

Trump promised Zelensky a White House meeting. More than a dozen other leaders got one instead.

Including someone from a country at war with Ukraine

By **Philip Bump**

Dec. 13, 2019 at 5:47 p.m. EST

You've seen the pictures dozens — maybe hundreds — of times. The president of the United States sitting in a big armchair in the Oval Office, shaking the hand of a foreign leader whose name is on the tip of your tongue. It's a bit of international diplomacy that's generally fairly routine: a visit to Washington and a photo opportunity for both sides, with the American public only occasionally looking up.

Over the past three months, though, we've learned a lot more about how fraught those visits can be. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky repeatedly made clear his desire for a meeting at the White House, a visit that would solidify his position as Ukraine's new leader and demonstrate the United States' ongoing support for Ukraine in its conflict with Russia. And yet it was continually out of reach, held hostage, according to witnesses who testified in the impeachment inquiry targeting President Trump, until Ukraine agreed to launch investigations that would politically benefit Trump himself.

While Zelensky and his aides wrestled with Trump's team to try to get a visit confirmed, leader after leader walked through the White House for a grip-and-grin. Strong allies of the United States, such as Canada and Australia. More dubious leaders such as Hungary's Viktor Orban and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. And, the salt in the wound, Russia's foreign minister, even as the House finalized articles of impeachment.

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Here are all of the visits that occurred after Trump first extended a vague invitation to Zelensky. We've interlaced dates from the impeachment probe (highlighted in yellow) to show how the Trump team was leveraging the Zelensky meeting to get the investigations Trump wanted to see. As they did on July 10, in two meetings with the Ukrainians — the same day the White House announced a visit by the prime minister of Pakistan, a country Trump once derided as a safe harbor for terrorists.

The year in White House visits (and one that wasn't)

April 18. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan.

April 21. Zelensky wins Ukraine's presidential election. In a call with Zelensky, Trump invites him to the White House. Zelensky asks that Trump attend his inauguration.

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April 26. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini of Slovakia.

April 26. Trump hosts Abe at the White House.

May 3. Trump hosts Pellegrini at the White House.

May 7. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

May 13. Trump hosts Orban at the White House.

May 15. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Polish President Andrzej Duda.

May 20. Zelensky is inaugurated. Then-Energy Secretary Rick Perry attends in lieu of Trump or Vice President Pence.

June 7. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani of Qatar.

June 12. Trump hosts Duda at the White House.

June 14. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

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June 17. Acting U.S. ambassador to Ukraine William B. Taylor Jr. arrives in Kyiv, carrying with him a letter again extending an invitation for Zelensky to visit the White House.

June 20. Trump hosts Trudeau at the White House.

June 28. According to testimony from David Holmes, Zelensky is told in a call with several administration staffers that a White House meeting would come only if he launched investigations desired by Trump.

July 2. At an event in Toronto, then-Ukraine special envoy Kurt Volker again tells Zelensky that a meeting depends on investigations.

July 9. Trump hosts al-Thani at the White House.

July 10. In two meetings at the White House, U.S. Ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland tells Ukrainian officials that a meeting with Trump depends on investigations.

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Also July 10. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan.

July 11. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

July 18. Trump hosts Rutte at the White House.

July 22. Trump hosts Khan at the White House.

July 25. Trump and Zelensky speak on the phone. Trump invites Zelensky to the White House, but only after Zelensky has agreed to launch the desired investigations. In a text message sent to Zelensky aide Andriy Yermak right before the call, that quid pro quo was made explicit by Volker.

Aug. 2. Trump's personal attorney meets with Yermak in Madrid, where the two discuss a meeting — and the need for investigations. The focus soon turns to the development of a statement announcing the probes.

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Aug. 6. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Romanian President Klaus Iohannis.

Aug. 10. Volker, Sondland, Yermak and Trump's personal lawyer Rudolph W. Giuliani have been in contact about the desired statement. Yermak suggests a date for the meeting be set before it's released. Both sides can't agreed on content, and the statement is tabled.

Aug. 20. Trump hosts Iohannis at the White House.

Aug. 28. The halt in aid to Ukraine becomes publicly known. Resolving this issue moves to the center of interactions with Ukraine.

Sept. 12. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa of Bahrain.

Sept. 15. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

Sept. 16. Trump hosts Salman at the White House.

Sept. 18. The White House announces an upcoming visit by President Sauli Niinisto of Finland.

Sept. 20. Trump hosts Morrison for a state dinner at the White House.

Sept. 24. House Democrats launch an impeachment inquiry.

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Sept. 25. Zelensky and Trump meet in person for the first time during a U.N. event in New York. The meeting is one of many for both leaders. In front of reporters, Zelensky pointedly asks Trump when he can come visit the White House.

“I want to thank you for invitation to Washington,” Zelensky said, half-joking. “You invited me, but I think — I’m sorry. I’m sorry. But I think you forgot to tell me the date.”

Trump demurred.

Oct. 2. Trump hosts Niinisto at the White House.

Oct. 8. The White House announces an upcoming visit by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey.

Oct. 11. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Italian President Sergio Mattarella.

Oct. 16. Trump hosts Mattarella at the White House.

Nov. 8. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov.

Nov. 13. Trump hosts Erdogan at the White House.

Nov. 25. Trump hosts Borissov at the White House.

Dec. 2. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in January 2020.

Dec. 5. The White House announces an upcoming visit by President Mario Abdo Benítez of Paraguay.

Dec. 8. The White House announces an upcoming visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Dec. 10. Trump hosts Lavrov at the White House.



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

Just had a very good meeting with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and representatives of Russia. Discussed many items including Trade, Iran, North Korea, INF Treaty, Nuclear Arms

Control, and Election Meddling. Look forward to continuing our dialogue in the near future!



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Dec. 13. Trump hosts Abdo Benítez at the White House.

No date for a visit by Zelensky has been announced.

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