I want to go back, on September 1st -- or I'm going to jump actually ahead to September 7th, okay. When we discussed those text messages where you said there were multiple convos with President Zelensky and POTUS. Do you recall that?

Ambassador Sondland. Do you have the email by any chance?

Mr. Goldman. We could try to pull it up in a second. But you don't remember, I showed it to you earlier this morning?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. Go ahead, though, with your question.

Mr. Goldman. And you confirmed that that likely meant, as you said it did, that you spoke with President Trump. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, if my email said I spoke with President Trump, presumably I did.

Mr. Goldman. You are relying pretty heavily in your testimony on the texts and emails that you were able to review. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

Mr. Goldman. So certainly, if someone else had contemporaneous texts, emails, or notes, you would presume that what they were saying was accurate. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, if they had texts or emails, I would. If they had notes, I don't know. Some people's notes are great. Some people's aren't. I don't know.

Mr. Goldman. But certainly, it would be a helpful refresher to anyone's memory?

Ambassador Sondland. Including my own.

Mr. Goldman. Now, you had a conversation on September 7th, according to both Ambassador Taylor and Tim Morrison, with Tim Morrison where you told Mr. Morrison that President Trump told you that he was not asking for a quid pro quo, but that he did insist that President Zelensky go to a microphone and say that he is opening investigations of Biden and 2016 election interference, and that President Zelensky should want to do this himself.

You don't have any reason to dispute both Ambassador Taylor's and Mr. Morrison's testimony about that conversation, do you?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Goldman. On September 8th, you then had a conversation directly with Ambassador Taylor about this same phone call where Ambassador Taylor said that you confirmed that you spoke to President Trump, as he had suggested earlier to you, and that President Trump was adamant that President Zelensky himself, meaning not the prosecutor general, had to, quote, "clear things up and do it in public," unquote.

Do you recall -- you don't have any reason to think that Ambassador Taylor's testimony based on his contemporaneous notes was incorrect?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know if I got that from President Trump or I got it from Giuliani. That's the part I'm not clear on.

Mr. Goldman. Well, Ambassador Taylor is quite clear that you said President Trump. Mr. Morrison is also quite clear that you said President Trump. You don't have any reason to dispute their very specific recollections, do you?

Ambassador Sondland. No. If they have notes and they recall that, I don't have any reason to dispute it. I just personally can't remember where I got it from.

Mr. Goldman. And then you also told Ambassador Taylor in that same conversation that if President Zelensky -- that rather you told President Zelensky and

Andriy Yermak that although this was not a quid pro quo, as the President had very clearly told you, it was, however, required for President Zelensky to clear things up in public or there would be a stalemate.

You don't have any reason to dispute Ambassador Taylor's recollection of that conversation you had with President Zelensky, do you?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Goldman. And that you understood the stalemate referenced the aid. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. At that point, yes.

Mr. Goldman. Ambassador Taylor also described a comment that you made where you were trying to explain what President Trump's view of this was. And you said that President Trump is a businessman, when a businessman is about to sign a check to someone who owes him something, the businessman asks the person to pay up before signing the check.

Do you recall saying that to Ambassador Taylor?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall it specifically, but I may have.

Mr. Goldman. And Ambassador Volker also said that you did.

Ambassador Sondland. Okay.

Mr. Goldman. So just to summarize here, by the end of the first week of September, before the aid had been released, you had expressed twice to the Ukrainians that you understood that the aid -- that the investigations needed to be publicly announced on CNN in order for the aid to be released. Do you recall that?

Ambassador Sondland. I didn't say that they had to be announced on CNN. The Ukrainians said to me or to Ambassador Volker or both of us that they had planned to do an interview anyway on CNN and they would use that occasion to mention these

items.

Mr. Goldman. And that even though at some point you had calculated two plus two to equal four and therefore you believed that the aid was conditioned on the investigations, that you had a phone call with President Trump that you relayed to both Tim Morrison and Ambassador Taylor, whose accounts of that conversation you do not dispute, where President Trump confirmed that President Zelensky needed to publicly announce the investigations or otherwise the obvious implication of the stalemate would be that the aid would not be released. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, the implication. I did not hear directly from President Trump that the aid would be held up until the statement was made. I did not hear those words.

Mr. Goldman. Well, you agree with whatever Mr. Morrison and Ambassador Taylor testified to about the conversation you had with President Trump. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Remind me again. I don't want to misspeak.

Mr. Goldman. Well, you just said you have no reason to dispute their accounts based on their detailed notes.

Ambassador Sondland. Were they saying that I told them that President Trump said that the aid would not be released until the statements were made? Because I said repeatedly I don't recall President Trump ever saying that to me.

Mr. Goldman. Okay.

The Chairman. I think what they said, if I could just finish this line of questioning --

Mr. Goldman. Yeah.

The Chairman. -- was that President Trump was adamant that President Zelensky himself had to clear things up, quote, "clear things up and do it in public,"

unquote.

So what they related was although President Trump claimed to you there was no quid pro quo, he also made it clear to you in that call that President Zelensky had to, quote, "clear things up and do it in public."

You don't have a reason to dispute that's what you told --

Ambassador Sondland. I don't have any reason to dispute the clear things up and do it in public. What I'm trying to be very clear about was President Trump never told me directly that the aid was tied to that statement.

The Chairman. But in that same conversation you had with him about the aid, about the quid pro quo, he told you that President Zelensky had to, quote, "clear things up and do it in public," correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I did not have a conversation with him about the aid. I had a conversation with him, as referenced in my text, about quid pro quo.

The Chairman. Well, the quid pro quo you were discussing was over the aid, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. No. President Trump, when I asked him the open-ended question, as I testified previously, what do you want from Ukraine? -- his answer was, I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. Tell Zelensky to do the right thing. That's all I got from President Trump.

The Chairman. Did you also get from President Trump, as reflected by Ambassador Taylor, that he said he was adamant that President Zelensky had to, quote, "clear things up and do it in public"?

Ambassador Sondland. That part I can agree to, yes.

The Chairman. Time is now with the minority for 20 minutes -- I'm sorry, 33 minutes.

Mr. Nunes. Thirty-three minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ambassador, you've been in business for a long time.

Ambassador Sondland. I have.

Mr. Nunes. So if you want to get to the bottom of something, somebody that's running a department or one of your buildings or something, who do you go to?

Ambassador Sondland. The boss.

Mr. Nunes. The manager of whatever company it is?

Ambassador Sondland. Exactly.

Mr. Nunes. Right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Nunes. So if you want to get to the bottom of foreign aid, you'd probably go to the people that are in charge of foreign aid here in this town, wouldn't you? Because you're not in charge of foreign aid.

Ambassador Sondland. I'm not in charge of foreign aid.

Mr. Nunes. And you've had to testify that you've presumed foreign aid was this or that, and you're guessing that this was tied to foreign aid.

But there are people in this town who are in charge of the foreign aid. And, in fact, I don't think it's very fair to you at all, or to us or to the American people, you might be surprised that we had that person here in the Capitol in a secret deposition in the basement last Saturday.

Now, that testimony might be pretty important to you before you're here to testify, if you could've read that, your lawyers could've went through that, because it may have clarified some more things for you about the -- about your recollection about the foreign aid.

So, you know, we've heard -- earlier we heard about the -- we had the chair

looking at the cameras telling the American people, talking about Watergate, with their Watergate fantasies that they continue to -- I guess they fantasize about this at night. And then they come here and talk about obstruction of justice because they're not giving you documents that you think you should have.

So now they've laid out their clear Watergate argument for Articles of Impeachment. So I just have to remind the gentleman, I know we're not in a court of law because you wrote the rules, the chair here did, but I would think it's obstruction of justice to not give the American people and give the ambassador the right to look at the transcript of the man who's in charge of the foreign aid in this town.

Now, I could get into what he said but -- and the chair could release what he said. And we're not even allowed to call that witness here today.

So let's talk about things that we do know are facts, okay, as best as I think you and I and most people know them.

President Trump does not like foreign aid to start with. Is that correct, Ambassador?

Ambassador Sondland. I've heard that, yes.

Mr. Nunes. And you've testified that watching over the EU, you have 28 countries, you have neighboring countries that you work with. One of his biggest complaints is the lack of participation that those countries participate in programs around the world. Isn't that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Nunes. Especially NATO?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Nunes. Right? That's one of your -- when you start -- when you go down the list of the jobs that -- when you get directions from the White House, when you first

became ambassador, probably one of the number one things -- I don't want to put words in your mouth -- but on the top of the list was making sure countries pay their fair share, especially with NATO?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. And we have a very capable ambassador to NATO, so I'm not going to take her lane.

Mr. Nunes. But it's one of the -- but you work with those countries. It's one of the issues that you bring up in your meetings, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. It is.

Mr. Nunes. So now, I know you weren't on the July 25th phone call, but one of the first things that the President of the United States brings up is Germany's lack of participation -- I think he names the President of Germany directly -- that they're not participating in helping out Ukraine, who's one of their neighbors. Is that what you read in the transcript?

Ambassador Sondland. I've heard that, yes.

Mr. Nunes. So the whole idea that the President, starting out with he doesn't like foreign aid, he doesn't think countries pay their fair share, that's looking out for the taxpayer, but there's more. And we talked about this in your deposition. We talked about it, about how we have requirements.

The Congress writes requirements into the law that require you and all the diplomats to carry out the foreign policy of this country for the President of the United States. Before the President can certify foreign aid and send foreign aid, there has to be certification that there's no corruption. You're aware of that now?

Ambassador Sondland. I am now, yes.

Mr. Nunes. So being that you learned about that in your deposition, now looking back at clearly the challenges and concerns the President had with the involvement of

high-level Ukrainian Government officials, including the ambassador here in the United States that attacked him during his Presidential campaign, the concerns of leaks that were leaks or just made up stories and conspiracy theories that were spun in the Steele dossier that the Democrats on this committee own, they paid for it, other DNC operatives that were working with the Ukrainian ambassador here in Washington, D.C., to dirty up your boss, the President of the United States, we're not going to hear from those witnesses.

Just like we're not going to hear from the person we deposed on Saturday. We're not going to hear about what the real reason, the person who's in charge of making sure that foreign aid is delivered, we're not going to hear about what actually happened with the foreign aid.

Wouldn't that have made it a lot easier for you to testify instead of guessing and doing little funny math problems up here, two plus two equals four? It's great for all the viewers to hear that. Wouldn't it be easier if you just knew exactly why the foreign aid wasn't given?

Ambassador Sondland. It would have been easier to testify if I had a totality of the record.

Mr. Nunes. And would you trust the person who's in charge of cutting the checks for foreign aid, a top career diplomat, or the top career official?

Ambassador Sondland. I'd have no reason not to.

Mr. Nunes. Well, Ambassador, I don't know if we'll get to speak again, if we have some more magical minutes, but I'm done with questions with you. I know the rest of our members have more questions.

And let me turn to -- I know Mr. Castor has some more questions.

Mr. Castor. Hello again, Ambassador.

Ambassador Sondland. Hi.

Mr. Castor. I will try not to use all of this time as a courtesy to you. I just want to go through some distinctions between your opener and your deposition and some other witnesses.

In your opening statement today you said President Trump directed us to talk with Rudy, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Castor. But then you and I had a little bit of a back and forth about the President just said, talk to Rudy. And I believe, and correct me if I'm wrong, you took that to mean if we wanted to move forward with these types of things, Rudy was the place to go?

Ambassador Sondland. Rudy was the guy.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But President Trump didn't direct you to talk to Rudy, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. It wasn't an order. It was, if you want to work on this, this is the guy you've got to talk to.

Mr. Castor. Ambassador Volker in his deposition said, I didn't take it as an instruction but just as a comment. Talk to Rudy. You know, he knows these things. And you've got some bad people around him, I mean, referring to the Ukrainians. So, I mean, Ambassador Volker hasn't testified that there's any sort of order or direction to talk to Rudy?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know what he testified. It became very clear to all three of us that if we wanted to move the relationship forward, President Trump was not really interested in engaging. He wanted Rudy to handle it. And as I said in my opening statement, Secretary Perry took the lead and made the initial contact with Rudy, and that's when we began working with him.

Mr. Castor. And as to the question of whether Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desire specifically to the President of the United States, in your deposition you said, I don't know, I don't know if this was coming out of Rudy Giuliani irrespective of the President. Correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. I'm not going to dispute what I said in my deposition. That's true, yeah.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And we walked through all your communications with Rudy Giuliani, and there are not a lot, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Castor. Ambassador Volker in his deposition on the same question said, I did not have that impression, I believe Mr. Giuliani was doing his own communications.

And, you know, granted, Mr. Giuliani had business interests in Ukraine, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Now I understand he did. I didn't know that at the time.

Mr. Castor. Okay. With Messrs. Parnas and Fruman, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. A lot of new names I've learned.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And you had never met with those folks?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Castor. And then in your September 9th communication with the President -- during your deposition that was a striking moment when you walked us through your telephone call with President Trump on September 9th.

Ambassador Sondland. By the way, I still cannot find a record of that call because the State Department and the White House cannot locate it, but I'm pretty sure I had the call on that day.

Mr. Castor. But whether it was the 9th or the 8th, you had this call. It was

extremely memorable, right?

Ambassador Sondland. It was.

Mr. Castor. And you've been very honest, and we're not trying to give you a hard time on all the times you don't recall. We're just trying to say that there's a lot of important events that have happened that the committee has asked you about, and you've honestly said, I don't recall.

But the call with President Trump, on September 9th or the 8th, you recall it vividly, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I recall it vividly because it was keyed by the sort of frantic emails from Ambassador Taylor. I had, again, prior to that call had all kinds of theories as to why things weren't moving, why there was no White House meeting, why there was no aid, why there was no this, why there was no that. And I was getting tired of going around in circles, frankly.

So I made the call, and I asked, as I said, the open-ended question, what do you want from Ukraine? And that's when I got the answer.

Mr. Castor. And he was unequivocal: Nothing.

Ambassador Sondland. What I said in the text is what I heard.

Mr. Castor. I'm curious, was that vignette in your opener today?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't think so.

Mr. Castor. How come? It's so memorable, so striking.

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know. It was in my previous testimony, and I assumed if people had questions, they would bring it up.

Mr. Castor. Okay. I mean, this is an example, you know, a lot of witnesses during the course of this investigation have dealt with ambiguities in different ways, and some have resolved them in the light least favorable to the President over and over again.

This is an exculpatory fact shedding some light on the President's state of mind about the situation about the --

Ambassador Sondland. And I'm happy to discuss it.

Mr. Castor. So I'm just wondering why you didn't mention it in your opener.

Ambassador Sondland. There were so many things I wanted to include in my opening, and my opening was already, I think, 45 minutes or something. It would have been an hour and a half. There were a lot of things I'd liked to have mentioned in my --

Mr. Castor. Okay. But you only had a couple conversations with the President, and we're trying to evaluate whether the --

Ambassador Sondland. It was not -- it was not -- it was not purposeful. Trust me.

Mr. Castor. Okay. Talking about striking conversations, Mr. Holmes, when he came here last Friday in the basement, he, I'll tell you, he thought your conversation that you had with the President was like the most memorable thing he's ever experienced.

Ambassador Sondland. How many conversations has he had with the President?

Mr. Castor. He probably hasn't had any. But he was energized, enthusiastic about telling us about this conversation. And he --

Ambassador Sondland. So not only did I buy him lunch, but I also provided entertainment?

Mr. Castor. And he -- I mean, he conferred with us that he regaled anyone that he came across with this story. And that's, I guess, a discussion for Thursday.

But other than the colorful language, and he was definitely moved by the color, but he was unequivocal that you brought up the Bidens in the post-call discussion.

And he said something to the effect of the President's only interested in big things, and Mr. Holmes said that, oh, there's a lot of big things going on in Ukraine, like

there are, there's a war. Ukraine's under attack from the east by Russia. And he puts words in your mouth to the effect of, no, the President only cares about investigations like Rudy is pitching about the Bidens.

