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Trump defends call with Ukrainian president, calling it 'perfectly fine and routine'

By **Colby Itkowitz**

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President Trump began his weekend defending his “perfectly fine and routine” conversation with the Ukrainian president in which he reportedly asked the foreign leader to investigate former vice president Joe Biden.

In his tweets, Trump references his phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, but makes no mention of whether he brought up Biden during the conversation. Instead, he blames the news media for its coverage of the story.

“The Fake News Media and their partner, the Democrat Party, want to stay as far away as possible from the Joe Biden demand that the Ukrainian Government fire a prosecutor who was investigating his son, or they won’t get a very large amount of U.S. money, so they fabricate a story about me and a perfectly fine and routine conversation I had with the new President of the Ukraine. Nothing was said that was in any way wrong, but Biden’s demand, on the other hand, was a complete and total disaster. The Fake News knows this but doesn’t want to report!” he said in a pair of tweets.

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Campaigning in Iowa on Saturday, Biden, the top polling 2020 Democratic presidential candidate, called on Trump to release a transcript of his call with Zelensky.

“Let everybody hear what it is. Let the House see it and see what he did,” Biden told reporters, according to video of the exchange posted by [CNN](#).

Biden said he'd never spoken to his son about his business overseas and accused Trump of “doing this because he knows I will beat him like a drum and is using the abuse of power and every element of the presidency to try to smear.”

Biden's efforts to get the top Ukrainian prosecutor removed was related to the United States' belief that he wasn't weeding out corruption in the country. No evidence has been found that Biden was trying to help his son.

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After Trump tweeted complaining that the media wouldn't cover the Biden story, he tweeted a video montage showing the media covering the Biden story.

An intelligence official who on a phone call with Trump and Volodymyr in July reported to the intelligence agency's inspector general that Trump had made a promise to the foreign leader that unnerved the whistleblower.

Subsequent reporting found that during the call Trump pressured Volodymyr to look into Biden's son. Then, Giuliani followed up with a more specific request that the country examine both the Ukrainian natural gas company who had Biden's son Hunter on his board as well as whether Democrats had colluded with Ukraine to get information about former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort.

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Trump later tweeted Saturday that news of his call with Zelensky was an extension of the "witch hunt" carried out by Democrats, his frequent reference to the Mueller investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election and firing of James B. Comey as FBI director.

“Now that the Democrats and the Fake News Media have gone “bust” on every other of their Witch Hunt schemes, they are trying to start one just as ridiculous as the others, call it the Ukraine Witch Hunt, while at the same time trying to protect Sleepy Joe Biden. Will fail again!” he tweeted.

Trump’s comments echo a defense first laid out Thursday night by his personal attorney Rudolph Giuliani, who argued that the president could ask a foreign leader anything he wanted and that the real story was related to Biden’s pressuring the Ukrainian government in 2016 to fire its top prosecutor who at the time happened to be investigating a company in which Biden’s son, Hunter, had a stake.

Trump made similar comments on Friday to reporters at the White House, saying “it doesn’t matter what I discussed” with Zelensky and that “someone ought to look into” the former vice president.

John Wagner contributed to this report.

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