



Excerpts from Joint Deposition

**Marie “Masha” Yovanovitch
Former United States Ambassador to Ukraine**

Conducted on October 11, 2019

**House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
House Committee on Foreign Affairs**

- Q: Also on page 4, at the top, President Trump said, “The former ambassador from the United States, the woman, was bad news and the people she was dealing with in the Ukraine were bad news, so I just want to let you know that.” Do you see that?*
- A: Yes.*
- Q: What was your reaction when you saw that?*
- A: Again, I hate to be repetitive, but I was shocked. I mean, I was very surprised that President Trump would—first of all, that I would feature repeatedly in a Presidential phone call, but secondly, that the President would speak about me or any ambassador in that way to a foreign counterpart.*
- Q: At the bottom of that same page, President Trump says, “Well, she’s going to go through some things.” What did you understand that to mean?*
- A: I didn’t know what it meant. I was very concerned. I still am.*
- Q: Did you feel threatened?*
- A: Yes.*

In late 2018, Ukrainian officials informed Ambassador Yovanovitch about Rudy Giuliani’s plans to target her. (Page 27-28)

Q: When did you first become aware that Rudy Giuliani had an interest in or was communicating with anyone in Ukraine?

A: Probably around November, December timeframe of 2018.

Q: And describe those circumstances when you first learned about it.

A: Basically, it was people in the Ukrainian Government who said that Mr. Lutsenko, the former prosecutor general, was in communication with Mayor Giuliani, and that they had plans, and that they were going to, you know, do things, including to me.

Q: So you first heard about it from Ukrainian officials?

A: That’s correct.

In the same time period, Ambassador Yovanovitch learned that Rudy Giuliani met with Yuriy Lutsenko, the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, who was looking to “hurt” her “in the U.S.” (Page 31-32)

Q: And from your staff members or your own conversations, what did you come to learn about Mr. Giuliani’s interest in Ukraine?

A: That basically there had been a number of meetings between Mr. Lutsenko and Mayor Giuliani, and that they were looking—I should say that Mr. Lutsenko was looking to hurt me in the U.S. I couldn’t imagine what that was. But, you know, now I see.

Q: What do you see now?

A: Well, that I’m no longer in Ukraine.

Mr. Lutsenko began spreading “falsehoods” about Ambassador Yovanovitch after she continued to press for reforms at his office that he failed to implement. (Page 32-34)

A: So I think that there was—Mr. Lutsenko was not pleased that—that we continued at the embassy to call for cleaning up the PGO, the Prosecutor General’s Office, and he came into office with, you know, three goals: One was to reform the office, one was to prosecute those who killed the innocent people on the Maidan during the Revolution of Dignity, and one was to prosecute money laundering cases to get back the \$40 billion-plus that the previous president and his cronies had absconded with. None of those things were done. And we thought those were great goals, and we wanted him [sic] to encourage him to continue with those goals. That did not happen. And so, we continued to encourage him, and I don’t think he really appreciated it. What he wanted from the U.S. Embassy was to set up meetings with the Attorney General, with the Director of the FBI, et cetera. And he would say, I have important information for them. As perhaps many of you know, there are, you know, usual processes for that kind of thing. We don’t have principals meet and, you know, the foreign principal springs new information that may or may not be valid to an American cabinet member, we just don’t do that. And so what we kept on encouraging him to do was to meet with

the legat, the legal attaché, the FBI at the embassy. That is precisely why we have the FBI in countries overseas, to work with host country counterparts and get information, whatever that information might be, develop cases, et cetera. He didn't want to share that information. And now, I think I understand that that information was falsehoods about me.

Q: What falsehoods about you?

A: Well, for example, as I mentioned in the testimony, in the statement, the opening statement, that I gave him a do-not-prosecute list, a list of individuals that he should not touch.

Q: And did you do that?

A: No.

In February 2019, after communicating with Rudy Giuliani about Vice President Biden and the 2016 election, Ukrainian Minister of the Interior Arsen Avakov expressed concerns to Ambassador Yovanovitch that “getting into U.S. politics” would be “a dangerous place for Ukraine to be.” (Page 43-44, 47)

Q: What were his concerns as expressed to you?

A: He thought it was—so he thought it was very dangerous. That Ukraine, since its independence, has had bipartisan support from both Democrats and Republicans all these years, and that to start kind of getting into U.S. politics, into U.S. domestic politics, was a dangerous place for Ukraine to be.