And what's important about this, this is the day after the 7/25 call. And what's reported by Mr. Holmes and you, to the extent you've confirmed it, isn't anything different than happened on the 7/25 call, agreed? From the President's standpoint?

Ambassador Sondland. No. With 20/20 hindsight, now that we've had the transcript of the call, the Bidens were clearly mentioned on the call. But I don't -- I wasn't making the connection with the Bidens.

Mr. Castor. Right. But with regard to the President, it was just mentioning investigations.

Ambassador Sondland. That's all he said on the phone was investigations, I think.

Mr. Castor. Right. But you told us time and again that you never realized the Bidens were part of any of this, that the Burisma, and you talked about a continuum, and you never came to understand that until maybe as late as September 25th, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know the exact date, but it was pretty late.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And Ambassador Volker said the Bidens never came up after his one breakfast meeting with Mayor Giuliani where he testified that he tried to disabuse the mayor of anything relating to the Bidens.

Ambassador Sondland. And I think Secretary Perry publicly stated that he never heard Biden either until the end, so --

Mr. Castor. Okay. So when you testify here today that you have no recollection of mentioning the Bidens to Mr. Holmes, that's not just a recollection. That's based on your state of mind at that point in time and your state of mind up to, you

know, September 25th, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I wasn't into investigating the Bidens.

Mr. Castor. So it's very surprising to you that he would mention that, right?

Ambassador Sondland. It was very surprising to me.

Mr. Castor. I want to go back to a couple things in your statement. This July 26th meeting with President Zelensky, earlier in the day, from this lunchtime event we've been talking about.

During the course of the meeting with President Zelensky did any of the parties discuss what came up on the telephone call?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't believe so.

Mr. Castor. Okay. So President Zelensky didn't express any concerns about the content of the call, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I mean, all I heard about that call was that it was a good call. It was friendly. Everyone was happy, you know. I was delighted to hear that so that we could now move to the next phase, which was the meeting.

Mr. Castor. Okay. So you can tell us with certainty that nobody talked about demands in that meeting or fulfilling the President's demands?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't remember exactly. Again, this is a great example, Mr. Castor, of where I would have loved to have seen the notes from the meeting. I didn't take any notes, but I know there were notes taken.

But I don't remember any heated conversation in the meeting. I remember it being a really, really friendly, good meeting. And that's why I said what I did to the President the next day, which was, you know, Zelensky will do whatever you want, he's very happy.

Mr. Castor. And you don't remember any discussion of -- by President Zelensky

of lamenting how he had to navigate this difficult situation, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't -- I don't know. I know that that was in the whistleblower complaint, something about navigating something. I didn't --

Mr. Castor. It was.

Ambassador Sondland. I didn't remember anything like that.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And I want to get back to your --

Mr. Nunes. Will the gentleman yield a second?

Mr. Castor. Of course.

Mr. Nunes. Which would be another helpful thing also, Ambassador, is if we actually had heard from the whistleblower and we had testimony of the whistleblower. Then you wouldn't have to be up here speculating as much and guessing because you would have a source that would have been interviewed. We have his complaint. We could've matched it up with your testimony along with the people from OMB.

That would have made it very easy for you to testify, so you wouldn't have to just try to remember all this stuff and chase conspiracy theories around that the Democrats have continued to lay out for the last 6 weeks, moving from quid pro quo to extortion to bribery to -- where are we at today? -- obstruction of justice, and now back to quid pro quo.

We wouldn't have had to do all that if the whistleblower would have testified. You wouldn't have to speculate about what the whistleblower only had in his or her complaint, that nobody seems to know.

Yield back to Mr. Castor.

Mr. Castor. Thank you, Mr. Nunes.

I want to turn to your -- a couple of times in your opener you said everyone was in the loop. And I just want to -- you know, these televised proceedings, sometimes you

lose track of things. And, you know, everyone was not in the loop with your speculation or your guess that: In the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid I later came to believe that the presumption of security aid would not occur without public statement from the Ukraine. Everyone wasn't in the loop with that, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, the Secretary was, because that's why I sent my email.

Mr. Castor. But your emails -- let's look at your emails. There's two emails that you sent to the Secretary, right, that are here?

Ambassador Sondland. August 22nd?

Mr. Castor. And August 11th?

Ambassador Sondland. August 11th.

Mr. Castor. So the August 11th email -- we went through this before, I'm sorry to go through it again -- you said to the Secretary, "Kurt and I negotiated a statement from Z to be delivered for our review in a day or two. The contents will hopefully make the boss happy enough to authorize an invitation. Z plans to have a big presser on the openness subject next week."

A couple things here. This is only relating to the White House meeting, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes, I believe so.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And this is only -- this is just investigations generally making a public statement of openness generally, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I think by August 11th, Mr. Castor, I think we were talking about 2016 and Burisma. The investigations generally was really early in the --

Mr. Castor. Okay. But do we know that Secretary Pompeo knows that?

Ambassador Sondland. I think so. I think --

Mr. Castor. Why?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, only because I think Ambassador -- or, I'm sorry, Counselor Brechbuhl was briefed on all of these things and --

Mr. Castor. By who? By you?

Ambassador Sondland. By, I believe, Ambassador Volker, by myself, various --

Mr. Castor. That's not what he testified to. I mean, did you -- did you --

Ambassador Sondland. Ambassador -- or Counselor Brechbuhl testified? I didn't know he had testified.

Mr. Castor. No. No. Ambassador Volker.

Ambassador Sondland. Oh, okay.

Mr. Castor. He didn't testify that he briefed Mr. Brechbuhl. I mean, this email to the Secretary is talking about this statement -- which, by the way, I mean, you said: Kurt and I negotiated a statement and the statement never went --

Ambassador Sondland. It didn't go anywhere.

Mr. Castor. Ambassador Volker said it wasn't a good idea. Mr. Yermak said it wasn't a good idea.

But what you're writing to the Secretary here is just, you know, it relates to a generic openness subject, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah. I think the Secretary, though, was on the July 25 call, which, obviously, I wasn't on, and I didn't know about.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But you used this email to suggest that everyone was in the loop, that like security sector assistance was tied to some sort of act by the Ukrainians.

Ambassador Sondland. No. No. I don't think I said that -- I don't think I said that the assistance was involved here. I think I was --

Mr. Castor. Okay. So what was everyone in the loop about then?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, the Secretary was in the loop that we had

negotiated a statement. I am fairly comfortable that the Secretary knows where the statement was at that point -- in other words the 2016 and Burisma -- and that Lisa passed that along to him and kept him informed.

Mr. Castor. Okay. So we can agree that at this point in time the Secretary wasn't in the loop that there was a conditionality on the security sector assistance?

Ambassador Sondland. Hold on a second. Are you asking about July 19th, exhibit 4?

Mr. Castor. I was asking about your email to the Secretary on August 11th.

Ambassador Sondland. Oh, okay. Well, on July 19th, which the Secretary was on, I talked about fully transparent investigation and turn over every stone. And the Secretary was on that. So --

Mr. Castor. Okay. But you testified at your deposition that on July 19th in this continuum you talked about --

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah.

Mr. Castor. -- at that point in the continuum it was just a generic investigation. It wasn't anything involving --

Ambassador Sondland. I think it went -- again, I'm not trying to put words in anyone -- I think it went from the original generic from, you know, May 23rd, when we left the Oval Office, we're talking about corruption and oligarchs, until Mr. Giuliani started to become involved, and then it transitioned into the Burisma and --

Mr. Castor. You hadn't even talked to Giuliani by that time. This is July 19th.

Mr. Luskin. Mr. Castor, with all due respect, will you allow him to finish his answer, please?

Mr. Castor. Sorry. Use the mike.

Mr. Luskin. Will you allow him to finish his answer, please?

Mr. Castor. Of course. I apologize.

Ambassador Sondland. We were communicating with Mr. Giuliani through Secretary Perry and through Ambassador Volker. I wasn't talking to Mr. Giuliani directly until after August 1st.

Mr. Castor. Good. But as of July 19th, weren't we still on the generic part of the continuum?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know. I believe we were -- I believe by then we were talking about Burisma and 2016, to be candid.

Mr. Castor. But not Biden?

Ambassador Sondland. No. No. Not Biden, no.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And then turning to your email of August 11th.

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah, got it.

Mr. Castor. I'm sorry. We just dealt with that. August the 22nd.

Ambassador Sondland. 22nd?

Mr. Castor. Yeah. It's page 23 of your opener.

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah, I got it.

Mr. Castor. And this is where you were requesting a pull-aside for the President, and this is when the President was --

Ambassador Sondland. He was still going to go, yes.

Mr. Castor. He was going to go. It was before the hurricane bumped that off his schedule.

Ambassador Sondland. Right.

Mr. Castor. I would ask Zelensky to look him in the eye and tell him that once Ukraine's new Justice folks are in place Zelensky should be able to move forward publicly and with confidence on those issues of importance to the President and the United

States. Hopefully, that will break the logjam.

And at this point in time, the issues of importance to the President of the United States were what?

Ambassador Sondland. The two investigations.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But nothing to do with Vice President Biden, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I didn't make the connection.

Mr. Castor. I'm going to just pivot briefly to the President's concerns about foreign assistance.

Under Secretary Hale, who will be with us later today, testified that during this relevant timeframe there was a real focus to re-examine all Federal aid programs. Are you aware of that interest of the President?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm generally aware of the President's skepticism toward foreign aid and, you know, conditioning foreign aid on certain things. I'm generally aware of that, yes.

Mr. Castor. And Ambassador Hale testified, and his testimony has been public, almost a zero-based concept, that each assistance program and each country that receives the program be evaluated. The program made sense that we avoid nation building and that we not provide assistance to countries that are lost to us in terms of policy, whether it's because corruption or, you know, another reason.

Is that something you were aware of at the time?

Ambassador Sondland. Generally, yes.

Mr. Castor. Okay. And you're certainly aware that the President was concerned about the European allies, the contributions to the region?

Ambassador Sondland. Exactly why I was involved.

Mr. Castor. Okay. So, you know, as we get down to September 11th, right

before the aid, you know, you're advocating that the pause be lifted, correct? I mean, you can't --

Ambassador Sondland. I didn't think -- I personally didn't think the pause should have ever been put in place.

Mr. Castor. Okay. But as we get down to September 11th and you're talking with Senator Johnson and so forth, you don't know with certainty that the genuine reason the President was implementing the pause wasn't because of his concerns about the allies or his concerns about foreign assistance generally or that he wasn't just trying to hold the aid as long as he could to see what he could, you know, what type of information he could get about those two subjects?

Ambassador Sondland. Fair enough.

Mr. Castor. Okay. I am really trying to finish up before my -- so I can yield some time back. Do we have anything else?

Mr. Nunes. I have nothing else.

Mr. Castor. Thank you. I yield back.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

Mr. Nunes. We yield back the balance of our time.

The Chairman. Let's take a 30-minute recess to allow Mr. Sondland, Ambassador Sondland, to get a bite to eat. I think the members of the committee might like to get a bite to eat. And then we will resume with the member rounds of questioning of 5 minutes.

If we could allow the witnesses to have the opportunity to leave the room first.

Mr. Luskin. Mr. Chairman, Ambassador Sondland had intended to fly back to Brussels to resume his duties at the end of the day. And so it would be a great convenience to us if we could have a shorter break now and resume with the members'

questions and try and wrap up in time that he might be able to make his flight.

The Chairman. I appreciate that, counsel. We all have a busy schedule these days.

The member round of questions should take, I think, slightly less than 2 hours. So I think you should be good depending on the time of your flight. But we will endeavor to make the break as short as possible.

Mr. Luskin. Thank you, sir.

The Chairman. If you would like to excuse yourself from the room before the rest of the crowd.

Mr. Luskin. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. We stand in recess.

[Recess.]

RPTR ZAMORA

EDTR SECKMAN

[1:38 p.m.]

The Chairman. The committee will come to order.

We will now proceed to the 5-minute member questioning. First, I wanted to recognize myself for 5 minutes. First of all, I wanted to clarify something for the record. With respect to the witness who testified on Saturday -- that is Mr. Sandy; he is a career official with the Office of Management and Budget. He is today reviewing his transcript, an opportunity we give all the witnesses before their transcript is released to make sure that it's accurate and correct. As his deposition was only taken on Saturday, this was the soonest we could arrange that.

We did inform the minority yesterday that if they wish to use any of the questioning from Mr. Sandy's deposition, they could do so, and we would happily take whatever excerpts they needed even prior to the witness having the chance to go through it. They chose not to take advantage of that opportunity.

But I would make this far more significant point, which is he is not the top official at the Office of Management and Budget responsible for releasing foreign assistance. Those individuals are named Vought and Duffey. And both of those political appointees have been subpoenaed to testify, and both of those political appointees have refused.

In fact, as the deposition will make clear when the transcript is released, at a certain point, Mr. Sandy was taken out of at least one significant part of the process. But that transcript will be made available as soon as he finishes the review, and we can redact any personal information from it.

I want to ask you just a few questions, and our staff because of the expanded round, had time to get through much of what I wanted to ask you, Ambassador. But

with respect to the statement, you are going back, and I mean by you and others Ambassador Volker and others were going back and forth with the Ukrainians to figure out what statement they would have to make to get the meeting, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. And they understood they were going to have to make this statement publicly in order to get the meeting?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. Similarly, you testified that pretty much everyone could put two and two together and make four and understood that the military assistance was also conditioned on the public announcement of these two investigations, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That was my presumption, yeah.

The Chairman. You put two and two together and you got four. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

The Chairman. Now, you're capable of putting two and two together, and so are the Ukrainians. They can put two and two together. As well, they understood there was a hold on security assistance. There is testimony that they understood that in July or August, but it was without a doubt understood when it was made public in the newspaper. They understood that the security assistance was being held up, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know when they understood it, but presumably they did.

The Chairman. Well, certainly once it was public, they understood the security assistance was withheld, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Once it was public, I assume so, yes.

The Chairman. And indeed that was one of the issues that was brought up in that meeting between Zelensky and Pence in Warsaw?

Ambassador Sondland. I think, as I testified previously, Chairman, I think Zelensky, if I recall, asked the question more open ended, like when do we get our money?

The Chairman. Well, okay. So they understood they didn't have the money yet. It had been approved by Congress, there was a hold on it. You couldn't give them any explanation.

Ambassador Sondland. I couldn't.

The Chairman. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

The Chairman. They asked. You couldn't tell them why it was being withheld, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I could not.

The Chairman. And if they couldn't put two and two together, you put two and two together for them because you told them in Warsaw they were going to need to make that public statement likely to get that aid released. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I said I presume that might have to be done in order to get the aid released.

The Chairman. Because we've had a lot of argumentation here, "Well, the Ukrainians didn't know the aid was withheld," but the Ukrainians found out and then it was made abundantly clear, if they hadn't put two and two together themselves, that if they wanted that aid, they were going to have to make these statements, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. Mr. Nunes.

Mr. Nunes. I yield to Mr. Ratcliffe.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Ambassador Sondland, I'm going to try and quickly move to

summarize all of your direct communications with President Trump as it relates to this inquiry, and, of course, you can correct me if I get it wrong.

On May 23rd, you had a group meeting that included what you called a vanilla request about ending corruption involving Ukrainian oligarchs, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. On July 25th, you called President Trump to say you were on your way to Ukraine but nothing of substance occurred on that call, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. On July 26th, you had a 5-minute call at a restaurant that you didn't originally remember because it, according to your statement this morning, quote, did not strike me as significant at the time, end quote, but once refreshed recalled that the primary purpose was a rapper named A\$AP Rocky, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And on September 9th and, most importantly, reading from your deposition, you called President Trump to ask him: What do you want from Ukraine?

He responded: I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. I want Zelensky to do the right thing. I want him to do what he ran on.

And what he ran on was fighting corruption, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And then, lastly, on October 2nd, in a random in-person meeting that you had, an event for the Finnish President, you ran into President Trump and advised him that you'd been called to testify before Congress, and he said to you, good. Go tell the truth.

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. And that is the entirety of your recollection of your

direct communications with President Trump about these matters?

