



Excerpts from Joint Deposition

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House Committee on Foreign Affairs

“I went back to talk to Ambassador Bolton. And Ambassador Bolton asked me to go over and report this to our NSC counsel, to John Eisenberg. And he told me, and this is a direct quote from Ambassador Bolton: You go and tell Eisenberg that I am not part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up on this, and you go and tell him what you’ve heard and what I’ve said. So I went over to talk to John Eisenberg about this. ... I told him exactly, you know, what had transpired and that Ambassador Sondland had basically indicated that there was agreement with the chief of staff that they would have a White House meeting or, you know, a Presidential meeting if the Ukrainians started up these investigations again. And the main thing that I was personally concerned about, as I said to John, was that he did this in front of the Ukrainians.”

Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch’s removal was the “result of the campaign that Mr. Giuliani had set in motion.” (Page 41, 43-44)

Q: Now why did the removal of Ambassador Yovanovitch mark a turning point for you?

A: Because there was no basis for her removal. The accusations against her had no merit whatsoever. This was a mishmash of conspiracy theories that, again, I’ve told you, I believe firmly to be baseless, an idea of an association between her and George Soros. I had had accusations similar to this being made against me as well. My entire first year of my tenure at the National Security Council was filled with hateful calls, conspiracy theories, which has started again, frankly, as it’s been announced that I’ve been giving this deposition, accusing me of being a Soros mole in the White House, of colluding with all kinds of enemies of the President, and, you know, of various improprieties. And it seems to be extraordinarily easy, as Ambassador Yovanovitch pointed out in her opening testimony, for people to make baseless claims about people and then to seek their dismissal.

...

And the most obvious explanation at that point, I have [sic] to be said, seemed to be business dealings of individuals who wanted to improve the investment positions inside of Ukraine itself, and also to deflect to where—on the findings of not just the Mueller report on Russian interference but what’s also been confirmed by your own Senate report, and what I know myself to be true as a former intelligence analyst and somebody who has been working on Russia for more than 30 years. So the fact that Ambassador Yovanovitch was removed as a result of this was, I have to say, pretty dispiriting.

Q: Who did you understand was responsible for her removal?

A: I understood this to be the result of the campaign that Mr. Giuliani had set in motion in conjunction with people who were writing articles and, you know, publications that I would have expected better of, and also, you know, just the constant drumbeat of these accusations that he was making on the television. And as a result of that, he had created an atmosphere in which she was under great suspicion, and it was obvious that she would lose the confidence of senior people because these accusations seem to stick to people even when they’re proved not to be true.

National Security Advisor John Bolton stated that “Rudy Giuliani is a hand grenade that is going to blow everybody up.” (Page 45)

Q: And did you discuss Ambassador Yovanovitch with Ambassador Bolton?

A: I did.

Q: And what was his reaction to this?

A: His reaction was pained. And he basically said—in fact, he directly said: Rudy Giuliani is a hand grenade that is going to blow everybody up. He made it clear that he didn’t feel that there was anything that he could personally do about this.

“Ambassador Bolton immediately stiffened and ended the meeting” with Ukrainian officials on July 10, 2019, after Ambassador Sondland “blurted out” that “we have an agreement with the Chief of Staff for a meeting if these investigations in the energy sector start.” (Page 65, 67-68)

Q: Did anything happen in that meeting that was out of the ordinary?

A: Yes. At one point during that meeting, Ambassador Bolton was, you know, basically trying very hard not to commit to a meeting, because, you know—and, again, these meetings have to be well-prepared. They’re not just something that you say, yes, we’re going to have a meeting without there being a clear understanding of what the content of that meeting is going to be.

...

A: Then Ambassador Sondland blurted out: Well, we have an agreement with the chief of staff for a meeting if these investigations in the energy sector start. And Ambassador Bolton immediately stiffened. He said words to the effect—I can’t say word for word what he said because I was behind them sitting on the sofa with our Senior Director of Energy, and we all kind of looked up and thought that was somewhat odd. And Ambassador Bolton immediately stiffened and ended the meeting.

Q: Right then, he just ended the meeting?

A: Yeah. He said: Well, it was very nice to see you. You know, I can’t discuss a meeting at this time. We’ll clearly work on this. And, you know, kind of it was really nice to see you. So it was very abrupt. I mean, he looked at the clock as if he had, you know, suddenly another meeting and his time was up, but it was obvious he ended the meeting.