Q: Why did he think he would be getting into U.S. domestic politics by speaking with Mr. Giuliani?

A: Well, because—well, he told me that, but because of what you had mentioned before, the issue of the Black Ledger. Mr. Manafort's resignation from the Trump campaign as a result. And looking into that and how did all of that come about; the issue of whether, you know, it was Russia collusion or whether it was really Ukraine collusion, and, you know, looking forward to the 2020 election campaign, and whether this would somehow hurt former Vice President Biden. I think he felt that that was just very dangerous terrain for another country to be in.

...

Q: Let me ask one clarification. You described the conversation you had with Minister—

A: Avakov.

Q: —Avakov, and the minister raising concerns about how the actions of these two individuals or Mr. Giuliani might pull Ukraine into U.S. politics. And you mentioned the Manafort ledger. You mentioned the issue of Ukraine collusion versus Russian collusion. Did the issue also come up in that conversation or others about the [sic] Giuliani and his associates' interest in the Bidens and Burisma?

A: Yeah. I mean, looking backwards to what happened in the past, with a view to finding things that could be possibly damaging to a Presidential run.

Q: By Joe Biden?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: That was a yes, just for the record?

A: Yes.

Ambassador Yovanovitch stated that Minister Avakov warned her that he was “very concerned” about Mr. Giuliani and “told me I really needed to watch my back.” (Page 41)

Q: Did you ever have any conversations after November, December 2018, with Ukrainian officials about Mr. Giuliani up until the time that you left in May?

A: I think perhaps in the February time period, I did where one of the senior Ukrainian officials was very concerned, and told me I really needed to watch my back.

Q: Describe that conversation.

A: Well, I mean, he basically said, and went into some detail, that there were two individuals from Florida, Mr. Parnas and Mr. Fruman, who were working with Mayor Giuliani, and that they had set up the meetings for Mr. Giuliani with Mr. Lutsenko. And that they were interested in having a different ambassador at post, I guess for—because they wanted to have business dealings in Ukraine, or additional business dealings. I didn’t understand that because nobody at the embassy had ever met those two individuals. And, you know, one of the biggest jobs of an American ambassador of the U.S. Embassy is to promote U.S. business. So, of course, if legitimate business comes to us, you know, that’s what we do, we promote U.S. business. But yeah, so—

Q: So did you deduce or infer or come to learn that the business interests they had were therefore not legitimate?

A: Honestly, I didn’t know. I didn’t know enough about it at the time. I thought it was exceedingly strange.

Mr. Giuliani sought to override a visa denial for former Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin—whom consular officials determined was ineligible based on his “known corrupt activities”—by claiming to the White House and State Department that Ambassador Yovanovitch was improperly blocking the visa. (Page 264-266)

And so, the consular folks, you know, got the application, recognized the name, and believed that he was ineligible for a visa, based on his, you know, known corrupt activities. And they alerted me to this. And I said, Well, what would you do if he wasn’t—if it wasn’t Mr. Shokin, if it was some other businessman that we didn’t recognize the name? And they said, We would refuse the visa. And so, my understanding is that that’s—that that is what happened, either a formal hard refusal, or what we call a 221G, which is an administrative refusal, asking for more information. The next thing we knew—so I alerted Washington to this, that this had happened. And the next thing we knew, Mayor Giuliani was calling the White House as well as the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, saying that I was blocking the visa for Mr. Shokin, and that Mr. Shokin was coming to meet him and provide information about corruption at the embassy, including my corruption.

...

And when—you know, of course, when the calls came from Mr. Giuliani to the White House and to the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, they got in touch with the

European Bureau, and Mr. Mitchell, you know, held firm. I mean, it was a consular decision. The consular folks felt that they had made the right decision. And, you know, there was the added issue that, you know, basically the notorious reputation of Mr. Shokin.

Ambassador Yovanovitch spoke with senior State Department officials about Mr. Giuliani's activities in Ukraine, but they did not stop his efforts. (Page 270-271)

- Q: While you were Ambassador to Ukraine, did you ever raise any concerns with the State Department about Giuliani's activities in Ukraine?
- A: Well, you know, there was a series of conversations, as we learned more and more. And I don't know if that constitutes raising concerns. I would say it does constitute raising concerns, but it's not like I sent in a formal cable outlining everything. It felt very—very sensitive and very political.
- Q: And who did you express those concerns with?
- A: The European Bureau.
- Q: And who in particular?
- A: George Kent; Phil Reeker, when he came on board.
- Q: And what was their response when you raised the concerns that Giuliani was involved in activities that may be at odds with U.S. policy?
- A: Well, they were concerned too.
- Q: And how did they express their concerns to you?
- A: I mean, I don't really know how to answer that question. I mean, it was—it was kind of what are you hearing, what do you think is happening? You know, it was that kind of a conversation.
- Q: And one last question before I yield to the minority. Did anyone at the State Department try to stop those efforts?
- A: I don't think so. I don't think they felt they could.