Ambassador Sondland. I may have had another call or meeting or two. Again, I wish, Mr. Ratcliffe, I had the record.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I understand. But this is what you recall?

Ambassador Sondland. This is what I recall.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So stop me if there's anything sinister or nefarious in any of this: A vanilla request about corruption; a call to say "I'm on my way to Ukraine"; a 5-minute call you didn't remember as significant, but its primary purpose was to discuss a rapper; a call that you made where the President said "I want nothing, I want no quid pro quo, I want Zelensky to do the right thing, I want him to do what he ran on"; and him telling you to go tell Congress the truth. Anything sinister or nefarious about any of that?

Ambassador Sondland. Not the way you present it.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. And that is the truth, as you've presented it, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. Why that's important, Ambassador Sondland, is because none of that is hearsay. None of that is speculation. None of that is opinion. That is direct evidence, and ultimately that is what, if this proceeds to the Senate, they're going to care about.

Unlike this proceeding, which has been based on largely speculation and presumption and opinion, this is direct testimony and direct evidence. And to that point, none of that included evidence about the Bidens and none of that included evidence about military assistance because President Trump never mentioned either of those to you, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. So, going back to the July 26th call, because it's going to be a spectacle tomorrow, you didn't remember it because it didn't strike you as significant at the time. Is it fair to say that, if the President of the United States was asking you to do or say something improper or unlawful, that would have been significant to you?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. And if that call was part of a bribery or extortion scheme that you were part of as Democrats have alleged, you'd remember that as significant, wouldn't you?

Ambassador Sondland. I was not a part, and I would have remembered.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I understand that, and I agree with you.

Let's turn to the quid pro quo because it's been reported in the papers that this was Blockbuster testimony today about quid pro quo and new evidence. To be fair to you, Ambassador Sondland, according to your statement today, as you say on page 14, as you testified previously, this was your opinion that there was a quid pro quo, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. The 2016 Burisma and the -- excuse me, the 2016 election and Burisma in return for the White House meeting. That's correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Right. So you've shared that before. To that point, to be clear again, on the part of it that relates to military assistance, though, you don't have any direct evidence from President Trump about that part of it. That's your two-plus-two part of the equation, right, the presumption, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. And you understand also that others disagree. Yesterday we heard from Mr. Morrison, Ambassador Volker. They testified that they didn't see a quid pro quo. Do you understand that?

RPTR BRYANT

EDTR HUMKE

[1:50 p.m.]

Ambassador Sondland. I understand that that's what they said.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. That reasonable people could look at all of this and come to different conclusions, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I yield back.

The Chairman. Mr. Himes.

Mr. Himes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, thank you for testifying.

Ambassador, a couple things jumped out at me in your testimony. In your opening statement, you say: Mr. Giuliani demanded that Ukraine make a public statement announcing investigations of the 2016 election, DNC server, and Burisma. Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the President of the United States, and we knew that these investigations were important to the President.

That last sentence is interesting. No conditionality, no modifiers. Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the President of the United States.

Mr. Giuliani communicates in colorful and memorable terms. What did Mr. Giuliani say to you that caused you to say that he is expressing the desires of the President of the United States?

Ambassador Sondland. Mr. Himes, when that was originally communicated, that was before I was in touch with Mr. Giuliani directly. So this all came through Mr. Volker and others.

Mr. Himes. So Mr. Volker told you that he was expressing the desires of the

President of the United States?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Himes. And subsequently, when you saw the July -- the transcript of the July 25th conversation with President Zelensky, you put it all together and, yeah, this is the desire of the President of the United States?

Ambassador Sondland. After I saw the July 25th readout.

Mr. Himes. Right. Okay. The other thing that is interesting here, you were -- the theme of your testimony today is that everybody knew and signed off, which is a little different from what we've heard, right? We've heard this from others saying that your effort out there was irregular, it was shadow foreign policy, characterized as a drug deal. And by the way, that was not a Democratic characterization, despite what Mr. Nunes says. That, of course, was the National Security Advisor of the United States characterizing it as a drug deal.

What confuses me is that you have said and testified -- and it's in here -- that the Secretary of State was not only aware, but that he applauded you, good work, keep banging away. The Secretary of State, if this had been irregular or a drug deal or a shadow foreign policy, he would have been the one to put an end to it and yet he did not, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, the Secretary of State I think was taking into account the totality of what I had been working on, you know, globally and saying, you're doing a great job, including this.

Mr. Himes. Right, okay. So he was aware of what you were doing, and you're doing a great job includes this?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Himes. So, in some sense, he was validating it rather than saying this was

irregular or shadow or a drug deal.

Ambassador Sondland. We never thought it was irregular. We thought it was in the center lane.

Mr. Himes. And why do you think the Secretary of State thought that?

Ambassador Sondland. Why did he think what?

Mr. Himes. Why did he think that this was a worthy thing to do when so many senior people, including the National Security Advisor, thought it was a drug deal?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know. You'd have to ask him.

Mr. Himes. Okay. To your knowledge, did he have communications with the President about this?

Ambassador Sondland. I have no knowledge of his communications with the President.

Mr. Himes. Okay. Let me take you to the July 26 call that we've talked a little bit about. You basically haven't disputed Mr. Holmes' characterization of that report, although perhaps the mention of Biden, you don't recall that.

I'm actually pretty confident we'll get a transcript of that call. A conversation in public between a high-profile ambassador and the President of the United States will be the top target not for one but for many foreign intelligence services.

And because it's pretty sensitive stuff to this inquiry and pretty sensitive stuff, because this information could be used to embarrass the President or leverage public officials, my guess is we're going to see the transcript. Our people are pretty good, and if other people have it, we're going to see this transcript. Until then, all we've got is your recollection and the testimony of the other people there.

So I'm curious about your frame of mind. This statement: Ambassador Sondland agreed that the President did not give a fig -- not the word used -- about

Ukraine. Is that a statement you might make? Do you believe that the President doesn't give a fig about Ukraine?

Ambassador Sondland. Congressman, are you referring to the call or are you referring to my conversation --

Mr. Himes. So Mr. Holmes recounts, and I'll read it to you: Ambassador Sondland agreed that the President did not give a fig about Ukraine. Fig was not the word used there. And I'm asking you whether it's plausible that he might have heard that, because I'm asking you whether you believe that the President does not give a fig about Ukraine.

Ambassador Sondland. I don't -- I think that's too strong. I think that, based on the May 23rd meeting, the President was down on Ukraine for the reasons mentioned and would need a lot of convincing, and that's why we were pushing so hard for the meeting between the President and President Zelensky, because we thought once the two of them would meet his impression of Ukraine, his stock about Ukraine would go up.

Mr. Himes. And what about this line: And Ambassador Sondland replied that he meant, quote/unquote, big stuff that benefits the President. That's what you meant by big stuff.

So, again, we don't have the transcript. I suspect we will. But is that something you might say? Do you believe that the President really considers big stuff to be that which benefits him?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall saying "benefits him."

Mr. Himes. No, I understand that. I'm not asking what you recall. I'm asking whether it's plausible that you might have said that because you believe -- I'm asking you what you believe right now -- that the President doesn't give a fig about Ukraine and, in fact, cares about the big stuff that benefits the President. Do you believe that now?

Ambassador Sondland. I really can't -- I really can't opine.

Mr. Himes. Wait. I'm not asking for your opinion. I'm asking for your beliefs.

Ambassador Sondland. I don't understand your question. I want to answer your question. I just don't understand.

Mr. Himes. Let me try one more time.

Ambassador Sondland. Okay.

Mr. Himes. Do you believe what is alleged that you said on this phone call, that the President cares primarily about stuff, the big stuff that benefits the President. Is that a belief of yours?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't think President said that on his -- on the phone call. I don't think the President said that to me on the phone call. I was talking about --

The Chairman. The time of the gentleman --

Ambassador Sondland. -- A\$AP Rocky, and he mentioned investigations. I don't know -- I don't -- I don't know why you're --

The Chairman. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. Conaway.

Mr. Conaway. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield 6 minutes to Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Jordan. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Ambassador, when did it happen?

Ambassador Sondland. When did what happen?

Mr. Jordan. The announcement. When did President Zelensky announce that the investigation was going to happen? On page 14, you said this: Was there a quid pro quo? Today in your opening statement: As I testified previously, with regard to a requested White House call, White House meeting, the answer is yes, that there needed

to be a public statement from President Zelensky.

When the chairman asked you about the security assistance dollars, you said there needed to be a public announcement from Zelensky. So I'm asking you a simple question: When did that happen?

Ambassador Sondland. It never did.

Mr. Jordan. It never did. They got the call July 25th. They got the meeting, not in the White House but in New York, on September 25th. They got the money on September 11th. When did the meeting happen, again?

Ambassador Sondland. It never did.

Mr. Jordan. You don't know who was in the meeting?

Ambassador Sondland. Which meeting are you referring to?

Mr. Jordan. The meeting that never happened, who was in it?

Ambassador Sondland. The people that weren't there.

Mr. Jordan. Do you know how Zelensky announced it? Did he tweet it? Did he do a press statement? Did he do a press conference? Do you know how that happened?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Jordan. I mean, you got all three of them wrong. They get the call, they get the meeting, they get the money. It's not two plus two, it's O for three. I've never seen anything like this.

And you told Mr. Castor that the President never told you that the announcement had to happen to get anything. In fact, he didn't just not tell you that, he explicitly said the opposite. The gentleman from Texas just read it. You said to the President of the United States: What do you want from Ukraine? The President: I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. I want Zelensky to do the right thing. I want him to do what he

ran on.

What did he run on, Ambassador Sondland?

Ambassador Sondland. Transparency.

Mr. Jordan. And dealing with corruption, right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

Mr. Jordan. Mr. Castor raised another important point. Why didn't you put that statement in your opening statement? I think you said you couldn't fit it in. Is that right? You said we might be here for 46 minutes instead of 45 minutes.

Ambassador Sondland. It wasn't purposeful, trust me.

Mr. Jordan. It wasn't purposeful?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Jordan. Couldn't fit it in a 23-page opener. The most important statement about the subject matter at hand, the President of the United -- in a direct conversation with you about the issue at hand, and the President says -- let me read it one more time. What do you want from Ukraine, Mr. President? I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. I want this new guy, brand new guy in politics, his party just took over, I want Zelensky to do the right thing. I want him to run on and do what he ran on, which is deal with corruption. And you can't find the time to fit that in a 23-page opening statement.

Do you know what a quid pro quo is?

Ambassador Sondland. I do.

Mr. Jordan. This for that, right? It looks to me like Ukraine got that three times and there was no this. There was -- we didn't do anything -- or, excuse me, they didn't have to do anything. I've never seen anything like this.

And this is -- this is -- when the call came out, you all remember this? When the

call came out, everyone said, we're going to -- quid pro quo, there's going to be a -- that was what was in the call. And, of course -- of course, that didn't happen. That didn't happen.

Remember what the complaint said? Remember what the memo said of the whistleblower? This call was frightening, this call was scary, all those things. None of that materialized. None of that materialized.

I yield back.

The Chairman. Ms. Sewell.

Ms. Sewell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to dig a little deeper in this quid pro quo. Did you not say in your opening statement and in previous testimony in closed door hearing that you thought there was a quid pro quo?

Ambassador Sondland. I thought the quid pro quo was the White House visit in return for the 2016, DNC server, and Burisma investigation announcement.

Ms. Sewell. So when you heard Burisma, you did not see that as code for Biden, the Bidens?

Ambassador Sondland. I did not.

Ms. Sewell. When did you even know that? Is your testimony that you only realized that Burisma included the Bidens when the readout came out on September 25th?

Ambassador Sondland. No. My testimony wasn't specific as to the date, because I really don't recall the date. It was very late in the game, though.

Ms. Sewell. September?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall the date.

Ms. Sewell. So if I told you that the legal definition of bribery was an event of

offering, giving, soliciting or receiving of any item of value as a means of influencing an action of an individual holding a public or legal duty, do you believe that not only was it quid pro quo, but it was bribery?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm not a lawyer and I'm not going to characterize what something was or wasn't, legally.

Ms. Sewell. You also said in your opening statement that Secretary Perry and yourself as well as Ambassador Volker worked with Giuliani on the Ukraine matter at the express direction of the President. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Ms. Sewell. You also go on to say that, we did not want to work with Giuliani. Simply put, we played the hand that we were dealt. What did you mean by that and, more importantly, what did you think would happen if you did not play that hand?

Ambassador Sondland. I think what you're asking me is -- well, you asked it.

Ms. Sewell. I did ask.

Ambassador Sondland. What would happen if we didn't? It was very fragile with Ukraine at the time. There was no new ambassador. The old ambassador had left. There was a new President. And we thought it was very, very important to shore up the relationship.

Ms. Sewell. In fact, you actually said, you go on to say: We all understood that if we refused to work with Mr. Giuliani, we would lose an important opportunity to cement relationships with the United States and Ukraine. So, quote, "we followed the President's orders." Did you see it as a directive?

Ambassador Sondland. I saw it as the only pathway to moving forward on Ukraine.

Ms. Sewell. So you would say that the efforts that Mr. Giuliani was undertaking

became a part of the formal Ukraine U.S. policy?

Ambassador Sondland. I can't opine on that. All I can tell you is the President wanted us to communicate with Mr. Giuliani --

Ms. Sewell. But you went on to say that -- in your opening testimony that the suggestion that you engaged in some, quote, "irregular or rogue diplomacy is absolutely false." So if, in fact, what Giuliani was doing was okay and proper, which is actually what you said, initially you all thought that what he was doing was not improper, right?

Ambassador Sondland. We did not think it was improper. And when I referred to the fact that I was not engaging in rogue diplomacy, by definition, rogue diplomacy would have meant I would not have involved the leadership of the State Department and the White House.

Ms. Sewell. So you're saying that everyone in the chain of command knew about Giuliani's efforts to try to get the investigations into Burisma and to -- you know, and -- I'm just trying to figure out what you thought you were actually opining to.

Ambassador Sondland. Look, the President directed us to work with Mr. Giuliani, and the leadership of the State Department were knowledgeable, as was the NSC, that we were working with Mr. Giuliani.

Ms. Sewell. What's interesting is that Ambassador Taylor testified that he knew nothing about it, and clearly he would be in the chain of information if he was the Ambassador to Ukraine. At the end of the day, sir, with all due respect, you're the Ambassador to the European Union. Why would he not know about it?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know.

Ms. Sewell. He was the one who said that there was both a regular and irregular channel.

Ambassador Sondland. He should have known about it.

Ms. Sewell. So although we don't want -- although you said that you did not want to work with Mr. Giuliani, you, in fact, did work with him.

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Ms. Sewell. And do you think that the essence of what he was trying to achieve was accomplished?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know what he was trying to achieve.

Ms. Sewell. You clearly had to have known, sir. If you think that this was actually going down the center lane is what you said, it was clearly important that we work with Mr. Giuliani to get what the President asked for, because it was a directive and an order, surely you must know whether or not mission was accomplished.

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I know what Mr. Giuliani communicated to us.

Ms. Sewell. And you thought that that was totally fine? Did you really think that it was okay --

Ambassador Sondland. Can I answer your question?

Ms. Sewell. Sure.

Ambassador Sondland. You asked what Mr. Giuliani was trying to achieve.

Ms. Sewell. No. I asked whether you thought that it was right for Mr. Giuliani to want to accomplish the efforts that he was involved in, which was to get them to investigate Burisma and the 2016 election, as you said.

Ambassador Sondland. All I can testify to is what I know that Mr. Giuliani either told me directly or told Ambassador Volker and others that was relayed to me.

Ms. Sewell. Thank you. I yield back.

The Chairman. Mr. Turner.

Mr. Turner. Ambassador Sondland, I want to walk through some of the portions of your testimony, because sometimes you seem to make direct connections and

sometimes they seem to be dead ends. And I kind of want to clear up one of the dead ends and one of the direct connections.

Yesterday, Ambassador Volker, who I consider to be very talented and a man of integrity, and I believe you think he's a man of integrity, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I do.

