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IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY: FIONA HILL AND DAVID HOLMES

Thursday, November 21, 2019

U.S. House of Representatives,
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence,
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:05 a.m., in Room 1100, Longworth House Office Building, the Honorable Adam Schiff (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Schiff, Himes, Sewell, Carson, Speier, Quigley, Swalwell, Castro, Heck, Welch, Maloney, Demings, Krishnamoorthi, Nunes, Conaway, Turner, Wenstrup, Stewart, Stefanik, Hurd, Ratcliffe, and Jordan.

1

2 The Chairman. The committee will come to order.

3 Good morning, everyone.

4 This is the seventh in a series of the public hearings the committee will be holding
5 as part of the House of Representatives' impeachment inquiry.

6 Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at
7 any time.

8 There is a quorum present. We will proceed today in the same fashion as our
9 other hearings. I will make an opening statement. Then Ranking Member Nunes will
10 have the opportunity to make a statement. Then we will turn to our witnesses for their
11 opening statements and then to questions.

12 For audience members, we welcome you and respect your interest in being here.
13 In turn, we ask for your respect as we proceed with today's hearing. It is the intention
14 of the committee to proceed without disruptions. As chairman, I'll take all necessary
15 and appropriate steps to maintain order and ensure that the committee is run in
16 accordance with House rules and House Resolution 660.

17 With that, I now recognize myself to give an opening statement in the
18 impeachment inquiry into Donald J. Trump, the 45th President of the United States.

19 Yesterday morning, the committee heard from Ambassador Gordon Sondland, the
20 American Ambassador to the European Union, the de facto leader of the Three Amigos,
21 who had regular access to President Donald Trump and pressed the new Ukrainian
22 President, Volodymyr Zelensky, for two investigations Trump believed would help his
23 reelection campaign.

24 The first investigation was of a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine, and not
25 Russia, was responsible for interfering in our 2016 election.

1 The second investigation was into the political rival Trump apparently feared
2 most, Joe Biden. Trump sought to weaken Biden and to refute the fact that his own
3 election had been helped by a Russian hacking and dumping operation and Russian social
4 media campaign directed by Vladimir Putin.

5 Trump's scheme stood in contrast to the longstanding, bipartisan foreign policy of
6 the United States by undermining military and diplomatic support for a key ally and set
7 back U.S. anticorruption efforts in Ukraine.

8 In conditioning a meeting with Zelensky and then military aid on securing an
9 investigation of his rival, Trump put his personal and political interests above the United
10 States. As Ambassador Sondland would later tell career Foreign Service Officer David
11 Holmes immediately after speaking to the President, Trump did "not give a [expletive]"
12 about Ukraine. He cares about "big stuff" that benefits him, like the "Biden
13 investigation" that Giuliani was pushing.

14 David Holmes is here with us today. He is a Foreign Service officer currently
15 serving as the Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv.

16 Also with us is Dr. Fiona Hill, whose job as the National Security Council Senior
17 Director for European and Russian Affairs encompassed the coordination of U.S. policy
18 towards Ukraine. Dr. Hill left the NSC in July, after more than 2 years in that position.

19 Dr. Hill and Mr. Holmes each provide a unique perspective on issues relating to
20 Ukraine, Dr. Hill from Washington, D.C., and Mr. Holmes from on the ground in Kyiv.

21 In early 2019, Dr. Hill became concerned by the increasing prominence of Rudy
22 Giuliani, the President's personal lawyer, who was, as she has testified, asserting quite
23 frequently on television, in public appearances, that he had been given some authority
24 over matters related to Ukraine.

25 Hill was not alone in her concerns. Her boss, National Security Adviser John

1 Bolton, was also paying attention, as were other NSC and State Department officials,
2 including Holmes at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv.

3 Bolton viewed Giuliani as a "hand grenade that is going to blow everybody up"
4 and was powerless to prevent the former mayor from engineering former U.S.
5 Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch's firing in late April or her recall. Holmes was
6 stunned by the intensity and consistency of media attacks on Yovanovitch by name as a
7 U.S. ambassador and the scope of the allegations that were leveled against her.