Ambassador Yovanovitch spoke with senior State Department officials who understood that claims made about her in a series of articles published in *The Hill* in March 2019 were “a fabrication” and “outrageous.” (Page 40-41)

- Q: You also said that, I believe, after this information came out in *The Hill* in late March, you had a number of conversations both with people in the embassy and people back in Washington. Who were you speaking to within the State Department about this issue?
- A: Assistant Secretary—or Acting Assistant Secretary Phil Reeker of the European Bureau, who is my boss. I spoke once with David Hale, who is the Undersecretary for Political Affairs. And at the NSC with Fiona Hill.
- Q: And what was the message that you generally received from them?
- A: Total support.
- Q: They understood that this was a fabrication?
- A: Yeah, I mean, until today, nobody has actually asked me the question from the U.S. Government of whether I am actually guilty of all these things I'm supposed

to have done. Nobody even asked, because I think everybody just thought it was so outrageous.

When Ambassador Yovanovitch sought advice from Gordon Sondland, the U.S. Ambassador to the European Union, he recommended that she tweet her praise of President Trump. (Page 267-268, 306)

Q: And what did Mr. Sondland say when you talked to him about this topic?

A: He hadn't been aware of it, that the story had shifted, and he said, you know, you need to go big or go home. You need to, you know, tweet out there that you support the President, and that all these are lies and everything else. And, you know, so, you know, I mean, obviously, that was advice. It was advice that I did not see how I could implement in my role as an Ambassador, and as a Foreign Service Officer.

...

Q: Did he actually say, "support President Trump"? Was that his advice, that you publicly say something to that effect?

A: Yes. I mean, he may not have used the words "support President Trump," but he said: You know the President. Well, maybe you don't know him personally, but you know, you know, the sorts of things that he likes. You know, go out there battling aggressively and, you know, praise him or support him.

Ambassador Yovanovitch was told that State Department officials were hesitant to issue a statement supporting her because "the rug would be pulled out" from under them by President Trump. (Page 63-64, 124-125)

A: I was told there was caution about any kind of a statement, because it could be undermined.

Q: I'm sorry, it could what?

A: It could be undermined.

Q: The statement could be undermined?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: By whom?

A: The President.

...

Q: And can you explain again why you understood that the State Department could not issue a statement of support?

A: What I was told was that there was concern that the rug would be pulled out from under the State Department if they put out something publicly.

Q: By whom?

A: The President.

In March 2019, Ambassador Yovanovitch transmitted a classified email, at the request of Under Secretary of State David Hale, documenting the disinformation campaign against her. (Page 61)

At the request—and as I said before, I don’t—I didn’t want to put anything in writing, certainly not front channel; but at the request of Under Secretary Hale, he asked me to send him a classified email, sort of pulling out what—this would have been like about March, like maybe 27th, 28th, that Sunday that the tweet came out. And he asked me to send him an email on the classified system putting down my understanding of what was going on, which was very unformed still, and then why people were doing this. And I did send that email to him.

In two phone calls on April 24 and 25, 2019, Director General of the Foreign Service Carol Perez informed Ambassador Yovanovitch that there was “a lot of nervousness on the seventh floor and up the street” and that she should board the “next plane home to Washington.” (Page 112; 125-126)

Q: What did she say to you?

A: Well, in the first call, which happened at quarter of 10 in the evening Kyiv time, she said that she was giving me a heads-up, that things were going wrong, kind of off the—off the track, and she wanted to give me a heads-up. She didn’t know what was happening, but there was a lot of nervousness on the seventh floor and up the street.

Q: What did she mean by “up the street”?

A: The White House.

...

A: She called me about an hour later, so it’s now 1 a.m. in the Ukraine.

Q: And what did she say to you then?

A: She said that there was a lot of concern for me, that I needed to be on the next plane home to Washington. And I was like, what? What happened? And she said, I don’t know, but this is about your security. You need to come home immediately. You need to come home on the next plane.