Mr. Turner. He testified that the President of the United States did not tie either a meeting with the President, a phone call, or any aid to investigations of Burisma, 2016, or the Bidens, that the President did not do that. And you've testified that the President did not tell you that he tied them either, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I did testify to that, although when Ambassador Volker and I were working on the statement and negotiating with the Ukrainians, it was clear to Ambassador Volker that a meeting would not happen without the Burisma and 2016. That was very clear to Ambassador Volker.

Mr. Turner. And how do you know that? What did he say to you? Because he said that was not clear to him. In fact, he said that's not the case. He was working on that. He knows that that's what the President wanted, but he didn't have it as this was a requirement.

Ambassador Sondland. Oh, I strongly disagree with that portion of his testimony. It was absolutely a requirement or we would have just had the meeting and been done with it.

Mr. Turner. What about the aid? He says that they weren't tied, that the aid was not tied --

Ambassador Sondland. And I didn't say they were conclusively tied either. I said I was presuming it.

Mr. Turner. Okay. And so the President never told you they were tied.

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Mr. Turner. So your testimony and his testimony is consistent, and the President did not tie aid to investigations.

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Mr. Turner. Okay. He also testified that he spoke to Giuliani and that Giuliani did not relate that he was tying on behalf of the President or on the President's behalf aid, and that, in fact, Giuliani never said to him that aid was tied to investigations.

Now, the question I have for you is, did you ever have a conversation with Giuliani that did not involve Volker, because your testimony is a lot of we's and us's. So did you -- do you and Giuliani have a separate conference, a separate phone call where Giuliani told you that the aid was tied? Because Volker says -- and if he was on all your phone calls -- Volker says that never happened.

Ambassador Sondland. No, I did have a few conversations -- I don't recall how many because I don't have the records -- with Mr. Giuliani directly when Mr. Volker wasn't available. And I don't believe --

Mr. Turner. Did Giuliani say to you -- go ahead. What were you going to say?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't believe I testified that Mr. Giuliani told me that aid was tied.

Mr. Turner. Oh, I think -- see, this is part of the problem, Ambassador Sondland -- and I just want to walk you through this -- is you've said to us everyone was in the loop and everyone knew. Now, hold a second, hold on a second.

I've listened to you today, as have a lot of people, and not only are your answers somewhat circular, frequently you've contradicted yourself in your own answer.

Now, the text messages and emails that you put up there Kurt Volker walked us through, and he has a completely different understanding of what you were saying than

you are saying you were saying. So I'm a little confused as to how everyone is in the loop, because they're -- if Giuliani didn't give you any express statement, then it can't be that you believe this from Giuliani. Now, let me tell you right now, because -- is Donald Trump your friend?

Ambassador Sondland. No, we're not friends. We have --

Mr. Turner. Do you like the President?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Turner. Okay. You know, after you testified, Chairman Schiff ran out and gave a press conference and said he gets to impeach the President of the United States because of your testimony. And if you pull up CNN today, right now their banner says "Sondland ties Trump to withholding aid."

Is that your testimony today, Ambassador Sondland, that you have evidence that Donald Trump tied the investigations to the aid? Because I don't think you're saying that.

Ambassador Sondland. I've said repeatedly, Congressman, I was presuming. I also said that President Trump --

Mr. Turner. So no one told you, not just the President. Giuliani didn't tell you. Mulvaney didn't tell you. Nobody -- Pompeo didn't tell you. Nobody else on this planet told you that Donald Trump was tying aid to these investigations. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I think I already testified to that.

Mr. Turner. No. Answer the question. Is it correct? No one on this planet told you that Donald Trump was tying this aid to the investigations? Because if your answer is yes, then the chairman is wrong and the headline on CNN is wrong. No one on this planet told you that President Trump was tying aid to investigations, yes or no?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Turner. So you really have no testimony today that ties President Trump to a scheme to withhold aid from Ukraine in exchange for these investigations?

Ambassador Sondland. Other than my own presumption.

Mr. Turner. Which is nothing. I mean, that's what I don't understand. So do you know what hearsay evidence is, Ambassador? Hearsay is when I testify what someone else told me. Do you know what made-up testimony is? Made-up testimony is when I just presume it.

I mean, you're just assuming all of these things. And then you're giving them the evidence that they're running out and doing press conferences and CNN's headline is saying that you're saying the President of the United States should be impeached because he tied aid to investigations, and you don't know that, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I never said the President of the United States should be impeached.

Mr. Turner. No, but you did -- you have left people with the confusing impression that you were giving testimony that you did not. You do not have any evidence that the President of the United States was tied to withholding aid from Ukraine in exchange for investigations.

I yield back.

The Chairman. Mr. Carson.

Mr. Carson. Thank you, Chairman.

Ambassador Sondland, I really want to better understand Mr. Giuliani's role in carrying out the President's demand for investigations. So on May 23rd, sir, during a meeting in the Oval Office to discuss the future of the U.S.-Ukraine relations, President Trump told you and others to, quote, "talk to Rudy." Do I have that right, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Carson. Mr. Ambassador, did you listen to the President and talk to Rudy, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. Did I talk to Rudy?

Mr. Carson. Yes, sir.

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Carson. What did you understand to be Mr. Giuliani's relationship with President Trump?

Ambassador Sondland. I understood he was the President's personal lawyer.

Mr. Carson. What did you believe to be Mr. Giuliani -- what did you believe Mr. Giuliani was doing in Ukraine for President Trump, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know.

Mr. Carson. Ambassador Sondland, in August of this year, you and Ambassador Volker spoke with Mr. Giuliani about a draft statement to be issued by President Zelensky. During those discussions, it was Mr. Giuliani who suggested, in fact, insisted that the statement include specific language about Burisma, correct, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Carson. And he insisted that the statement include the mention of the 2016 elections. And Mr. Volker transmitted this message to a top Ukrainian official, right, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Carson. Mr. Ambassador, and this statement was part of the deliverable that President Trump wanted, correct, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Carson. To your knowledge, sir, was pushing the Ukrainians to investigate Burisma, 2016, or the Bidens part of some official State Department policy, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. I never testified that we were pushing anyone to

investigate the Bidens. I said Burisma.

Mr. Carson. You were involved in Ukrainian policy, right, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. I told you what my role was, which was quite limited and focused.

Mr. Carson. Was it your understanding, Mr. Ambassador, that Ukraine policy should involve investigations into Americans or debunked conspiracy theories about the 2016 election, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. What I testified was that in order to get President Zelensky a White House visit, Mr. Giuliani conveyed the notion that President Trump wanted these announcements to happen.

Mr. Carson. Of course, it was not. It was a part of the President's political agenda, and it was done to benefit the President personally and politically.

Were you following the President's orders, Mr. Ambassador?

Ambassador Sondland. I was following the President's direction to speak with Mr. Giuliani.

Mr. Carson. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The Chairman. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I just want to point out a couple things, Ambassador, in response to my colleagues. My colleagues seem to be under the impression that unless the President spoke the words "Ambassador Sondland, I am bribing the Ukrainian President" that there is no evidence of bribery; if he didn't say, "Ambassador Sondland, I am telling you I am not going to give the aid unless they do this" that there's no evidence of a quid pro quo on military aid.

But nonetheless, Ambassador, you've given us a lot of evidence of precisely that

conditionality of both the White House meeting and the military assistance. You've told us, Ambassador, have you not, that you emailed the Secretary of State and said that if these investigations were announced, a new justice person was put in place, that the Ukrainians were prepared to give the President what he wants and that would break the logjam. You've testified and showed us documents about this, have you not, Ambassador?

Ambassador Sondland. I have.

The Chairman. And in your written statement, you say that the logjam you're referring to includes the logjam on security assistance, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct, as my presumption.

The Chairman. Yes. And we also have seen and you testified that you have also seen Ambassador -- or, rather, Acting Chief of Staff Mulvaney himself acknowledge that the military aid was withheld, in part, over the investigation into 2016 that you've talked about. You referenced that as well, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

The Chairman. Now, they also seem to say that, well, they got the money. The money may have been conditioned, but they got the money. Yes, they got caught. They got caught. Now, they still don't have the White House meeting. They made no statement; they got no meeting. The statement on the investigations was the condition to get the meeting. They didn't make the statement; they got no meeting. But they got caught.

You're aware, aren't you, Ambassador, that 2 days before the aid was lifted, this inexplicable aid was lifted, Congress announced it was investigating this scheme. You're aware of that, aren't you, Ambassador?

Ambassador Sondland. I am now, yes.

The Chairman. Dr. Wenstrup.

Dr. Wenstrup. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to address something, a claim that you made this morning, claiming that Republicans deny Russian attempts to influence our elections. That is false and you know it. In this committee, the Intel Committee, not the impeachment committee, but in this committee, time and time again we all agreed that Russia has tried to influence American elections as far back as the Soviet Union. So I wish you would quit making that comment.

Yesterday we established with Mr. Volker something quite obvious. More than one country can try to influence our elections. You see, Mr. Schiff, we didn't agree with your Russian collusion narrative, your DNC Clinton campaign coup attempt that occurred in conjunction with members of the FBI, and DOJ, and foreign sources, something that you have conveniently ignored as chairman of the Intelligence Committee as you became the chairman of the impeachment committee. But in this process today, I'm interested in facts. I'm not a prosecutor or a defense attorney. I'm not an attorney, like Mr. Turner.

Ambassador Sondland, you honestly have used the words "presumed," "presumption," "presuming," some form of the verb to presume repeatedly today. And today you said that was the problem, Mr. Goldman. No one ever told me the aid was tied to anything. I was presuming it was.

You see, in mathematic fact, two plus two does equal four; but in reality, two presumptions plus two presumptions does not equal even one fact. And the fact is the President did tell you, Ambassador Sondland, no quid pro quo. That's a fact. And another fact, no quid pro quo occurred.

At this time, I'd like to yield to Mr. Conaway.

Mr. Conaway. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like unanimous consent to enter into the record a Washington Post article from today that's headlined "Schiff's claim that the whistleblower has a statutory right to anonymity received three Pinocchios," Pinocchios meaning that -- well, we all know what Pinocchios mean.

[The information follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

Mr. Conaway. The interpretation of that would be that -- two interpretations: One that my colleagues on the other side would argue as they were trying to protect the whistleblower.

An equally valid and credible interpretation is that there's something to hide, and that this unlevel playing field that's been created by the chairman's insistence that there is a statutory right to anonymity maintains that unlevel playing field and the advantages that gives them.

Now, the chairman also announces at every hearing that he will not tolerate -- and I agree with him -- any witness intimidation, any threats or any issues of trying to bully a witness.

Ambassador Sondland, have you, your family or your businesses received any threats, or reprisals, or attempts to harm you in any way?

Ambassador Sondland. Many.

Mr. Conaway. Could you give us an example or two?

Ambassador Sondland. We have countless emails apparently to my wife. Our properties are being picketed and boycotted.

Mr. Conaway. Let's explore that one. Our own colleague Congressman Earl Blumenauer from Oregon has, in fact, called for a boycott of your hotel chain or your hotels in Oregon. I'm assuming he believes that that will harm you to the point that you will then be bullied into doing whatever he wants done. Now, my colleagues and I know that using the word "bully" and "Earl Blumenauer" in the same sentence is a bit over the top. But, nevertheless, he intended to harm you and your businesses. Is that what you surmise?

Ambassador Sondland. That's my understanding.

Mr. Conaway. And that the boycotts, his call for boycott gave rise to demonstrations in front of your hotels that made your customers have to weave in and out of the demonstrators to try to actually get into the hotels?

Ambassador Sondland. As I understand, they're going on as we speak.

Mr. Conaway. Well, the words are better put by a couple of other Oregonians. It says: Congressman Blumenauer's irresponsible attempt to hurt a homegrown business that supports hundreds of jobs in our local economy is just shameful and ought to be an outrage to all Oregonians, some fellow named McDermott.

Then a lady named Ellen Carmichael, who I believe works for you, said: We are saddened to have our Congressman Earl Blumenauer call for a boycott that would put the livelihoods of thousands of his constituents in peril. The attack on our employees is unwarranted.

And I couldn't agree more, Mr. Ambassador. Mr. Blumenauer should not be using the vast influences that we as Members of Congress have to bully you and your businesses and to harm the hundreds or thousands of employees there, that operate in your business, by trying to take business away from you to force you into doing something that they wanted you to do, which is make you testify, and you actually have done that. But that's a shame for that.

And I'm hopeful that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will join me in saying, Mr. Blumenauer, you really shouldn't be using your congressional influence to try to bully and threaten a witness before these proceedings, that is just wrong. I look forward to my colleagues' response.

And I yield back.

RPTR BRYANT

EDTR SECKMAN

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you, Congressman.

The Chairman. Ms. Speier.

Ms. Speier. I was somewhat humored by your request that Mr. Blumenauer not bully to get something done when all we're talking about is the President bullying to get something he wants done.

But, having said that, I'd like to clarify one point about the whistleblower protection from the article that Mr. Conaway just provided. The law reads: Expressly restricts the Inspector General's Office from disclosing whistleblowers' identities.

It says, quote: The Inspector General shall not disclose the identity of the employee without the consent of the employee unless the Inspector General determines that such disclosure is unavoidable during the course of the investigation or the disclosure is made to an official of the Department of Justice responsible for determining whether a prosecution should be undertaken, unquote.

That appears to be the lone statutory restriction on disclosing a whistleblower's identity, applicable only to the Inspector General's Office. We found no court rulings on whether whistleblowers have a right to anonymity under the ICWPA or related statutes. Vladeck said: It is nonetheless a best practice to avoid disclosure of the Ukraine whistleblower's identity, given the concerns about retaliation.

McCullough said: We've stepped into bizarro-land when senior policymakers are trying to yank a CIA employee into the public spotlight in retaliation for making a whistleblowing complaint, especially when there are credible threats to that employee's personal safety.

And I don't know why our colleagues on the other side of the aisle --

Mr. Conaway. Would the gentlelady yield?

Ms. Speier. No, I'm afraid I only have 3 minutes, and I have some other issues, but thank you.

Mr. Conaway. Well, the end of the article does go through that and also says three Pinocchios, in spite of that conversation.

Ms. Speier. Well, the President of the United States has five Pinocchios on a daily basis, so let's not go there.

Ambassador Sondland, in your deposition, you lamented, quote: I was truly disappointed that the State Department prevented me at the last minute from testifying earlier on October 8, 2019, but your issuance of a subpoena has supported my appearance here today, and I am pleased to provide the following testimony.

So it is clear that the White House, the State Department did not want you to testify at that deposition. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Ms. Speier. And since then, you have on numerous occasions during your opening statement today indicated that you have not been able to access documents in the State Department. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Ms. Speier. So you have been hampered in your ability to provide testimony to this committee. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I have been hampered to provide completely accurate testimony without the benefit of those documents.

Ms. Speier. In terms of your conversations with the President of the United States, what percentage of your conversations were about Ukraine as compared to your other duties?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall.

Ms. Speier. Well, you've only had six conversations or seven conversations with the President, you said. So --

Ambassador Sondland. About Ukraine, I think.

Ms. Speier. So you've had many other conversations?

Ambassador Sondland. Oh, yeah, about unrelated -- completely unrelated matters.

Ms. Speier. So how many conversations with the President of the United States have you had?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I don't want to give you a number because it's going to be wrong if I don't have the records.

Ms. Speier. Is it less than 20?

Ambassador Sondland. It's probably in that range.

Ms. Speier. Would you say that delay in military aid and the lack of a meeting in the White House works to the benefit of Russia?

Ambassador Sondland. Repeat the question again, please.

Ms. Speier. Would you say that the delay in military aid to Ukraine and the reluctance to have a White House meeting has a benefit to Russia?

Ambassador Sondland. I think it could be looked that way, yes, looked at that way, yes.

Ms. Speier. All right. I'm going to just speak very briefly about code. When Michael Cohen was before the Oversight Committee, he was asked: You suggest the President sometimes communicates his wishes indirectly. For example, you say, quote: Mr. Trump did not directly tell me to lie to Congress, that's not how he operates. It would be different, he said. The nice -- he doesn't give you questions. He doesn't give

you orders. He speaks in code. And I understand the code because I've been around him for a decade.