8 Yovanovitch's dismissal as a result of Giuliani's smear campaign was one of several
9 things that unsettled Dr. Hill. Another was the role of Gordon Sondland, who emerged
10 as a key player in Ukraine policy in May when he was named as part of the U.S.
11 delegation, led by Secretary Rick Perry, to President Zelensky's inauguration.

12 Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman also attended the inauguration and, as
13 Holmes recalls, during a meeting with President Zelensky, took the opportunity to advise
14 the new Ukraine leader to stay out of U.S. domestic politics.

15 Another concern that arose for Dr. Hill around this time was her discovery of a
16 potential NSC back channel on Ukraine. Hill learned that an NSC staff member, who did
17 not work on Ukraine and for her, may have been providing Ukraine-related information to
18 President Trump that Dr. Hill was not made aware of.

19 According to Holmes, following the Zelensky inauguration, Sondland and Perry
20 took a very active and unconventional role in formulating our priorities for the new
21 Zelensky administration and personally reaching out to President Zelensky and his senior
22 team.

23 Sondland's newfound assertiveness also concerned Dr. Hill, who previously had
24 enjoyed a cordial working relationship with the Ambassador. On June 18, 2019, Hill had
25 a blowup with Sondland when he told her that he was in charge of Ukraine policy.

1 Dr. Hill testified that Sondland "got testy with me, and I said, 'Who has put you in charge
2 of it?' He said, 'The President.'"

3 On July 10th, Dr. Hill was part of a meeting at the White House with a group of
4 U.S. and Ukrainian officials, including Bolton, Sondland, and Energy Secretary Perry,
5 another of the Three Amigos. The meeting was intended, among other things, to give
6 the Ukrainians an opportunity to convey that they were anxious to set up a meeting, a
7 first meeting, between their new President and President Trump.

8 Sondland interjected to inform the group that, according to White House Chief of
9 Staff Mick Mulvaney, the White House meeting sought by the Ukrainian President with
10 Trump would happen if Ukraine undertook certain investigations. Hearing this, Bolton
11 abruptly ended the meeting.

12 Undeterred, Sondland brought the Ukrainian delegation and the NSC Director for
13 Ukraine, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman, downstairs to another part of the White
14 House, where they were later joined by Dr. Hill. In this second meeting, Sondland was
15 more explicit: Ukraine needed to conduct investigations if they were to get a meeting at
16 all.

17 Bolton directed Dr. Hill to report this to NSC Legal Advisor John Eisenberg, telling
18 her, "You go and tell Eisenberg that I am not part of whatever drug deal Sondland and
19 Mulvaney are cooking up on this, and you go ahead and tell him what you've heard and
20 what I've said." Dr. Hill did so, as did Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, who separately
21 approached the same lawyers with his concerns.

22 On July 18, the day before Dr. Hill left her post at the NSC, Holmes participated in
23 a secure interagency video conference on Ukraine. Towards the end of the meeting, a
24 representative from the Office of Management and Budget announced that the flow of
25 nearly \$400 million in security assistance for Ukraine was being held up. The order had

1 come from the President and had been conveyed to OMB by Acting White House Chief of
2 Staff Mick Mulvaney without further explanation.

3 Holmes, unaware of the hold prior to the call, was shocked. He thought the
4 suspension of aid was extremely significant, undermining what he had understood to be
5 longstanding U.S. national security goals in Ukraine.

6 One week later, on July 25th, President Trump spoke with President Zelensky by
7 phone. When President Zelensky brought up U.S. military support and noted that
8 Ukraine would like to buy more Javelin anti-tank missiles from the United States, Trump
9 responded by saying, "I would like you to do us a favor, though."

10 Trump then requested that Zelensky investigate the discredited conspiracy theory
11 that Ukraine interfered in the 2016 election. Even more ominously, Trump asked
12 Zelensky to look into the Bidens.