Q: And did you have a conversation with Ambassador Bolton after this meeting?

A: I did.

Q: Describe that.

A: Ambassador Sondland said as he was leaving—again, I was back—to the back of Ambassador Bolton’s office. And Ambassador Sondland said to Ambassador Volker and also Secretary Perry and the other people who were with him, including the Ukrainians, to come down to—there’s room in the White House, the Ward Room, to basically talk about next steps. And that’s also unusual. I mean, he meant to talk to the Ukrainians about next steps about the meeting. And Ambassador—

Q: The White House meeting?

A: The White House meeting. And Ambassador Bolton pulled me back as I was walking out afterwards and said: Go down to the Ward Room right now and find out what they’re talking about and come back and talk to me. So I did go down.

In a follow-on meeting the same day, Ambassador Sondland again referenced “an agreement with Chief of Staff Mulvaney for a meeting with the Ukrainians if they were going to go forward with investigations,” and he specifically mentioned Burisma. (Page 69, 70, 151-152)

A: And Ambassador Sondland, in front of the Ukrainians, as I came in, was talking about how he had an agreement with Chief of Staff Mulvaney for a meeting with the Ukrainians if they were going to go forward with investigations. And my director for Ukraine was looking completely alarmed. And I came in again as this discussion was underway.

...

And I said: Look, I don't know what's going on here, but Ambassador Bolton wants to make it very clear that we have to talk about, you know, how are we going to set up this meeting. It has to go through proper procedures. And he started to basically talk about discussions that he had had with the chief of staff. He mentioned Mr. Giuliani, but then I cut him off because I didn't want to get further into this discussion at all.

...

Q: So it was you personally who heard Ambassador Sondland mention Burisma—

A: Correct.

Q: —in the Ward Room?

A: Correct. And Wells had been sitting with me in Ambassador Bolton's office when the initial meeting took place, and he also understood it was a redirect.

Q: And Mr. Vindman was also there—

A: Correct.

Q: —and heard it?

A: And Kurt Volker.

Ambassador Bolton told Dr. Hill: “You go and tell Eisenberg that I am not part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up on this, and you go and tell him what you've heard and what I've said.” (Page 70-71, 139)

A: And I went back to talk to Ambassador Bolton. And Ambassador Bolton asked me to go over and report this to our NSC counsel, to John Eisenberg. And he told me, and this is a direct quote from Ambassador Bolton: You go and tell Eisenberg that I am not part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up on this, and you go and tell him what you've heard and what I've said. So I went over to talk to John Eisenberg about this.

...

Q: And in that initial brief conversation, do you recall what you said and what he said?

A: Yeah. I told him exactly, you know, what had transpired and that Ambassador Sondland had basically indicated that there was agreement with the chief of staff that they would have a White House meeting or, you know, a Presidential meeting if the Ukrainians started up these investigations again. And the main thing that I

was personally concerned about, as I said to John, was that he did this in front of the Ukrainians.

Ambassador Bolton made clear that Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and Ambassador Sondland were engaged in “an improper arrangement” by “predicating the meeting in the White House” on the Ukrainians agreeing “to restart investigations that had been dropped in the energy sector.” (Page 129)

Q: I just want to follow up with a couple questions about Ambassador Bolton’s comments about not wanting to be part of this drug deal. Did you understand it from that that he was not referring to an actual drug deal but—

A: Of course not. Yeah.

Q: —some other kind of illicit transaction that he believed that Sondland and Mulvaney were engaged in?

A: Yes. He made it clear that he believed that they were making, basically, an improper arrangement to have a meeting in the White House, that they were predicating the meeting in the White House on the Ukrainians agreeing, in this case, based on the meeting on July 10th, to restart investigations that had been dropped in the energy sector.

Q: And—

A: —by which point it was apparent that this was code, at least, for Burisma. Because that had been mentioned, you know, in the course of Mr. Giuliani’s appearances on television...

Dr. Hill also warned Deputy National Security Advisor Charlie Kupperman that Rudy Giuliani’s demands meant that “Ukraine was going to be played by Giuliani in some way as part of the campaign.” (Page 130, 130-131)

I also talked to Charlie Kupperman at length about this, the Deputy National Security Advisor. I mean, I recall telling Charlie that this was the company that Hunter Biden was associated with. And we were concerned that—not at this particular juncture, again, not specifically about the Bidens per se, but that Ukraine was going to be played by Giuliani in some way as part of the campaign.