So do you think that the President was speaking in code when he would talk about wanting investigations?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't -- I can't characterize how the President was speaking. Every conversation I've had with the President has been fairly direct and straightforward.

Ms. Speier. All right. With that, I yield back.

The Chairman. Mr. Stewart.

Mr. Stewart. Mr. Chairman, I have a unanimous consent request.

The Chairman. You may state your request.

Mr. Stewart. DOE responds to Ambassador Sondland's comments before the House Intelligence Committee attributable to the DOE Secretary of -- the press secretary: Ambassador Sondland's testimony today misrepresented both Secretary Perry's interaction with Rudy Giuliani and direction the Secretary received from President Trump. As previously stated, Secretary Perry spoke to Rudy Giuliani only once at the President's request. No one else was on that call. At no point before, during, or after the phone call did the words "Biden" or "Burisma" ever come up in the presence of Secretary Perry.

Again, I ask that that be entered into the record.

The Chairman. Without objection, although I would note that they have also refused to come and testify under oath.

[The information follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

Mr. Stewart. The American people expect a lot of things out of politics. Arguments, protests, we certainly see that, clash of principles and ideas. I think sometimes eventually they actually would like to see some compromise. But I think something they expect above everything else, fundamental, they expect there is a sense of fairness about it.

And I want to read part of a text I received from someone that I have tremendous respect for. Just a few hours ago, she wrote: Crafting a story to hurt another human being can never be right. The means of destroying and hurting another individual just does not justify the end, and politics does not give anyone a free pass to destroy other people.

Now, you can say a lot about the treatment of President Trump over the last few years, but I think one thing you cannot argue is that it has been fair. There were those calling for his impeachment literally before he was inaugurated. For 2 and a half years, we were told every single day he has betrayed our country. He is a Russian asset. He has committed treason. Accusations that we know now are not true and for which we never had any evidence to support that. He was accused of obstruction, and now here we are actually impeaching the President over, well, first quid pro quo, until we found out that didn't poll very well with focus groups. Then it was bribery, until virtually every witness before us who was asked a question said they had no evidence of bribery. And now it's extortion.

And, again, the American people expect some sense of fairness. So, when Nancy Pelosi goes, before she has seen a shred of evidence and she announces, the President has betrayed his oath of office, he has betrayed the American people, he betrayed national security, without seeing any evidence, again, the American people say, well,

what is fair about that?

So the question before us now is, again, extortion. That's the latest version of the charges against the President. And I'm not an attorney. Extortion sounds pretty scary. It's kind of serious. I had to look it up what it means. It means obtaining money or property by threat to a victim's property or loved ones.

Mr. Ambassador, I'm going to read you a couple quotes from President Zelensky and then ask you a question. First from a Ukrainian press release: Donald Trump is convinced that the new Ukrainian Government will be able to quickly improve the image of Ukraine, complete investigation of corruption, which inhibited the interaction with Ukraine and the USA. Does that sound like President Zelensky is being bribed or extorted in that comment?

Ambassador Sondland. As I testified previously, I'm not a lawyer either, and I don't want to characterize --

Mr. Stewart. Well, okay.

Ambassador Sondland. -- any legal terms. I really don't.

Mr. Stewart. That's fine. I think most people would read that and say, that doesn't sound like he's under severe pressure. He makes it very clear in his own words then. Ukrainian President Zelensky told reporters during a joint press conference with Donald Trump that he was not pressured by the U.S. President. Again, "I was not pressured." Here's another time. There was no blackmail.

I would ask you, do you think he felt like he was being extorted by the President, based on these comments?

Ambassador Sondland. I really think that's for the committee and the Congress to --

Mr. Stewart. Well, you know what, Mr. Ambassador? It's really for the

American people.

Ambassador Sondland. I agree.

Mr. Stewart. And the American people aren't stupid, and the American people can hear that, and they can say: I don't think he was under duress. I don't think he was being extorted. I don't think there was an exchange of a bribe.

And I would conclude with this last observation. It is common for our national policy to withhold aid for various reasons. You know that's true as an Ambassador. Is that not true?

Ambassador Sondland. It's true.

Mr. Stewart. It's frequent, isn't it, that we will withhold aid for various reasons?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Mr. Stewart. It is a policy. I mean, for example, President Bush did it. He suspended military aid to 35 countries over their lack of support for the International Criminal Court. I'll bet that helped his political standing back home, but I don't remember anyone suggesting we should impeach him for it.

President Trump did it last year with Afghanistan over corruption. We did it with Pakistan over much the same thing. And no one suggested that we impeach them for it. This is a common occurrence in international relations. It is hardly an impeachable offense.

The Chairman. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. Quigley.

Mr. Quigley. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, sir, for being here today. You know, there are things we can agree with our colleagues on, things we can disagree. I can agree that -- with my colleague -- that we should turn over all -- the documents should be turned over.

Mr. Ambassador, I think you agree that it would have helped your testimony, helped you understand, that the State Department, the White House hasn't turned over a single document. The White House one -- the President's April phone conversation, but millions more are out there. So, on that, we can agree.

On others, we can disagree as to -- particularly as it relates to the whistleblower. It distresses me because I begin to wonder about the motivations. In the final analysis, the way I look at this is, if we are investigating an arson, you all would indict the person who pulled the fire alarm. That person's job is done, and we have seen the smoke, and we have seen the fire.

Whatever the whistleblower did doesn't change the President's actions, doesn't change the President's own words, which are in our testimony, are in our body of evidence. It doesn't change Mr. Mulvaney's own words. It doesn't change the body of evidence here. All it does is put this person at risk.

Back to the documents and what you know. And, clearly, Mr. Ambassador, you seem to have your memory jogged by documents. Let's talk about May 23rd and see if this one helps you. Senator Johnson, in referencing the May 23rd meeting in his letter, sir, says: I have no recollection of the President saying that during the meeting. It is entirely possible he did. Because I do not work for the President, if made, the comment simply did not register with me. He also says: I also remember Sondland staying behind to talk to the President as the rest of the delegation left the Oval Office.

Sir, do you recall this later conversation and what you and the President discussed?

Ambassador Sondland. I do.

Mr. Quigley. And what was that?

Ambassador Sondland. Just, again, recapping what -- it was sort of a free-for-all

conversation, and I wanted to tie down exactly what we agreed to do and what we didn't.

Mr. Quigley. And in that subsequent, he reinforced talk to Rudy. And did he --
Ambassador Sondland. Talk to Rudy. You guys should work on this.

Mr. Quigley. Did he go into any more detail about what that meant?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Quigley. Just said talk to Rudy.

Ambassador Sondland. It was a very short conversation.

Mr. Quigley. And the second part? You said there was something besides just
"talk to Rudy"?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah, to, you know, reconfirm that the three of us would
be working on the Ukraine file and so on.

Mr. Quigley. Back to Rudy and these seemingly contradictory messages here.
You now recall the prerequisite mentioned in the July 10th meeting, right, that when you
were having this discussion the first meeting in John Bolton's office, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Quigley. That you referenced that there was a condition, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I believe someone else testified that I raised that. And I
didn't dispute that testimony that I said it's my understanding that, in order to get this
visit done, there needs to be an announcement about -- I don't know if I said
investigations or said specifically Burisma and 2016.

Mr. Quigley. Sure. But in your opening, you mention that, at the very same
time that apparently there was a meeting with Rudy Giuliani, and the message you got
was underscored, very concerned about what Lutsenko told them, that according to RG,
Rudy Giuliani, the Z-POTUS meeting will not happen, which is not a condition. It's just
not going to happen. Your understanding of the difference here?

Ambassador Sondland. I think what you're saying is this meeting I was talking about in my opening statement was apparently a meeting that Rudy Giuliani was having.

Mr. Quigley. At the same time.

Ambassador Sondland. At the same time in Ukraine.

Mr. Quigley. Right.

Ambassador Sondland. Unbeknownst to us.

Mr. Quigley. Right. But he's saying something different. He's saying it's not going to happen. There's no notice in here that it's conditioned in any way.

Ambassador Sondland. Well, that was Ambassador Volker's point. This was really an exchange with Ambassador Taylor and Ambassador Volker.

Mr. Quigley. Correct.

Ambassador Sondland. Ambassador Volker is saying: Don't let other people speak for the U.S. Government.

That was his point.

Mr. Quigley. But if Rudy is following the directions and he's saying what he's saying here and you're also following directions, right, and you're saying it's conditioned, who's giving you the instructions to say what you're saying?

Ambassador Sondland. That's why we thought it was problematic to work with Mr. Giuliani.

Mr. Quigley. Exactly. But who did you work with to say the things that you said? Did you have conversations with the chief of staff, with Secretary Pompeo, to say what you were saying? You didn't just say this on your own.

Ambassador Sondland. Are you talking about in the July 10th meeting?

Mr. Quigley. That is correct.

Ambassador Sondland. Oh, yes, with Ambassador Volker, because at that point

Ambassador Volker was the one in touch with Mr. Giuliani, not me.

Mr. Quigley. But you had no direct conversations with Mr. Mulvaney about this, or Secretary Pompeo, to make this condition statement?

Ambassador Sondland. Only the texts and emails that I've already reviewed.

Mr. Quigley. Thank you. My time is up.

The Chairman. Ms. Stefanik.

Ms. Stefanik. Thank you, Ambassador Sondland, for your service.

And I also want to thank you for your recognition in your opening statement of your hardworking staff at the U.S. mission to the EU.

Mr. Sondland, you testified that you never received any direct confirmation or specific information as to why there was a hold on aid.

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Ms. Stefanik. And, in fact, you testified, quote: President Trump never told me directly that the aid was conditioned on the investigations, end quote.

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Ms. Stefanik. You said, quote, "never heard those words from the President," correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Ms. Stefanik. Instead, you testified that, in your September 9th call with President Trump, the President said, quote: No quid pro quo. I want nothing. I want nothing. I want President Zelensky to do the right thing, do what he ran on, end quote. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Ms. Stefanik. And the fact is the aid was given to Ukraine without any announcement of new investigations?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Ms. Stefanik. And President Trump did, in fact, meet with President Zelensky in September at the United Nations, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. He did.

Ms. Stefanik. And there was no announcement of investigations before this meeting?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Ms. Stefanik. And there was no announcement of investigations after this meeting?

Ambassador Sondland. That's right.

Ms. Stefanik. And you've been very clear when Chairman Schiff has asked you broadly about investigations, you've corrected that to say specifically your understanding of investigations are investigation into the 2016 elections and investigation into Burisma. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That is correct.

Ms. Stefanik. And are you aware that, during the Obama administration, the U.S. partnered with the U.K. and Ukraine on an investigation into the owner of Burisma, as part of Ukraine's anticorruption efforts?

Ambassador Sondland. I became aware of it today during the hearing.

Ms. Stefanik. Other witnesses have testified, but yes.

And, in fact, the Obama administration State Department was concerned about the potential appearance of conflict of interest with Hunter Biden serving on the board of Burisma because they raised this as they were preparing Ambassador Yovanovitch for her Senate confirmation.

Are you aware of that?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm not aware of it.

Ms. Stefanik. She testified when I asked her that question both in the open hearing and the closed deposition. And I've asked most of our witnesses this, and every witness I've asked has said yes, and I want to ask you this today.

Do you believe that Hunter Biden having a position on the board of Burisma has the potential appearance of a conflict of interest?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't want to characterize Hunter Biden's service on the board one way or another. I just don't know enough.

Ms. Stefanik. So you disagree with every other witness that has answered yes, there is a potential appearance of a conflict of interest?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, you asked if there was a conflict or an appearance of a conflict?

Ms. Stefanik. A potential. My quote was the potential appearance of a conflict of interest.

Ambassador Sondland. I didn't hear the word "appearance." Well, clearly it's an appearance of a conflict.

Ms. Stefanik. Correct, clearly, it is an appearance of conflict of interest. Again, this is something that every witness has answered yes to or agreed with; it could have a potential appearance. And yet we are not allowed to call Hunter Biden to answer questions in front of this committee.

Thank you again for your truthful testimony today, and I yield back.

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you.

The Chairman. Mr. Swalwell.

Mr. Swalwell. Ambassador Sondland, you were told by the President and others to not show up. You showed up. I think that says a lot about you, and I think history

will look kindly on you doing that. But there are consequences to that. And just a couple hours ago, President Trump was asked about you, and he said: I don't know him well. I have not spoken to him much. This is not a man I know well.

Is that true?

Ambassador Sondland. It really depends on what you mean by "know well." We are not close friends, no. We have a professional, cordial working relationship.

Mr. Swalwell. And in that working relationship, he knows who you are?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Swalwell. And he has spoken to you often?

Ambassador Sondland. What's often?

Mr. Swalwell. Well, you said at least 20 times.

Ambassador Sondland. Okay. If that's often, then it's often.

Mr. Swalwell. And you donated a million dollars to his inaugural committee. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I bought a VVIP ticket to the inauguration.

Mr. Swalwell. That's a lot of money, isn't it?

Ambassador Sondland. It's a lot of money.

Mr. Swalwell. And after that, the President makes you Ambassador to the European Union. Eventually, the Ambassador to Ukraine is removed and, as you told us in your deposition, you become a central figure as it relates to Ukraine. That's a pretty big responsibility, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I don't know that I said I was a central figure. I was one of several people who were tasked to work on the Ukraine file.

Mr. Swalwell. And would you ever in that big responsibility take any actions that were not authorized by President Trump?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, by President Trump or the leadership in the State Department.

Mr. Swalwell. Were you ever hauled into the leadership of the State Department for any actions you were taking -- you had taken around your work on Ukraine?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Swalwell. As to Rudy Giuliani, on May 23rd, the President told you: Talk to Rudy.

You talked to him a couple times, as you told us; in September, talked to the President a couple times. Did the President ever say to you, "Stop talking to Rudy"?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Swalwell. Did he ever say, "Don't any longer talk to Rudy"?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Swalwell. On Ukraine, you said that you were playing the hand you were dealt. President Trump was the dealer, wasn't he?

Ambassador Sondland. President Trump was what?

Mr. Swalwell. The dealer. In your metaphor, you were playing the hand you were dealt. The dealer is President Trump, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I'll recharacterize your question by saying we followed the direction of the President because that was the only pathway to working with Ukraine.

Mr. Swalwell. On page 4 of your testimony, you said: Given what we know -- given what we knew at the time, what we were asked to do did not appear to be wrong.

And you would agree now, Ambassador, knowing what you know now, what you did not know at the time, there are some things around Ukraine that were wrong?

Ambassador Sondland. I agree.

Mr. Swalwell. So let's take out any leveraging of security assistance over the Ukrainians and a White House visit. Would you agree that it is wrong for the President of the United States to ask the leader of a foreign government to investigate the President of the United States' political opponent?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Swalwell. Would you agree that, in addition to making that request for an investigation, leveraging a visit at the White House that a foreign government leader desperately needs is also wrong?

Ambassador Sondland. Leveraging in what respect?

Mr. Swalwell. A meeting at the White House. If someone really needs a meeting at the White House to show their legitimacy to their people, then leveraging that meeting and asking for an investigation would be wrong?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, to be candid, Congressman, every meeting at the White House has conditions placed on it. I've never worked on a meeting at the White House that doesn't have a host of conditions placed.

Mr. Swalwell. But if one of those conditions is to investigate a political opponent, you would agree that would be wrong?

Ambassador Sondland. The political opponent, yes. But making announcements or investigations per se, no.

Mr. Swalwell. And if you asked a foreign government leader to investigate your political opponent, leveraged a White House meeting, and leveraged security assistance, in this hypothetical, you would agree all three of those are wrong?

Ambassador Sondland. In the hypothetical, yes, I would agree.

Mr. Swalwell. Now, you, before becoming an ambassador, worked as a

businessman, and I presume you worked on a lot of deals. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Swalwell. Involving millions of dollars?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Swalwell. You work for a guy now who wrote a book called "Art of the Deal."

Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I do.

Mr. Swalwell. And State Department employees have told us that they don't want to make legal definitions around what occurred with the White House meeting being leveraged against the investigations, but you plainly call it a quid pro quo. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I did.