13 Neither request had been included in the official talking points for the call
14 prepared by the NSC staff, but both were in Donald Trump's personal interest and the
15 interest of his 2020 reelection campaign. And the Ukraine President knew about both in
16 advance, in part because of efforts by Ambassadors Sondland and Volker to make him
17 aware of President Trump's demands.

18 The next day, July 26, in Kyiv, Holmes served as a note-taker during a meeting
19 between Acting Ambassador Bill Taylor, Volker, and Sondland with President Zelensky
20 and other senior Ukrainian officials. Zelensky said that, on the previous day's call,
21 President Trump had, quote, "three times" raised "some very sensitive issues," that he
22 would have to follow up on those issues when they met "in person."

23 Although he did not realize it at the time, Holmes came to understand that the
24 sensitive issues were the investigations that President Trump demanded on the July 25th
25 call.

1 Following the meeting with Zelensky, Holmes accompanied Sondland to a
2 separate meeting with one of the Ukrainian President's top advisors, Andriy Yermak, but
3 Holmes was not allowed into the meeting and waited for 30 minutes while Sondland and
4 the Ukrainian met alone, without any note-takers to record what they said.

5 After the meeting, Sondland, Holmes, and two other State Department staff went
6 to lunch at a nearby restaurant and sat on an outdoor terrace. At some point during the
7 meal, Sondland pulled out his cell phone, placed a call to the White House, and asked to
8 be connected to the President.

9 When Trump came on the line, Holmes could hear the President's voice clearly.
10 Holmes recalled that, quote, "the President's voice was very loud and recognizable, and
11 Ambassador Sondland held the phone away from his ear for a period of time, presumably
12 because of the loud volume."

13 Sondland said he was calling from Kyiv. He told the President that President
14 Zelensky "loves your ass." Holmes then heard President Trump ask, "So he's going to do
15 the investigation?" Ambassador Sondland replied, "He's going to do it," adding that
16 President Zelensky will do "anything you ask him."

17 After the call ended, Holmes took the opportunity to ask Sondland for his candid
18 impression of the President's views on Ukraine. It was at this point that Sondland
19 revealed that President Trump doesn't "give a [expletive]" about Ukraine. The President
20 only cares about "big stuff" that benefits the President, like the "Biden investigation" that
21 Mr. Giuliani was pushing.

22 A month later, National Security Advisor Bolton traveled to Kyiv. Between
23 meetings with Ukrainian Government officials, Holmes heard Bolton express to
24 Ambassador Bill Taylor his frustration about Mr. Giuliani's influence with the President.
25 Bolton made clear, however, there was nothing he could do about it.

1 Bolton further stated that the hold on security assistance would not be lifted prior
2 to the upcoming meeting between President Trump and Zelensky in Warsaw, where it
3 would hang on whether Zelensky was able to favorably impress President Trump.

4 Trump canceled his trip to Warsaw, but Sondland, Volker, and others continued to
5 press for a public announcement of the opening of investigations by Zelensky.

6 On September 8, Taylor told Holmes that, quote, "now they're insisting Zelensky
7 commit to the investigation in an interview with CNN." Holmes was surprised the
8 requirement was so specific and concrete, since it amounted to nothing less than a,
9 quote, "demand that President Zelensky personally commit to a specific investigation of
10 President Trump's political rival on a cable news channel," unquote.

11 On September 9, this committee, along with the Foreign Affairs and Oversight
12 Committees, launched our investigation of this corrupt scheme. President Trump
13 released the hold on aid 2 days later. As CNN's Fareed Zakaria has revealed, the
14 Ukrainians canceled the CNN interview shortly thereafter.

15 Two weeks later, on September 25th, the transcript of the July 25th call was
16 released by the White House, and the details of the President's scheme started coming
17 into view.