...

Because it was positing, you know, here that there was a great deal of, you know, illegal or whatever activity going on in Ukraine, according to Giuliani. You know, basically, the 2016 alternative theory of the election, the cyber issues—these were all getting put out through these articles in the newspaper. So it was kind of creating a kind of a story that was out there that was being packaged.

Mr. Eisenberg “was also concerned” and “said that he would follow up on this” after Dr. Hill and NSC Senior Director Wells Griffith described the meeting. (Page 158-159)

Q: What was Mr. Eisenberg’s reaction to what you explained to him had and Mr. Griffith had explained to him had occurred the day before?

A: Yeah. He was also concerned. I mean, he wasn't aware that Sondland, Ambassador Sondland was, you know, kind of running around doing a lot of these, you know, meetings and independently. We talked about the fact that, you know, Ambassador Sondland said he'd been meeting with Giuliani and he was very concerned about that. And he said that he would follow up on this. He has frequent meetings with Ambassador Bolton and had frequent meetings with Ambassador Bolton and also with Charlie Kupperman, our deputy National Security Advisor, both of whom, you know, were fully cognizant of everything that was kind of going on and churning around.

Mr. Eisenberg stated that he followed up through his “reporting authority”—White House Counsel Pat Cipollone. (Page 160-161, 269-270)

Q: There wasn't a long period of time when you were still there after this July 11th meeting, but at any point before July 19th did you hear back either from Mr. Eisenberg directly or from Ambassador Bolton or anyone else about any further conversations that Mr. Eisenberg had on this topic?

A: Not from Ambassador Bolton, I did not. John Eisenberg said that he had followed up, and he had followed up, you know, through his basically reporting authority, which would be the White House counsel.

...

Q: What was the final determination of—you gave a readout of what occurred in the meeting, maybe what your concerns were, what Ambassador Bolton's concerns were. What was the final—

A: The final outcome of that was that John Eisenberg said that he would talk about this further, and I presumed that he meant with the White House counsel, with Pat Cipollone, and that he would, you know, raise these concerns about what Sondland had said.

Q: Okay.

A: And Wells Griffith, you know, obviously, was also you know, concerned in the general sense about the references, you know, that were going out with Giuliani and the other two, Burisma. But he did not indicate that, you know, Secretary Perry was following up on any of these issues.

Q: Okay. And was that loop ever closed? Did Eisenberg ever reach out to you and tell you that he spoke with Mr. Cipollone or any other officials?

A: He said that he'd talked to Cipollone, but he didn't then give me any further—but, again, at this point, having told so many people and also Charlie Kupperman, as well as Ambassador Bolton, there was every indication that they were all going to follow up on this.

“Ambassador Bolton had said repeatedly that nobody should be meeting with Giuliani,” and he was “closely monitoring what Mr. Giuliani was doing and the messaging that he was sending out.” (Page 126-127)

A: Well, based on what had happened in the July 10th meeting and Ambassador Sondland blurting out that he'd already gotten agreement to have a meeting at the

White House for Zelensky if these investigations were started up again, clearly Ambassador Bolton was referring directly to those. And Ambassador Bolton had said repeatedly that nobody should be meeting with Giuliani. And you may recall before that I said that he described Giuliani as a bit of a hand grenade that was going to blow everyone up.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And he was obviously, at that point, you know, closely monitoring what Mr. Giuliani was doing and the messaging that he was sending out.

Dr. Hill was “very shocked” and “very saddened” to read the record of the July 25, 2019, call between President Trump and President Zelensky. (Page 237-238, 238-239, 239-240)

Q: How did you react when you read that, the transcript, particularly the portions I pointed to about President Trump pushing President Zelensky to investigate the Bidens and investigate Ukrainian—purported Ukrainian interference in the 2016 election and as well as his comments about Ambassador Yovanovitch?

A: I was actually shocked.

Q: Why?

A: Well, particularly on Ambassador Yovanovitch, and very saddened because, again, Ambassador Yovanovitch is a great American, and I don't think any American citizen should be disparaged by their President, just put it out there. So that made me very sad and very shocked and, yeah, not too happy. And on the other issue, it was pretty blatant. So, I mean, I found that I couldn't really explain that away with an alternate explanation. So that's what I mean about being, you know, quite shocked. And I was also very shocked, to be frank, that we ended up with a telephone conversation like this because all of the—and, you know, this is obviously going into executive privilege, and I'm not going to say anything more about this, but I sat in an awful lot of calls, and I have not seen anything like this. And I was there for 2 and a half years. So I was just shocked.