Mr. Swalwell. And, finally, one final hypothetical. If someone walks through those two doors wearing rain boots, a raincoat, and holding an umbrella with raindrops falling off of them, do you have to see outside that it's raining to presume or conclude that it might be raining outside?

Ambassador Sondland. I understand your hypothetical.

Mr. Swalwell. I yield back. Thank you.

The Chairman. Mr. Hurd.

Mr. Hurd. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. Good to see you.

Ambassador Sondland. Good to see you.

Mr. Hurd. My colleague from California basically implied that you've been supportive of President Trump's campaign. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm having a very hard time hearing you, sir.

Mr. Hurd. My colleague from California indicated that you were supportive of

the President's campaign. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I actually donated to the inaugural committee in order to secure tickets.

Mr. Hurd. So let me ask this question: Did you participate in or overhear any conversations about the potential information collected by Ukraine on the Bidens, collected by Ukrainians on the Bidens would be used for political gain?

Ambassador Sondland. Did I personally hear that? No.

Mr. Hurd. Did you participate in any conversations when this was being discussed?

Ambassador Sondland. Not that I recall.

Mr. Hurd. In your statement on page 5, you said: Mr. Giuliani's requests were a quid pro quo for arranging a White House visit for President Zelensky. And you also recount in your conversation with President Trump where he says, I want nothing, no quid pro quo.

How do you reconcile these two statements?

Ambassador Sondland. They're hard to reconcile. We were working along Mr. Giuliani's direction for a period of time. We still didn't have a White House meeting. Aid was now held up. There were lots of reasons being given by various people as to why those weren't moving forward. And I finally got exasperated by receiving Ambassador Taylor's latest texts, and I just picked up the phone. I got through to the President, and I said, what do you want?

Mr. Hurd. Sure. Are you aware of any specific conversations Mayor Giuliani had with the President between your May 23rd conversation and September 11, 2019?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall if Mayor Giuliani, when I was directly talking to him, either through a conference call or on a direct call, whether he quoted

from the President or said: I just talked to the President.

Most of the communications, as I said, went through Ambassador Volker initially. So I don't want to opine on what may or may not have been said.

Mr. Hurd. On page 11 of your testimony, you said: Mr. Giuliani had been communicating with Ukrainians without our knowledge. I'm assuming you're believing you, Mr. Volker, and Ambassador Taylor. Which Ukrainians was Rudy Giuliani communicating with?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I was specifically referring to this text that I received from Ambassador Volker, where Mr. Giuliani was apparently telling the Ukrainians something that frustrated Ambassador Volker.

Mr. Hurd. Sure. So who specifically? We know that --

Ambassador Sondland. Mr. Lutsenko, the old prosecutor.

Mr. Hurd. And do you think Mr. Lutsenko has any gravitas within the Zelensky regime?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know. He was the old Attorney General and --

Mr. Hurd. And ultimately got fired in August, when the new --

Ambassador Sondland. I think so, yeah.

Mr. Hurd. -- group came in. Okay.

So we know Rudy Giuliani has met with Mr. Yermak on the fringes of meetings in I think it was Spain. Do you know any other Ukrainian official within the Zelensky regime that Mayor Giuliani was meeting with?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know who Mr. Giuliani was meeting with.

Mr. Hurd. Had you had any conversations with Ukrainian officials within the Zelensky regime that came to you and said, "Hey, I just got off the phone with Giuliani; what the hell is he talking about"?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall.

Mr. Hurd. Would that be normal?

Ambassador Sondland. Would what be --

Mr. Hurd. In all your interactions with ambassadors and heads of states and governments, if there is some element of the U.S. Government that they have spoken to, isn't it usually a step that they come in, talk to the ambassador, try to clarify what that statement was? Is that a true characterization of how elements of diplomacy work?

Ambassador Sondland. I think that's a reasonable possibility. Things work all kinds of different ways these days.

RPTR ZAMORA

EDTR CRYSTAL

[2:49 p.m.]

Mr. Hurd. When you met with President Zelensky after the July 25th phone call, so you met him on July 26th, did the investigations or Joe Biden come up in that meeting?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall Joe Biden coming up.

Mr. Hurd. Was there any frustration expressed to you by the phone call that happened the day before?

Ambassador Sondland. No. As I testified, everyone said it was a good call.

Mr. Hurd. Is, in your opinion, your interactions with President Zelensky, is he a straight shooter, is he a liar -- or is he a liar?

Ambassador Sondland. He impressed me greatly, and that's why I wanted to get he and President Trump together as soon as possible.

Mr. Hurd. And so when he makes express statements you tend to believe him?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah, with my limited interaction with him, he seems very honorable.

Mr. Hurd. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. I hope you make your plane back.

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you, Mr. Hurd.

Mr. Hurd. I yield back.

The Chairman. Mr. Castro.

Mr. Castro. Thank you, Chairman.

Good afternoon, Ambassador. Welcome.

Others close to President Trump have made it clear that investigations were, in fact, part of the conditions for U.S. assistance to Ukraine, including Rudy Giuliani and Mick Mulvaney, the acting chief of staff.

So, Ambassador Sondland, at a press conference on October 17th, Acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney discussed his belief that it's entirely appropriate to politicize U.S. foreign policy.

Ambassador, how often did you speak or meet with Mr. Mulvaney?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, based on my lack of records, I'm going by a bad memory --

Mr. Castro. Just based on your memory.

Ambassador Sondland. I only think I had one formal meeting with Mr. Mulvaney, and it had nothing to do with Ukraine. It had to do with a completely unrelated matter.

Mr. Castro. So did you have a chance to talk with Mr. Mulvaney about your efforts in the Ukraine?

Ambassador Sondland. I think most of our communication were through the stream of emails, which others were on generally, and I may have seen him at the White House casually and said hello and, you know, kept in touch. But we didn't have a back and forth.

Mr. Castro. Sure. Well, let me ask you this. Was it your sense that Mr. Mulvaney had a direct line to President Trump? He must have as acting chief of staff. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Of course.

Mr. Castro. Let us look at what Mr. Mick Mulvaney said during his October 17th press conference.

[Video shown.]

Mr. Castro. He said that President Trump, in that clip, had an interest in the investigations, did he not?

Ambassador Sondland. Apparently, yes.

Mr. Castro. He's the chief of staff. He's somebody that sees the President and has a conversation with the President every single day. Wouldn't you expect that?

Ambassador Sondland. I would expect he has a direct line to the President.

Mr. Castro. Ambassador Sondland, when did you first learn from Mr. Mulvaney that the investigations were holding up the security assistance, if at any time?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know that I heard it from Mr. Mulvaney.

Mr. Castro. Okay. And, Ambassador Sondland, I know that you're not a career Foreign Service officer. Is it your understanding that the U.S. Government conditions security assistance on an investigation into a political rival all the time?

Ambassador Sondland. I've already testified I didn't think that would be proper.

Mr. Castro. All right. Well, let us also see what Mr. Mulvaney had to say about that at the same press conference.

[Video shown.]

Mr. Castro. I'll just go ahead and read it for you, because this thing -- I'll read it. He says, "And I have news for everybody. Get over it. There's going to be political influence in foreign policy."

Knowing what you know now about what was intended with Ukraine, do you agree with Mr. Mulvaney that there's just going to be political influence in foreign policy or that we should all just get over it and allow a President now or later to investigate a political rival and ask a foreign government to do that? Do you agree with Mr. Mulvaney?

Ambassador Sondland. I think there's a big difference between political influence and investigating a rival, because politics enters into everything relating to foreign policy.

Mr. Castro. So but you disagree that the President -- you agree that the

President should not be allowed to ask for the investigation of a political rival?

Ambassador Sondland. In the context of what was going on in Ukraine, I believe that the President should not investigate a political rival in return for a quid pro quo.

Mr. Castro. And part of the way that you figured out that all of this stuff that was going on, that you were part of something that was basically wrong, is because in the July 25th phone call the President himself, he didn't tell you, we don't know if he told Rudy Giuliani or not because Rudy Giuliani won't come in here, he said directly to the President of Ukraine that he wanted the Bidens investigated. Wasn't that your reading of the call?

Ambassador Sondland. First of all, I don't believe that I was a part of something that was wrong, because based on what I knew, I thought we were operating well within the center lane of proper U.S. diplomacy.

Mr. Castro. I yield back.

The Chairman. Mr. Ratcliffe.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Chairman, thank you.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a statement issued this morning from the Office of the Vice President by Chief of Staff Marc Short.

The Chairman. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

Mr. Ratcliffe. Ambassador Sondland, I'll be brief.

In anticipation of Mr. Holmes' testimony tomorrow about this July 26th phone call that he overheard at a cafe in Kyiv that you had with President Trump, he overheard that even though -- the call was not on speakerphone, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't believe so.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. Was it an open air cafe?

Ambassador Sondland. It was outdoors.

Mr. Ratcliffe. One of the points that my Democratic colleagues keep making is that David Holmes' prior testimony, which he'll apparently confirm tomorrow, is that President Trump said that he doesn't give a blank about Ukraine. You heard that earlier?

Ambassador Sondland. That was not on the phone call. I don't think he testified that was on the phone call. I think he was testifying that I summarized the phone call, and I don't recall saying that.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And you have no recollection of that?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Yeah. Even if it was true, there's nothing wrong with that, to have an opinion about --

Ambassador Sondland. He can have whatever opinion he wants about Ukraine.

Mr. Ratcliffe. It's all part of the narrative that President Trump is a bad guy, that he doesn't care about the Ukrainians. But it seems to me, Ambassador Sondland, that nothing says you care more about the Ukrainians than sending Javelin antitank missiles. Do you agree with me?

Ambassador Sondland. I agree that sending Javelin antitank missiles is

something that Ukraine wanted and needed.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Certainly those work a lot better at stopping Russian tanks than the blankets that were sent by the Obama administration?

Ambassador Sondland. Your point is taken.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I'll yield back.

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you.

The Chairman. Mr. Heck.

Mr. Heck. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Ambassador, thank you for your stamina, sir. I have a few quick, fairly easy questions.

You would agree, would you not, sir, that foreign interference in our elections is or can be a threat to our democracy?

Ambassador Sondland. Under certain conditions, yes.

Mr. Heck. There are conditions under which their interference is not a threat?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm sorry, did you say foreign interference?

Mr. Heck. Yes.

Ambassador Sondland. Oh, always. Sorry.

Mr. Heck. And do you also agree that identifying and preventing that interference should be a priority of the Federal Government?

Ambassador Sondland. It should be one of its priorities.

Mr. Heck. And when you were assisting President Trump in his effort to obtain those investigations, did you at all realize that those investigations could, in fact, impact the 2020 election?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Heck. Do you believe, sir, that it is appropriate, ever appropriate, to invite,

press, bribe, or coerce foreign interference in our elections?

Ambassador Sondland. No.

Mr. Heck. Thank you.

I want to refer to something that you said in your opening statement.

"As I previously testified, had I known of all of Mr. Giuliani's dealings or of his associations with individuals now under criminal indictment, I would not have acquiesced to his participation."

It's hard to read that without believing that you thought that what he was doing was either wrong or that he was not reputable. Fair?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, with 20/20 hindsight, that's fair.

Mr. Heck. Yes. You have testified here today that you also came to believe that the request for investigations into Burisma was, in fact, a request to investigate the Bidens, both the former Vice President and Hunter. And indeed, the transcript of the July 25th call makes specific reference to that, including Hunter Biden, and today even the ranking member said we could clear all this up if we could have Hunter Biden.

And I have a simple question: What Ukrainian law did Hunter Biden violate?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm not aware.

Mr. Heck. What evidence is there that he may have violated any Ukrainian law?

Ambassador Sondland. I'm not aware.

Mr. Heck. That's because there is none, sir.

Finally, also from your opening statement you said, "As you know, I have already provided 10 hours of deposition testimony. I did so despite directives from the White House and the State Department that I refuse to appear as many others have done. I agreed to testify because I respect the gravity of the moment, and I believe I have an obligation to account fully for my role in these events."

Did by "obligation" you mean simply your legal obligation, or did you mean something bigger?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, both my legal obligation and my moral obligation.

Mr. Heck. Your moral obligation.

I actually want to present an alternative theory. Your family came here escaping the Holocaust via Uruguay. And your parents moved Lucy and later you here, where, frankly, you've been an American success story. Through dint of hard work and innovation, good idea, a knack to hire the right people, and some luck, you've built a considerable successful business, one that I know for a fact would make your parents proud.

They came here because they knew that it was here that they could have freedom that they had not enjoyed, security that they had not enjoyed, and opportunity that they had not enjoyed. And no doubt, on some level, you're grateful and it's created a sense of patriotism in you. Is that fair to say?

Ambassador Sondland. Very fair.

Mr. Heck. Why then, sir, with your courage to come before us, does that same standard not apply to Mr. Mulvaney, Mr. Duffey, Mr. Pompeo, Mr. Bolton, Mr. Vought, Mr. Giuliani? Why shouldn't those same sentiments beat within their hearts to do their patriotic duty and do what you have done, sir? Indeed, why doesn't that same standard apply to the President of the United States?

Ambassador Sondland. I wish I could answer.

Mr. Heck. I suspect you can't because there is no good answer. But I do appreciate your willingness to come here today.

With that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you, Congressman.

The Chairman. Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Jordan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a statement from Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney.

The Chairman. Without objection. We haven't seen all these statements, but I presume they are accurate, and no objection.

[The information follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

Mr. Jordan. Thank you.

Ambassador, President Trump is not a big fan of foreign aid. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't know if that's a fair characterization. I think he's careful.

Mr. Jordan. He's expressed concerns about --

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah.

Mr. Jordan. -- foreign aid going to certain countries?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah.

Mr. Jordan. Okay. Fair enough. And he knew Ukraine was corrupt. Is that right?

Ambassador Sondland. He believed Ukraine was corrupt.

Mr. Jordan. Yeah. And he wanted Europe to do more?

Ambassador Sondland. Definitely.

Mr. Jordan. Definitely wanted Europe to do more.

And the President had a belief that Ukrainian Government officials, some senior Ukrainian Government officials supported his opponent in 2016. I won't go into all the details, but I think of the one member of parliament who said the majority of Ukrainian politicians want Hillary Clinton to win. So he had that belief as well.

And, obviously, he understood what was happening. We got a brand new guy in Ukraine, this Zelensky guy wins, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Right.

Mr. Jordan. And his party takes over and President Trump wants to see, with all these other things that are of concern to him, he wants to see if this new guy is actually, as I like to say, the real deal, a real reformer, and actually going to deal with the

corruption problem.

So aid gets held up for 55 days, gets held up on June 18th -- or, excuse me, July 18th -- and then is released on September 11th. But it seems to me more important than the 55-day pause is the 14 days when Ukraine realized aid was held up on the 29th. We've now had you testify to that. The two witnesses yesterday testified to that, the Politico article.

So aid gets held up on August -- excuse me -- Ukraine learns that aid is held on August 29th, and then, of course, released on September 11th.

In those 14 days, there are three important meetings with senior government officials and President Zelensky. There's the August 29 meeting between Ambassador Bolton and President Zelensky. There's the meeting September 1st that you're a part of, Vice President Pence meets with President Zelensky. And then there's the meeting on September 5th where U.S. Senators Murphy and Johnson meet with President Zelensky.

None of those meetings, none of those meetings did any linkage to security assistance dollars and an announcement or start of any investigation ever come up? None of them. But it seems to me the one that's the most important is probably the one we've talked least about, and that's the September 5th meeting, because that's actually a meeting where there is no one -- well, it's much more congressional focused than White House focused.

This is the meeting where Senators Murphy -- Senators Murphy and Johnson, bipartisan, meet with President Zelensky. And what's interesting is both Senators in the last 2 days have given us letters recounting what happened in that meeting.

Senator Murphy said: I broached the topic of pressure on Zelensky from Rudy Giuliani and the President's other emissaries to launch an investigation into Trump's political rival. Murphy brought it up. You got two Senators, who both strong

supporters of money going to Ukraine, these guys are all for it, and Senator Murphy, the Democrat, even brings up the issue everyone has been talking about.