18 In the coming days, Congress will determine what response is appropriate. If the
19 President abused his power and invited foreign interference in our elections, if he sought
20 to condition, coerce, extort, or bribe a vulnerable ally into conducting investigations to
21 aid his reelection campaign and did so by withholding official acts -- a White House
22 meeting or hundreds of millions of dollars of needed military aid -- it will be for us to
23 decide whether those acts are compatible with the Office of the Presidency.

24 I now recognize Ranking Member Nunes for any remarks he would like to make.

25 [The statement of the chairman follows:]

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2 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1 Mr. Nunes. Thank you.

2 Throughout these bizarre hearings, the Democrats have struggled to make the
3 case that President Trump committed some impeachable offense on his phone call with
4 Ukrainian President Zelensky. The offense itself changes depending on the day, ranging
5 from quid pro quo, to extortion, to bribery, to obstruction of justice, then back to quid
6 pro quo.

7 It's clear why the Democrats have been forced onto this carousel of accusations.
8 President Trump had good reason to be worried of Ukrainian election meddling against
9 his campaign and of widespread corruption in that country.

10 President Zelensky, who didn't even know aid to Ukraine had been paused at the
11 time of the call, has repeatedly said there was nothing wrong with the conversation.
12 The aid was resumed without the Ukrainians taking the actions they were supposedly
13 being coerced into doing.

14 Aid to Ukraine under President Trump has been much more robust than it was
15 under President Obama, thanks to the provision of Javelin anti-tank weapons.

16 As numerous witnesses have testified, temporary holds on foreign aid occur fairly
17 frequently for many different reasons. So how do we have an impeachable offense
18 here, when there's no actual misdeed and no one even claiming to be a victim?

19 The Democrats have tried to solve this dilemma with a simple slogan: "He got
20 caught." President Trump, we are to believe, was just about to do something wrong,
21 and getting caught was the only reason he backed down from whatever nefarious
22 thought crime the Democrats are accusing him of almost committing.

23 I once again urge Americans to continue to consider the credibility of the
24 Democrats on this committee who are now hurling these charges. For the last 3 years,
25 it's not President Trump who got caught; it's the Democrats who got caught.

1 They got caught falsely claiming they had more than circumstantial evidence that
2 Trump colluded with Russians to hack the 2016 election. They got caught orchestrating
3 this entire farce with the whistleblower and lying about their secret meetings with him.
4 They got caught defending the false allegations of the Steele dossier, which was paid for
5 by them.

6 They got caught breaking their promise that impeachment would only go forward
7 with bipartisan support because of how damaging it is to the American people. They got
8 caught running a sham impeachment process featuring secret depositions, hidden
9 transcripts, and an unending flood of Democrat leaks to the media.

10 They got caught trying to obtain nude photos of President Trump from Russian
11 pranksters pretending to be Ukrainians. And they got caught covering up for Alexandra
12 Chalupa, a Democratic National Committee operative who colluded with Ukrainian
13 officials to smear the Trump campaign, by improperly redacting her name from
14 deposition transcripts and refusing to let Americans hear her testimony as a witness in
15 these proceedings.

16 That is the Democrats' pitiful legacy in recent years. They got caught.

17 Meanwhile, their supposed star witness testified that he was "guessing" that
18 President Trump was tying Ukrainian aid to investigations, despite no one telling him that
19 was true and the President himself explicitly telling him the opposite, that he wanted
20 nothing from Ukraine.

21 Ladies and gentlemen, unless the Democrats once again scramble their kangaroo
22 court rules, today's hearing marks the merciful end of this spectacle in the impeachment
23 committee, formerly known as the Intelligence Committee.

24 Whether the Democrats reap the political benefit they want from this
25 impeachment remains to be seen, but the damage they have done to this country will be

1 long-lasting. With this wrenching attempt to overthrow the President, they have pitted
2 Americans against one another and poisoned the mind of fanatics who actually believe
3 the entire galaxy of bizarre accusations they have leveled against the President since the
4 day the American people elected him.