...

Q: So you just said that it was pretty blatant, what President Trump was saying in this call. What do you mean by that?

A: Well, that it looks to me like it was in the context of everything else that had come to my attention.

Q: And what do you mean by—you mean like what Ambassador Sondland had brought up in the July 10th meeting?

A: Correct. And then, you know, that Rudy Giuliani's commentary—I mean, again, Rudy Giuliani has been saying an awful lot of things all the time, and he was pretty inescapable. And after a while, you know, kind of he was making it crystal clear what it was that he was pushing. And this is very much repeating things that Rudy Giuliani was saying in public on television.

Q: And by that, you mean that he wanted an investigation done of the Bidens and of this debunked conspiracy theory about 2016?

A: Correct.

Q: And that this was a condition of getting this White House meeting?

A: That's certainly what this looks like, in the context of the transcript.

...

Q: And here it's—I mean, this is essentially President Trump adopting exactly what Rudy Giuliani had been pressing since the spring of 2019 in this phone call. Is that right?

A: I mean, Giuliani has been relentless on this point, you know, to the point where, you know, obviously, he has, as Ambassador Volker said, shaped a very negative image.

Q: But now it's President Trump pressing the President of Ukraine to do exactly what Rudy Giuliani had been trying to get other Ukrainian officials to commit to, correct?

A: That is certainly how this reads.

President Trump's July 25, 2019, call "really was kind of my worst fears and nightmares" in terms of being an effort "to subvert the national security process" and in "basically turning a White House meeting into some kind of asset." (Page 420-421)

Q: You, obviously, left July 19th. And you've exhaustively answered our questions today, and we are very appreciative of that. You've mentioned repeatedly concerns that you had about, in particular, Mr. Giuliani and his efforts. When you read the call transcript of July 25th, the call record, which you must have done just a couple weeks ago, did it crystalize in your head in any way a better understanding of what was transpiring while you were there?

A: In terms of providing, you know, more information with hindsight, unfortunately, yes.

Q: And in what way?

A: The specific references, also juxtaposed with the release of the text messages by Ambassador Volker—you know, what I said before—really was kind of my worst fears and nightmares, in terms of, you know, there being some kind of effort not just to subvert the national security process but to try to subvert what really should be, you know, kind of, a diplomatic effort to, you know, kind of, set up a Presidential meeting.

Q: This may—

A: There seems to be an awful lot of people involved in, you know, basically turning a White House meeting into some kind of asset.

Q: What do you mean by "asset"?

A: Well, something that was being, you know, dangled out to the Ukrainian Government. They wanted the White House meeting very much. And this was kind of laying out that it wasn't just a question of scheduling or having, you know, the national security issues worked out, that there were all of these alternative discussions going on behind.

“My worst nightmare is the politicization of the relationship between the U.S. and Ukraine and, also, the usurpation of authorities, you know, for other people’s personal vested interests.” (Page 243, 428)

Q: Right. Going back to the transcript just quickly, the investigations that President Trump was urging President Zelensky to undertake, is it fair to say that those were to serve President Trump’s personal political interests as opposed to the national security interests of the United States?

A: I don’t honestly see much national security interest in what I’ve just read there, and I do not see and I did not see at any point any national security interest in the things that Rudy Giuliani was saying on the television that I watched.

...

Q: And I guess the final question I have is, you indicated earlier on today that this was sort of your worst nightmare and that these requests for investigations appear to be political in nature. Is that accurate?

A: Correct. My worst nightmare is the politicization of the relationship between the U.S. and Ukraine and, also, the usurpation of authorities, you know, for other people’s personal vested interests.

Ambassador Volker rejected warnings from Ambassador Bolton and Dr. Hill not to meet with Rudy Giuliani, and Dr. Hill stated that “the more you engage with someone who is spreading untruths, the more validity you give to those untruths.” (Page 113-114, 116-117)

Q: But Ambassador Volker always acted with integrity?

A: He did.

Q: In the interest of the United States?

A: He did. I have to say, though, that we did say to him that we did not think it was a good idea for him talking to Rudy Giuliani.

Q: And how did he respond to that?