It seems to me if ever there was going to be a time where the President of Ukraine says, "Guys, you don't know what I'm dealing with, I'm getting pressure from the President of the United States, he wants me to do this, I've got to make an" -- it seems if ever there was a time that the President of Ukraine, the new guy, who now knows the aid has been on hold, if ever there was a time to bring it up, that would have been the time.

But guess what? At no time, Senator Johnson tells us, at no time during this meeting or on any other meeting on this trip was there any mention by Zelensky or any other Ukrainian that they were feeling pressure to do anything in return for military aid, not even, Senator Johnson says, not even after Murphy warned them about getting involved in the election.

So Murphy gave this big deal on Giuliani and nothing. Nothing. And guess what Murphy also said: I do not dispute any of Senator Johnson's factual representations regarding the meeting.

If ever it was going to happen, September 5th was the day. No one from the White House there, not Ambassador Bolton, not the Vice President, no one there. But even then it didn't happen. And we've got all kinds of other meetings when it didn't happen.

And, of course, as you testified earlier, there was never an announcement. You said there were three quid pro quos, but there weren't, because there was never an announcement.

I mean, this is as clear as it gets, but these guys want to keep stirring it up based on no direct evidence whatsoever. And the best direct evidence we have is actually what the President told you: I want nothing. There is no quid pro quo. I want

Zelensky to do exactly what he campaigned on.

And when that became clear to us, guess what? They got the money. They got the money. God bless America. It all worked out, right?

This is crazy what we're going through, because the facts are so darn clear.

I yield back.

The Chairman. Mr. Welch.

Mr. Welch. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, I'm impressed with your career. You've been very successful in business. I'm impressed with your commitment to public service. And I was very impressed with your forthright statement. So thank you for that.

You said it was the highest honor for you to have this opportunity to have this appointment to serve as ambassador to the EU, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Welch. And you quickly became very involved in Ukraine policy. And that policy, as been described by you and others, was really very clear: help Ukraine fight internal corruption and resist external aggression, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Welch. And this Congress, I think with the support of everybody up here, Republicans and Democrats, and in fact with a significant amount of Republican leadership, authorized the release of military aid, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Right.

Mr. Welch. And you and others who were working with you believed it was very important to the new government, President Zelensky, to have that White House meeting to show our support and send a signal to Russia, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Welch. And from hearing you and from hearing our other witnesses, Ambassador Yovanovitch, Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Taylor, there was a concerted team effort on your part to get that meeting and release that aid, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, there was always a concerted effort on my part to get the meeting. That was my singular narrow focus, was to get the meeting.

Mr. Welch. Right. And that was shared by all of the colleagues I just mentioned, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Welch. All right. And incredibly urgent. Ambassador Taylor described going to the front where Ukrainians were dying at the Donbas, 14,000 had died. And it was an existential issue for them that they get the aid. And you were well aware of that and shared, I'm sure, Ambassador Taylor's concern. Is that correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I did.

Mr. Welch. All right. And in your forthright testimony you've testified -- and it's really with the benefit of hindsight, because you couldn't piece it all together -- you know, Giuliani knew in realtime what you were trying to figure out as you went along. Is that a fair statement?

Ambassador Sondland. I think so.

Mr. Welch. One, you testified that you acted on the orders of the President. That was you acting on his orders, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Welch. And you said quite explicitly there was a quid pro quo.

Ambassador Sondland. Relating to the meeting and the Burisma, DNC.

Mr. Welch. That's exactly right. No meeting unless there's an investigation, right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's what we were told by Mr. Giuliani.

Mr. Welch. All right. And Mr. Giuliani, you --

Ambassador Sondland. Wait. No meeting unless there was an announcement of an investigation.

Mr. Welch. Okay. Thank you.

And I asked -- by the way, did the efforts of Mr. Giuliani authorized by the President impede the efforts that you and others were making to try to advance what you thought was the Ukraine policy?

Ambassador Sondland. Not initially. We were just working toward --

Mr. Welch. Ultimately?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, ultimately nothing happened.

Mr. Welch. Right. And Giuliani was the one who was absolutely insistent on the meeting, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Giuliani was insistent on the --

Mr. Welch. On the investigation.

Ambassador Sondland. -- investigation, yeah.

Mr. Welch. All right.

Now, I asked this of Ambassador Taylor -- or Ambassador Volker. If the mayor of Portland said to the police chief, "I'm not going to authorize your budget unless you agree to do an investigation into my political opponent," would that be wrong?

Ambassador Sondland. Of course.

Mr. Welch. And likewise, if it were the governor of the State of Oregon doing the same thing, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Welch. And would that same rule apply to the President of the United

States?

Ambassador Sondland. To investigate a political opponent? Yes.

Mr. Welch. That's correct.

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Welch. All right. So that's the question here. The President in his phone call, he asked President Zelensky, who desperately needed the release of that aid, who desperately needed the White House meeting, to do an investigation, and it was focused on the Bidens and Hunter Biden and Burisma and CrowdStrike. I mean, you don't have to answer that. The President's words speak for themselves.

Do you feel, as a person who went into public service to serve, who had a team of people that shared your desire to help Ukraine, do you feel in any way betrayed by the double dealing of the President? This is a real question.

Ambassador Sondland. I don't want to characterize --

Mr. Welch. You don't have to characterize him. I'm just -- you know, we all, if we get a chance to do something useful, we'd like to do it. And there's no better joy than when you're doing it with other people.

Ambassador Sondland. Mr. Welch, let me answer your question this way. I would have preferred that -- and I'm sure everyone would have preferred that the President simply met with Mr. Zelensky right away.

Our assessment of Mr. Zelensky was that he and the President would get on famously. He was smart, he was funny, he was charming. He was the kind of person the President would like. And once the two of them got together, we thought the chemistry would take over and good things would happen between the U.S. and Ukraine relationship. That's why we were pushing for a quick, unconditional meeting.

Mr. Welch. So it's unfortunate that he was --

Ambassador Sondland. That it didn't happen.

Mr. Welch. -- unwilling to meet without the commitment on the investigation.

Thank you, Ambassador.

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you.

The Chairman. Mr. Maloney.

Mr. Maloney. Mr. Ambassador, let's pick up right there. You would have preferred if they just had the meeting with the President of Ukraine without these conditions. Is that what you're saying?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Maloney. But there were these conditions, and it involved an investigation, right, and you've said that many times.

Ambassador Sondland. Well, remember, the initial invitation that the President sent to President Zelensky --

Mr. Maloney. I understand. I understand.

Ambassador Sondland. -- had no conditions.

Mr. Maloney. But that didn't last very long, did it? And then there were conditions -- this is not controversial at this point, I don't believe, sir -- there were conditions.

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Maloney. That the President wanted investigations, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Right.

Mr. Maloney. And you thought they were of Burisma and the 2016 election?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Maloney. We now know, of course, that Burisma means Bidens, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Today we do.

Mr. Maloney. And we can probably from today until the end of time set aside any confusion that when somebody is asking for an investigation of Burisma over the summer what they really meant was Bidens, right?

Ambassador Sondland. With 20/20 hindsight, yes.

Mr. Maloney. Right, with hindsight.

And, of course, on the day after the President's famous call, you're having lunch with David Holmes, we've covered this, and he overhears your conversation. And I know you said you have no reason to dispute what Mr. Holmes said, and I think you said you wouldn't have any reason to think you didn't speak about investigations with the President.

The President raised investigations with you, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Maloney. On the 26th?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Maloney. And we now know, of course, that was about the Bidens and Burisma and 2016, right? I mean, I know you didn't know that at the time, that's your testimony, but we now know that, right?

Ambassador Sondland. I understood it meant to mean Burisma.

Mr. Maloney. Mr. Holmes says you said Bidens right after that, but I don't know you don't recall that, right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Maloney. Do you dispute it?

Ambassador Sondland. I do.

Mr. Maloney. Okay. But you don't recall it. But we know that that's what the President meant, right? And you do confirm that he wanted to talk about investigations

with you.

Ambassador Sondland. Well, now with the complete picture --

Mr. Maloney. I understand.

Ambassador Sondland. -- what he said 24 hours before, yes --

Mr. Maloney. I understand.

Ambassador Sondland. -- it makes sense.

Mr. Maloney. And you've said it's wrong to investigate political opponents.

We've agreed on that today, haven't we, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. Yes.

Mr. Maloney. And yet, of course, that's what we know the President was asking for.

Let me ask you something. Who would have benefited from an investigation of the President's political opponents?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't want to characterize who would have and who would not have.

Mr. Maloney. I know you don't want to, sir. That's my question. Would you answer it for me?

Ambassador Sondland. Restate your question.

Mr. Maloney. Who would benefit from an investigation of the President's political opponent?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, presumably that -- the person who asked for the investigation.

Mr. Maloney. Who was that?

Ambassador Sondland. If the President asked for the investigation, it would be he.

Mr. Maloney. Well, it's not a hypothetical, is it, sir? We just went around this track, didn't we? The President asked you about investigations. He was talking about the Bidens. When he asked you about the Biden investigation, who was he seeking to benefit?

Ambassador Sondland. He did not ask me about the Biden investigation.

Mr. Maloney. When he asked you about investigations --

Ambassador Sondland. I've said that about 19 times, Mr. Maloney.

Mr. Maloney. Sir. Sir. We just went through this. When he asked you about investigations, which we all agree now means the Bidens -- we just did this about 30 seconds ago, right? It's a pretty simple question, isn't it? I guess I'm having trouble why you can't just say --

Ambassador Sondland. When he asked about investigations, I assumed he meant --

Mr. Maloney. I know what you assumed.

Ambassador Sondland. -- the company, Burisma.

Mr. Maloney. But who would benefit from an investigation of the Bidens?

Ambassador Sondland. They're two different questions. Are you --

Mr. Maloney. I'm just asking you one. Who would benefit from an investigation of the Bidens?

Ambassador Sondland. I assume President Trump would benefit.

Mr. Maloney. There we have it, see. Didn't hurt a bit, did it? Didn't hurt a bit.

But let me ask you something --

Ambassador Sondland. Mr. Maloney --

Mr. Maloney. Hold on, sir.

Ambassador Sondland. -- excuse me. I've been very forthright, and I really resent what you're trying to do.

Mr. Maloney. Fair enough. You've been very forthright. This is your third try to do so, sir. Didn't work so well the first time, did it? We had a little declaration come in after, you remember that? And now we're in here a third time, and we've got a doozy of a statement from you this morning. There's a whole bunch of stuff you don't recall.

So all due respect, sir, we appreciate your candor, but let's be really clear on what it took to get it out of you.

So my question is, when the President is putting pressure on the Ukrainians, withholding a meeting, to get this investigation that you and I agree would benefit him politically, what kind of position does that put the Ukrainians in, sir?

Ambassador Sondland. A terrible position.

Mr. Maloney. A terrible position. Why?

Ambassador Sondland. Why does it put them in a terrible position?

Mr. Maloney. Why?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, obviously, they're not receiving ultimately what they thought was coming to them, and they're put in a position that jeopardizes their security.

Mr. Maloney. A position that jeopardizes their security, and they're being asked to do an investigation to help their security, essentially, that would benefit the President politically.

In other words, you might say they're being asked to give him a personal benefit in exchange for an official act. Is that a fair summary?

Ambassador Sondland. In your hypothetical, that's correct.

Mr. Maloney. It's not a hypothetical, sir. This is real life. Were they asked to

give him a personal benefit --

Ambassador Sondland. By whom?

Mr. Maloney. -- in exchange for an official act?

Ambassador Sondland. Sir, I am not going to go around in circles with you.

Please be clear about what you're asking me.

Mr. Maloney. My time has expired, sir. Thanks for your appearance.

The Chairman. Mrs. Demings.

Mrs. Demings. Good afternoon, Ambassador. It's good to see you again.

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you.

Mrs. Demings. Do you have any knowledge of a possible meeting on or around May 7th involving then President-elect Zelensky and several of his aides to discuss how to handle pressure from President Trump and Mr. Giuliani about investigating the Bidens?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall such a meeting.

Mrs. Demings. You don't recall such a meeting? You don't recall hearing anything about such a meeting --

Ambassador Sondland. Again --

Mrs. Demings. -- if you don't have firsthand knowledge?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, if I don't have -- if I don't have records, schedules. I don't -- right now I don't recall anything about such a meeting.

Mrs. Demings. Ambassador, in the May --

Ambassador Sondland. Was this a meeting among the Ukrainians?

Mrs. Demings. This was a meeting among the Ukrainians involving then President-elect Zelensky, so this would have been early on in his Presidency, with several aides to discuss how to handle pressure from President Trump and Mr. Giuliani about investigating the Bidens.

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah, I don't recall such a meeting.

Mrs. Demings. You don't remember that.

Ambassador, in the May -- I believe it was the May 23rd meeting, you talked about how the President categorized Ukraine, what he thought about Ukraine. I believe that meeting was on May 23rd. Did you ever hear President Zelensky relay any concerns about you about how he felt about how the United States viewed him, whether he was being taken seriously, or any concerns about being used as a tool for political reasons?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I saw that in an email from Ambassador Taylor. We obviously tried to relay to President Zelensky the glass-half-full version of how the United States felt about Ukraine, not the glass-half-empty version, which is: We're here for you, we support you, and we're trying very hard to get you the meeting with President Trump.

Mrs. Demings. So after hearing that from Ambassador Taylor, you relayed -- you tried to reassure President Zelensky that America was truly on their side. Is that what you just said?

Ambassador Sondland. I think we've been trying to assure President Zelensky throughout his entire -- his entire term as the President.

Mrs. Demings. Ambassador, I know you said you don't quite remember exactly when you came to the realization that Burisma actually meant Bidens. But back on May 6th, when asked about a news report about the role of former Vice President's son on Burisma, President Trump told FOX News that it was, and I quote, "a major scandal, major problem."

On May 9th, The New York Times reported that Rudy Giuliani planned to travel to Ukraine and, quote, "shortly to meet with President Zelensky to urge him to pursue the 2016 election and the involvement of Hunter Biden in Burisma," unquote.

Are you saying that you did not realize at that time -- we're talking about on May 9th of this year -- that Mr. Giuliani wanted to urge President Zelensky to pursue the 2016 election and the involvement of Hunter Biden of Burisma?

Ambassador Sondland. I do now, but I did not then.

Mrs. Demings. You did not know that. And I believe you said earlier that you did not pay any attention or much attention at all to any of the numerous news reports of the person you were directed by the President to work with when he was on television over and over and over again talking about Hunter Biden and Burisma.

Ambassador Sondland. No, I did not.

Mrs. Demings. On September 9th, in a text from Ambassador Taylor, he said something to the effect: Are we now saying that aid is tied to investigations? And I believe you text back: Call me. Then you had a conversation with President Trump, and President Trump said something to the effect that there is no quid pro quo.

Do you know what prompted him to say that? You asked him what do you want, and he goes directly to there is no quid pro quo, as opposed to going directly to the list of things that he wanted. What prompted him to use that term?

Ambassador Sondland. I have no clue.

Mrs. Demings. Did you discuss your conversation or your text from Ambassador Taylor with President Trump before he made that statement?

Ambassador Sondland. I did not. I asked a very open-ended question: What do you want from Ukraine?

Mrs. Demings. And you remember that directly, although there are several other conversations that you cannot recall because you don't have your notes or your documents or your emails or other information. But you remember that call specifically, exactly what the President said to you in response to your question about, what do you

want? Why is that?

Ambassador Sondland. I remember the first girl I kissed. I mean, I remember --

Mrs. Demings. You kissed -- well, I won't say that, but anyway.

Ambassador Sondland. I remembered that conversation because, as I said, it was a pretty intense, short conversation.

Mrs. Demings. And tell me again about the conversation you had at the restaurant that was overheard by Mr. Holmes, because that was a conversation with the President. Tell me about that conversation with the President. What was said on the phone?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I don't remember the specifics. I'm being guided by what Mr. Holmes testified to. I said I didn't dispute the basic, you know, subject of the conversation. As I said, we were talking primarily about A\$AP Rocky. That was a completely unrelated matter.