5 I sincerely hope the Democrats end this affair as quickly as possible so our Nation
6 can begin to heal the many wounds it has inflicted on us. The people's faith in
7 government and their belief that their vote counts for something has been shaken.

8 From the Russia hoax to the shoddy Ukrainian sequel, the Democrats got caught.
9 Let's hope they finally learn a lesson, give their conspiracy theories a rest, and focus on
10 governing, for a change.

11 In addition, Mr. Chairman, pursuant to House rule XI, clause 2(j)(1), the Republican
12 members transmit our request to convene a minority day of hearings. To date, you
13 have blocked key witnesses that we have requested from testifying in this partisan
14 impeachment inquiry. This rule is not displaced by H. Res. 660, and, therefore, under
15 House rule XI, clause 1(a), it applies to the Democrats' impeachment inquiry. We look
16 forward to the chair promptly scheduling an agreed-upon time for the minority day of
17 hearings so that we can hear from key witnesses that you have continually blocked from
18 testifying.

19 I'd also like to take a quick moment on an assertion Ms. Hill made in the
20 statement that she submitted to this committee, in which she claimed that some
21 committee members deny that Russia meddled in the 2016 election.

22 As I noted in my opening statement on Wednesday, that in March 2018,
23 Intelligence Committee Republicans published the results of a year-long investigation into
24 Russian meddling. The 240-page report analyzed 2016 Russian meddling campaign, the
25 U.S. Government reaction to it, Russian campaigns in other countries, and provided

1 specific recommendations to improve American election security.

2 I'm going to ask my staff to hand these reports to our two witnesses today, just so
3 they can have a recollection of their memory.

4 As America may or may not know, Democrats refused to sign on to the Republican
5 report. Instead, they decided to adopt minority views filled with collusion conspiracy
6 theories.

7 Needless to say, it is entirely possible for two separate nations to engage in
8 election meddling at the same time, and Republicans believe we should take meddling
9 seriously by all foreign countries regardless of which campaign is the target.

10 I'd like to submit for the record a copy of our report, titled, "Report on Russian
11 Active Measures."

12 [The report follows:]

13

14 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1 Mr. Nunes. I yield back.

2 [The statement of Mr. Nunes follows:]

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4 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1 The Chairman. Today, we are joined by Dr. Fiona Hill and David Holmes.

2 Dr. Fiona Hill is a former Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director for
3 Europe and Russia on the National Security Council. Before returning to government,
4 she was a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, where she directed the Center on the
5 United States and Europe. She had previously worked at the National Intelligence
6 Council, the Eurasia Foundation, and the John F. Kennedy School of Government.

7 David Holmes is the Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, where he
8 serves as the senior policy and political advisor to Ambassador Taylor, who testified
9 earlier in these hearings. He is a career Foreign Service officer. He has previously
10 served in Moscow, New Delhi, Kabul, Bogota, and Pristina. He has also served on the
11 staff of the National Security Council as special assistant to the United States Secretary of
12 State.

13 Two final points before our witnesses are sworn.

14 First, witness depositions as part of this inquiry were unclassified in nature, and all
15 open hearings will also be held at the unclassified level. Any information that may touch
16 on classified information will be addressed separately.

17 Second, Congress will not tolerate any reprisal, threat of reprisal, or attempt to
18 retaliate against any U.S. Government official for testifying before Congress, including you
19 or any of your colleagues.

20 If you would please rise, raise your right hand, I will begin by swearing you in.

21 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to give is the truth, the
22 whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

23 Let the record show that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

24 Thank you, and you may be seated.

25 The microphones are sensitive, so you'll need to speak directly into them.

1 Without objection, your written statements will be made part of the record.

2 With that, Mr. Holmes, you are now recognized for your opening statement, and
3 when you conclude, Dr. Hill, you'll be immediately recognized thereafter for your opening
4 statement.