When Ambassador Yovanovitch returned to Washington shortly after the April calls, Acting Assistant Secretary of State Philip T. Reeker informed her that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo “was no longer able to” protect her from President Trump. (Page 129)

Q: What did Mr. Reeker say to you at that point?

A: Mr. Reeker said that I, you know, I would need to leave. I needed to leave as soon as possible. That apparently, as I stated in my statement, the President had been—had wanted me to leave since July of 2018 and—or the summer, I should say, the middle of the summer of 2018—and that the Secretary had tried to protect me but was no longer able to do that.

Q: Who had concerns as of July 2018?

A: President Trump.

Q: And was that the first that you had heard of that?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you say in response?

A: I was shocked.

Q: Did he explain why President Trump had concerns?

A: No. No. I think there was just a general assumption that it must have to do with the information that Mr. Lutsenko provided to Mr. Giuliani. But we really didn't get into that because, you know, we, Phil and I had—or Ambassador Reeker and I had had previous discussions about this. And, yeah, there just didn't seem to be much point.

Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan informed Ambassador Yovanovitch that she had “done nothing wrong,” but the President had “lost confidence” in her. (Page 131, 133-134)

So the Deputy Secretary said that, you know, he was sorry this was all happening, that the President had lost confidence, and I would need to depart my post. That, you know, he had—you know, I said, what have I done wrong? And he said, you've done nothing wrong. And he said that he had had to speak to ambassadors who had been recalled for cause before and this was not that.

...

I was upset. And I, you know, I wanted an explanation because this is rather unusual. But he could not offer one beyond the fact that the President had made a decision. And it is the President's to make, as we know. I did ask him, though, you know, what does this mean for our foreign policy? What does it mean for our position on anticorruption? What message are we sending to the Ukrainians, to the world? How were, you know, I mean, beyond me, how were we going to explain this? And what are we going to say, you know, not only to the people at U.S. Embassy Kyiv, but more broadly to the State Department? And I told him I thought it was a dangerous precedent, that as far as I could tell, since I didn't have any other explanation, that private interests and people who don't like a particular American ambassador could combine to, you know, find somebody who was more suitable for their interests. That, you know, it should be the State Department, the President, who makes decisions about which ambassador. And, obviously, the President did make a decision, but I think influenced by some who are not trustworthy.

Counselor to the State Department Ulrich Brechbuhl, who had been the “point person” for Ambassador Yovanovitch's recall, refused to accept Ambassador Yovanovitch's request for a meeting. (Page 139)

Q: Just going back to Secretary Pompeo. Did you ever ask to meet with him or speak to him?

A: No. I asked to speak with the counselor, Ulrich Brechbuhl, who had been handling this matter.

Q: What do you mean by handling this matter?

A: Exactly what I said. I mean, he was—he seemed to be the point person that Ambassador Reeker was talking to.

Q: Did you speak with Counselor Brechbuhl?

A: No.

Q: Why not?

A: He didn't accept the meeting request.

The smear campaign and social media postings questioning Ambassador Yovanovitch’s loyalty “cut the ground out from underneath” U.S. diplomatic efforts. (Page 313-314)

But the other thing is, because there were—there was, you know, the press interview and then all of the other subsequent articles, social media postings, et cetera, Ukrainians were wondering whether I was going to be leaving, whether we really represented the President, U.S. policy, et cetera. And so, I think it was—you know, it really kind of cut the ground out from underneath us.

Ambassador Yovanovitch was “shocked” to read the White House’s record of the July 25, 2019, call between President Trump and President Zelensky and felt “threatened” by the President’s statement that “she’s going to go through some things.” (Page 192-193)

Q: Also on page 4, at the top, President Trump said, “The former ambassador from the United States, the woman, was bad news and the people she was dealing with in the Ukraine were bad news, so I just want to let you know that.” Do you see that?

A: Yes.

Q: What was your reaction when you saw that?

A: Again, I hate to be repetitive, but I was shocked. I mean, I was very surprised that President Trump would—first of all, that I would feature repeatedly in a Presidential phone call, but secondly, that the President would speak about me or any ambassador in that way to a foreign counterpart.

Q: At the bottom of that same page, President Trump says, “Well, she’s going to go through some things.” What did you understand that to mean?

A: I didn’t know what it meant. I was very concerned. I still am.

Q: Did you feel threatened?

A: Yes.