And I think the President may have brought up, you know, how'd it go with Zelensky or is he going to do the investigations, which we'd been talking about for weeks.

And then, as I said, I dispute the -- Mr. -- is it Mr. Holmes' characterization of what I said afterwards.

Mrs. Demings. Thank you, Ambassador.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

The Chairman. Mr. Krishnamoorthi.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Good afternoon, Ambassador.

I'm just going to pick up on that September 9th conversation, in which the President allegedly said: I want nothing, I don't want a quid pro quo.

I presume that on this September 9th conversation the President did not mention that that was the same day that we launched a congressional investigation into whether

there was a quid pro quo. Did he say that to you?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I know all of that today, but he did not -- we didn't have time to talk about things like that.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And I presume he also didn't mention the whistleblower complaint that also alleged that there was a quid pro quo that day.

Ambassador Sondland. He did not.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Okay. So you can't rule out the possibility that the reason why he started talking that way on that day is because of the congressional investigation?

Ambassador Sondland. I can't rule that out.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. You know, the inauguration of President Zelensky was on May 20th, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. As you stated, you attended this inauguration with Senator Johnson, Secretary Perry, Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, and others, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. But Vice President Pence was supposed to originally attend that, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I believe so.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. We learned from Jennifer Williams, a witness who testified, that it was at the President's direction on May 13th that the Vice President not attend. She said, quote, that according to the Vice President's chief of staff, the President determined that the Vice President would not go.

Do you know why the Vice President did not attend the inauguration?

Ambassador Sondland. No clue.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. I want to point to a New York Times article from last week

that says that Lev Parnas' attorney -- you've heard of this gentlemen, Lev Parnas, an associate of Rudy Giuliani?

Ambassador Sondland. Only what I've read very recently.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. He was recently indicted?

Ambassador Sondland. Yeah.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Mr. Parnas told a representative of the incoming government, the Zelensky government, that it had to announce an investigation into Trump's political rival, Joseph R. Biden, and his son, or else Vice President Mike Pence would not attend the swearing in of the new President and the United States would freeze aid.

Did the Vice President not attend possibly because this investigation had not yet been initiated by the Zelensky government?

Ambassador Sondland. I have no idea.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. You can't rule it out, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Again, I have no idea.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. You have no basis for ruling it out, however, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. All I know is that the leader of the delegation was Secretary Perry who invited me along.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Interestingly, Ambassador Sondland, since you came forward in these proceedings, others in the administration have tried to distance themselves from you. You know, on October 14th, Rudy Giuliani told The Washington Post that Sondland, quote, "seemed to be in charge," close quote, of the effort to get Ukrainian officials to publish -- to publicly announce investigations.

Of course that's false, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. If I had been in charge, I would have asked

President Trump to have the meeting without preconditions, and the meeting would have occurred a long time ago.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. That's exactly right. The President is the one that wanted these investigations, as we learned later on in reading the July 25th call transcript. Isn't that right?

Ambassador Sondland. The President, through Mr. Giuliani, as conveyed through Mr. Giuliani, wanted the investigation.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Mr. Tim Morrison came in yesterday, and his deposition testimony as well as yesterday disparaged you too. He called you, quote/unquote, "the Gordon problem."

Ambassador Sondland. That's what my wife calls me. Maybe they're talking. Should I be worried?

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Maybe.

You know, on October 8th of this year, the President tweeted that you are a really good man and a great American. And, of course, on November 8th, one month later, he said, "Let me just tell you, I hardly know the gentleman."

Ambassador Sondland. Easy come, easy go.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. You know, what I'm concerned about -- you were part of the Three Amigos. But what I'm really concerned about, Ambassador Sondland, is that the President and the good folks over here, my Republican colleagues, are now casting you as the one Amigo, the one lonely Amigo they're going to throw under the bus.

But the truth is that, as you said in your opening statement, the suggestion that you were engaged in some rogue diplomacy or irregular channel of diplomacy is, quote/unquote, absolutely false. Isn't that right?

Ambassador Sondland. That's correct.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. The presumption that military aid was conditioned on investigations was based on Mulvaney's statement that we saw on the video. Isn't that right?

Ambassador Sondland. Well, I didn't have the benefit at that time of Mulvaney's statement.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. But you would stand by the presumption that you had based on what you know now, right?

Ambassador Sondland. Correct.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And on September 1, when you told Andriy Yermak your presumption, which you've told us about military aid being conditioned on the investigations, you then told Mr. Morrison what you told Yermak, and Morrison did not try to dispute your presumption, correct?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall him disputing it. I think I went right over to him and just repeated the conversation.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And when you told Vice President Pence your concerns he did not dispute that as well?

Ambassador Sondland. He didn't respond. He just listened.

The Chairman. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And when you told Secretary Pompeo, that wasn't disputed as well?

Ambassador Sondland. I don't recall.

The Chairman. That concludes the member questioning.

Mr. Nunes, do you have any closing remarks?

Mr. Nunes. Just briefly.

Ambassador, I know you want to get on a plane, so I want to thank you for your

indulgence today.

Once again, the American people have seen another failure of their preposterous conspiracy theory, which -- that's if their conspiracy theory doesn't change between now and our next hearing, which is in a few hours from now or another hour or so, and it keeps changing every day.

The claim, Ambassador, that you had an irregular -- you were accused of having an irregular channel, drug deals, now supposedly you're one Amigo. Nobody on this side of the aisle claimed that you were one Amigo.

Ambassador Sondland. I lost my Amigos?

Mr. Nunes. Yeah. Not from us. Not from us.

No bribes given to -- that you made any bribes to the Ukrainian people or to the Ukrainian President.

Your co-conspirator, Kurt Volker, I find it remarkable and troubling how the Democrats and their collaborators and the press have been able to vilify Ambassador Volker, who was supposed to work on these matters in Ukraine like you, Ambassador.

It was a very regular channel, and no amount of storytelling by the left and the Democrats on this dais will change that. It was the regular channel.

The testimony received today was far from compelling, conclusive, and provides zero evidence of any of the crimes that have been alleged. In fact, Ambassador Sondland testified that he presumed the temporary pause in military aid was conditioned on Ukraine carrying out the investigations the Democrats are desperate to portray as nefarious. The Democrats have, as their custom, seized on this presumption as proof they can use it against the President.

However, Ambassador Sondland testified in his deposition that when he asked President Trump what do you want from Ukraine, President Trump replied: I want

nothing. There is no quid pro quo. Let me repeat, President Trump said: I want nothing. There is no quid pro quo.

This comes on the heels of the testimony by Ambassador Volker that he saw no evidence of bribery, extortion, quid pro quo, or treasonous actions. We didn't get to ask him about obstruction of justice because we didn't know that was on the table until today.

Like the President's call with President Zelensky, Democrats want the American people to believe, as one Democrat on this committee put it, that hearsay is much better than direct evidence. And I think Mr. Ratcliffe from Texas laid out the direct evidence that we have from your testimony today. Nothing we have heard establishes a claim that the President acted improperly in his dealings with Ukraine, and certainly nothing has been presented to support anything near impeachment.

In the meantime, Mr. Chair, we continue to have no answers to the questions that only you know, starting with who is the whistleblower who gave birth to this hoax, and what was the nature of his coordination with the Democrats on this committee; second, what is the full extent of Ukraine's election meddling against the Trump campaign in 2016; and finally, why did Burisma hire Hunter Biden? What did he do for them? And did his position impact any U.S. Government actions under the Obama administration? Another hearing in the books and no answers to basic three material, factual questions that we need answers to.

Yield back.

And thank you, Ambassador, for being here.

Ambassador Sondland. Thank you.

The Chairman. I thank the ranking member for his remarks.

Ambassador Sondland, thank you for your testimony today. This is a seminal

moment in our investigation, and the evidence you have brought forward is deeply significant and troubling.

It's been a long hearing, and I know Americans watching throughout the country may not have had the opportunity to watch all of it, so I'm going to go through a few of the highlights. And I'm not going to try to paraphrase what you've said, I'm going to refer to your opening statement.

"We all understood that if we refused to work with Mr. Giuliani we would lose an important opportunity to cement relations between the United States and Ukraine. So we followed the President's orders."

"Mr. Giuliani's requests were a quid pro quo for arranging a White House visit for President Zelensky. Mr. Giuliani demanded that Ukraine make a public statement announcing investigations of the 2016 election, DNC server, and Burisma. Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the President of the United States, and we knew that these investigations were important to the President."

Later you testified: "I tried diligently to ask why the aid was suspended, but I never received a clear answer. In the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I later came to believe that the resumption of security aid would not occur until there was a public statement from Ukraine committing to the investigations of the 2016 election and Burisma as Mr. Giuliani had demanded. I shared concerns of the potential quid pro quo regarding the security aid with Senator Ron Johnson, and I also shared my concern with the Ukrainians."

So much for the Ukrainians didn't know. You can't have a quid pro quo unless the Ukrainians know, and you have testified today, Ambassador, the Ukrainians knew.

You further testified: "Mr. Giuliani emphasized that the President wanted a public statement from President Zelensky committing Ukraine to look into corruption

issues. Mr. Giuliani specifically mentioned the 2016 election, including the DNC server and Burisma as two topics of importance to the President."

In reference to the July 10th meeting at the White House, which you attended with Ambassador Bolton and others and the Ukrainian delegation, you said: "I recall mentioning the prerequisite of investigations before any White House call or meeting."

You further testified: "Again, Mr. Giuliani's demand that President Zelensky make a public statement about investigations, I knew that the topic of investigations was important to President Trump."

You testified later: "I know that members of this committee have frequently framed these complicated issues in the form of a simple question: Was there a quid pro quo? As I testified previously, with regard to the requested White House call and White House meeting, the answer is yes. We all understood that these prerequisites for the White House call and White House meeting reflected President Trump's desires and requirements."

Later, on the subject of security aid, you testified: "In the absence of any credible explanation for the hold, I came to the conclusion that the aid, like the White House visit, was jeopardized in preparation for the September 1 meeting in Warsaw. I asked Secretary Pompeo whether a face-to-face conversation between Trump with Zelensky could help break the logjam."

And this is from an email that the State Department refuses to provide to us but you have provided to us, Ambassador. It reads: "Should we block time in Warsaw for a short pull-aside for POTUS to meet Zelensky? I would ask Zelensky to look him in the eye" -- that is the President -- "and tell him that once Ukraine's new Justice folks are in place in mid-September that Z should be able to move forward publicly with confidence on those issues of importance to POTUS and to the United States. Hopefully that will

break the logjam."

And Secretary Pompeo's reply: "Yes." Not, "What issues of importance to the POTUS?" Not, "What are you talking about, Ambassador Sondland?" Because Secretary Pompeo was on the July 25th phone call, he knew what issues were important to POTUS, and there were two of them, the investigation into 2016 and the DNC server and the investigation into the Bidens.

By the end of August you testified: "My belief was that if Ukraine did something to demonstrate a serious intention to fight corruption specifically addressing Burisma and the 2016 server, then the hold on military aid would be lifted. I mentioned to Vice President Pence before the meetings with Ukrainians that I had concerns that the delay in aid had become tied to the issue of investigations."

And as you testified, he gave you no response. No, "What are you talking about, Ambassador? How could that be, Ambassador? How do we clear this up, Ambassador?" He merely nodded his head or took it in.

And, of course, the record of that 25th call between President Trump and Zelensky was in the Vice President's reading book earlier.

Then you testified: "My goal at the time was to do what was necessary to get the aid released, to break the logjam. I believe that the public statement we have been discussing for weeks was essential to advancing that goal."

Now, my colleagues seem to believe -- and let me add, too, about this call you had with the President. You have confirmed today, in addition to claiming there was no quid pro quo, the President was adamant that President Zelensky had to, quote, "clear things up and do it in public." That's what you have confirmed. That is what you also told Ambassador Taylor. So he would deny there was a quid pro quo, but he was adamant that Zelensky had to, quote, "clear things up and do it in public."

Now, I have said a lot of things about President Trump over the years. I have very strong feelings about President Trump, which are neither here nor there. But I will say this on the President's behalf: I do not believe that the President would allow himself to be led by the nose, by Rudy Giuliani or Ambassador Sondland or anybody else. I think the President was the one who decided whether a meeting would happen, whether aid would be lifted, not anyone who worked for him.

And so the answer to the question, who was refusing the meeting with Zelensky that you believe should take place, that Ambassador Volker believes should take place, and everybody believes should take place, the only question was when, who was the one standing in the way of that meeting? Who was the one refusing to take that meeting? There's only one answer to that question, and it's Donald J. Trump, 45th President of the United States.

So who was holding up the military assistance? Was it you, Ambassador Sondland? No, it wasn't. Was it Ambassador Volker? No. Was it Ambassador Taylor? No. Was it Deputy Secretary Kent? No. Was it Secretary of State Pompeo? No. Who had the decision to release the aid? It was one person, Donald J. Trump, President of the United States.

Now, my colleagues seem to think unless the President says the magic words "I hereby bribed the Ukrainians" that there's no evidence of bribery or other high crimes or misdemeanors. But let's look to the best evidence of what's in the President's head, what's his intent, what's the reason behind the hold on the meeting, and on the aid. Let's look at what the President has to say. Let's look at what's undisputed about what the President has to say.

And you know how we know what the President has to say? Not because what you have represented or others have represented, but because we have a record of his

conversation. And with who? The one who really matters, with the other President, Zelensky.

And this is what he says. He says: "Rudy very much knows what's happening and he is a very capable guy." This is after he says he wants a favor, and he goes into CrowdStrike and 2016. He says: "Rudy very much knows what's happening and he's a very capable guy. If you could speak to him, that would be great."

The former ambassador from the United States, the woman was bad news. And the people she was dealing with in Ukraine were bad news. So I just want to let you know that. The other thing, there's a lot of talk about Biden's son, that Biden stopped the prosecution, and a lot of people want to find out about that, so whatever you can do with the Attorney General, that would be great. Biden went around bragging that he stopped the prosecution, so if you could look into it...it sounds horrible to me.

So what's in the President's mind when he has placed this otherwise inexplicable hold on the aid when he refuses to take the meeting? What's on his mind? Biden. He makes that abundantly clear.

I understand, Ambassador, you've said you didn't make the connection between Burisma and Biden. I will let the American people judge the credibility of that answer. But there's no mistaking what Donald Trump's interest was. There's no mistaking about what Donald Trump meant when he had that call with you on an unsecure phone as you're sitting there in an outdoor terrace in Ukraine, when the President said investigation, he meant Biden. He made that abundantly clear to the President of Ukraine the day before.

The question is not what the President meant. The question is not whether he was responsible for holding up the aid. He was. The question is not whether everybody knew, and apparently they did.

The question is, what are we prepared to do about it? Is there any accountability? Or are we forced to conclude that this is just now the world that we live in, when a President of the United States can withhold vital military aid from an ally at war with the Russians, an ally fighting our fight, too, to defend our country against Russian aggression? Are we prepared to say, in the words of Mick Mulvaney, get over it or get used to it?

We're not prepared to say that. We're not prepared to say of that.

And I appreciate, Ambassador Volker -- Ambassador Sondland -- I appreciate the fact that you have not opined on whether the President should be impeached or not be impeached or whether the crime of bribery or the impeachable offense of bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors has been committed. That is for us to decide in consultation with our constituents and our conscience. That is for us to decide.

And much as my colleagues have said otherwise, this is not an easy decision for any of us. And much as my colleagues may say otherwise, this is not something we relish. For over a year, I resisted this whole idea of going down the road to impeachment, but it was made necessary, and not by the whistleblower, but by the actions of the President.

I'm continually struck how my colleagues would suggest that because the President got caught we should ignore the fact that he was conditioning official acts in order to get political favors, in order to get an investigation against his rival. Getting caught is no defense, not to a violation of the Constitution or to a violation of his Oath of Office, and it certainly doesn't give us a reason to ignore our own Oath of Office.

We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:47 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]