

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE
ON INTELLIGENCE

HPSCI Republicans
HVC 304, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-4121

GROUND TRUTH
Former Ambassador Yovanovitch

MYTH #1: Russia benefits because the President is not viewed as a strong ally by Ukraine against Russia.

FACT #1: Ukraine is better postured against Russia today than at any point during the Obama Administration.

Ambassador Yovanovitch unsuccessfully advocated for the provision of lethal assistance to Ukraine during the Obama Administration. According to Ambassador Volker, the failure of Obama Administration leadership emboldened the Russians. Yovanovitch acknowledged that “in the three years that I was there, partly because of my efforts, but also the interagency team, *and President Trump’s decision to provide lethal weapons to Ukraine*, that our policy actually got stronger” (*emphasis added*). (p. 140, Yovanovitch deposition transcript, Oct 11, 2019)

Yovanovitch further testified: “In terms of lethal assistance, we all felt it was very significant that this administration [Trump] made the decision to provide lethal weapons to Ukraine.” (p. 144); and: “[E]very Russian tanker knew that those Javelins were coming to Ukraine – or maybe were already in Ukraine – and it gives them pause when they are given an order.” (p. 147)

MYTH #2: President Trump’s skepticism about Ukraine was motivated by a political desire to undermine an opponent—Joe Biden.

FACT #2: The testimony received by the committees clearly indicates that no such desire dictated U.S. policy or actions.

Ambassador Yovanovitch testified that the President’s deep-rooted skepticism about Ukraine was well understood. The Ambassador further stated “we all were” concerned about corruption in Ukraine. (p. 142) Yovanovitch also testified that she was not aware of any effort by U.S. officials to press Ukrainian officials to investigate Joe Biden or the 2016 election, including outside of the State Department. (p. 312)

MYTH #3: The President’s unwillingness to rush into a meeting with President Zelensky is evidence of his corrupt intent.

FACT #3: The President clearly articulated his concerns about corruption in Ukraine, as well as his skepticism about whether the new Administration was any different than those of the past.

The President's reasonably-held skepticism about President Zelensky and the status of anti-corruption efforts in Ukraine has been well established by multiple witnesses including Ambassador Yovanovitch. Ambassador Yovanovitch testified she had reservations about President Zelensky prior to his election (p. 297). Additional testimony taken by the committees shows officials at the National Security Council also had concerns about the new Ukrainian administration and did not want President Trump to meet with President Zelensky at that time (see, e.g., Fiona Hill testimony at p. 76)

MYTH #4: The delay in funding U.S. foreign assistance impacted the ability of Ukraine to buy Javelins needed to protect the country against a hostile Russia.

FACT #4: Foreign Military Sales, which is the mechanism for the sale of Javelins to Ukraine, had nothing to do with the delay in security assistance funds.

Ambassador Yovanovitch indicated that, to be best of her knowledge, there was no impact on the Javelin sales to Ukraine – the funding for which was separately provided by the United States in 2018. (p. 314-15) In addition, President Zelensky stated his desire to purchase more Javelins from the United States using Ukrainian funds, so any future purchases are not dependent on the provision of U.S. security assistance funds. (p. 315)

MYTH #5: The President had no basis for his loss of confidence in Ambassador Yovanovitch, and her recall was inappropriate.

FACT #5: All Ambassadors, whether career or political, serve at the pleasure of the President, and the President may choose to remove an Ambassador from their post at any time.

The Constitution provides the President of the United States with significant responsibility for U.S. foreign policy, and diplomats are tasked with implementing the President's policy. The President, not diplomats, is elected by the people of the United States and is directly responsible to them. As such, the President has full authority to hire diplomats in whom he has confidence and remove those who lack his confidence. There is nothing scandalous or even unusual about a President replacing diplomats with others whom he believes would do a better job implementing presidential policies.