A: He said that he thought that he would be able to—I don’t think he used exactly these words, but be able to reason with him and to, you know, kind of, basically, you know, manage this. Well, we did not think that this was manageable. And Ambassador Bolton made it very clear that nobody should be talking to Rudy Giuliani, on our team or anybody else should be.

...

Q: Ambassador Volker related to us that he was engaging with Mr. Giuliani because he believed that Giuliani was amplifying a negative narrative and he had the ear of the President, and so he was trying to make the best of this truism. Is that a—

A: That’s exactly what he told me as well. I mean, I beg to differ, because I didn’t think that this was actually going to be very helpful. Because the more you engage with someone who is spreading untruths, the more validity you give to those untruths.

Conditioning a White House meeting on investigations was “not a national security deliverable” and “not something that we were pushing from the national security perspective.” (Page 219-220)

Q: Having reviewed the text messages that are in the papers, what’s your opinion of those? Is that normal diplomacy, as you—based on your experience?

A: No.

Q: And why not?

A: Because of the content and the nature of, you know, setting up a meeting in relation to this, to something that is not a national security deliverable.

Q: And can you explain that a little bit more? Like what do you mean by this was not a national security deliverable? What was not the national security deliverable?

A: It was obvious from those text messages that they were referring to the investigations, and that was not something that we were pushing from the national security perspective, certainly not the National Security Council and certainly not the State Department.

Q: And they were pushing that in exchange for a White House meeting?

A: In exchange for a White House meeting.

“It is a fiction that the Ukrainian Government was launching an effort to upend our election, upend our election to mess with our Democratic systems.” (Page 338-339, 340, 345)

Q: At my peril, I’m trying to figure out whether this is just complete fiction that was pitched to a reporter and has been completely debunked based on information you have or whether there’s any other explanation for this—

A: It is a fiction that the Ukrainian Government was launching an effort to upend our election, upend our election to mess with our Democratic systems.

...

Q: I’m just asking you about—

A: Because if you’re also trying to peddle an alternative variation of whether the Ukrainians subverted our election, I don’t want to be a part of that, and I will not be part of it.

Q: I’m not trying to peddle anything. I’m trying to ask you about what information you have regarding these. And, you know, frankly, if we didn’t have such a—

A: But you’re asking me about an article that was written in Politico in January of 2017.

Q: And I probably wouldn’t have returned to it, but it was just such a passionate rebuke of this article that just—

A: Well, it’s the thrust of the question that you’re asking here, which is to basically—you know, what we’re dealing with now is a situation where we are at risk of saying that everything that happened in 2016 was a result of Ukraine in some fashion.

Q: Yeah. I’m not saying that. I’m not—

A: Well, that’s certainly what it sounds like to me.

...

A: I'm just trying to basically say here that I have very—you know, obviously strong feelings about our national security. And I just want to, if I've done anything, leave a message to you that we should all be greatly concerned about what the Russians intend to do in 2020. And any information that they can provide, you know, that basically deflects our attention away from what they did and what they're planning on doing is very useful to them.

National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster and Homeland Security Advisor Tom Bossert “spent a lot of time” warning President Trump that “the alternative theory” about Ukraine interfering in the 2016 election was false. (Page 234-235)

Q: And then he goes on to mention: I would like you to find out what happened with this whole situation with Ukraine, they say CrowdStrike ... I guess you have one of your wealthy people ... The server, they say Ukraine has it. Do you know what the President—what President Trump was referring to when he was asking President Zelensky to look into those things?

A: I think some of this gets to some speculation here. Clearly—well, this seems to be the alternative theory for 2016 at the beginning here with the whole situation with Ukraine when as you've been asking questions along that Ukraine might have interfered in the election, particularly in the references to CrowdStrike. Tom Bossert has already spoken out publicly against this, and we spent a lot of time with Tom and General McMaster and others trying to refute this one in the first year of the administration.

Q: Can you say a little bit more about that? What did Tom Bossert do in the first year?

A: Well, Tom Bossert came out publicly and said that he really regretted this reference after he read the transcript as well because this was a debunked theory. And this was also a muddle.

Q: But you said there were some efforts early on in the administration internally to debunk this theory. Can you explain what you did?

A: Basically, Tom and others who were working on cybersecurity laid out to the President the facts about the interference. Again, I can't say any more than that.

Q: Okay. But to a certain extent, they advised him that the alternative theory that Ukraine had interfered in the election was false?

A: Correct.