5 Mr. Holmes. Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member
6 Nunes, and members of the committee.

7 My name is David Holmes, and I'm a career Foreign Service officer with the
8 Department of State. Since August 2017, I have been the Political Counselor at the
9 U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, Ukraine.

10 While it is an honor to appear before you today, I want to make clear that I did not
11 seek this opportunity to testify today. Since you determined that I may have something
12 of value to these proceedings and issued a subpoena, it is my obligation to appear and to
13 tell you what I know.

14 Indeed, as Secretary Pompeo has stated, I hope everyone who testifies will do so
15 truthfully and accurately. When they do, the oversight role will have been performed,
16 and I think America will come to see what took place here.

17 That is my only goal: to testify truthfully and accurately to enable you to
18 perform that role. And, to that end, I have put together this statement to lay out as best
19 I can my recollection of events that may be relevant to this matter.

20 By way of background, I have spent my entire professional career as a Foreign
21 Service officer. Like many of the dedicated public servants who have testified in these
22 proceedings, my entire career has been in the service of my country.

23 I'm a graduate of Pomona College in Claremont, California, and received degrees
24 in international affairs from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and from Princeton
25 University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

1 I joined the Foreign Service in 2002 through an apolitical, merit-based process
2 under the George W. Bush administration. And I have proudly served administrations of
3 both parties and worked for their appointees, both political and career.

4 Prior to my current post in Kyiv, Ukraine, I served in the Political and Economic
5 Sections at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, Russia. In Washington, I served on the
6 National Security Council staff as director for Afghanistan and as a special assistant to the
7 Under Secretary of State. My prior overseas assignments include New Delhi, India;
8 Kabul, Afghanistan; Bogota, Colombia; and Pristina, Kosovo.

9 As the Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, I lead the Political Section,
10 covering Ukraine's internal politics, foreign relations, and security policies, and I serve as
11 the senior policy and political advisor to the Ambassador.

12 The job of an embassy political counselor is to gather information about the host
13 country's political landscape, to report back to Washington, to represent U.S. policies to
14 foreign contacts, and to advise the Ambassador on policy development and
15 implementation.

16 In this role, I'm a senior member of the Embassy's country team and continually
17 involved in addressing issues as they arise. I'm also often called upon to take notes in
18 meetings involving the Ambassador or visiting senior U.S. officials with Ukrainian
19 counterparts. For this reason, I have been present in many of the meetings with
20 President Zelensky and his administration, some of which may be germane to this inquiry.

21 While I'm a political counselor at the Embassy, it is important to note that I am not
22 a political appointee or engaged in U.S. politics in any way. It is not my job to cover or
23 advise on U.S. politics. On the contrary, I'm an apolitical foreign policy professional, and
24 my job is to focus on the politics of the country in which I serve so that we can better
25 understand the local landscape and better advance U.S. national interests there.

1 In fact, during the period that we'll cover today, my colleagues and I followed
2 direct guidance from Ambassador Yovanovitch and Ambassador Taylor to focus on doing
3 our jobs as foreign policy professionals and to stay clear of Washington politics.

4 I arrived in Kyiv to take up my assignment as Political Counselor in August 2017, a
5 year after Ambassador Yovanovitch received her appointment. From August 2017 until
6 her removal from post in May 2019, I was Ambassador Yovanovitch's chief policy advisor
7 and developed a deep respect for her dedication, determination, decency, and
8 professionalism.

9 During this time, we worked together closely, speaking multiple times per day,
10 and I accompanied Ambassador Yovanovitch to many of her meetings with senior
11 Ukrainian counterparts.

12 Our work in Ukraine focused on three policy priorities: peace and security,
13 economic growth and reform, and anticorruption and rule of law. These policies
14 matched the three consistent priorities of the Ukrainian people since 2014, as measured
15 in public opinion polling -- namely, an end to the conflict with Russia that restores
16 national unity and territorial integrity, responsible economic policies that deliver
17 European standards of growth and opportunity, and effective and impartial rule-of-law
18 institutions that deliver justice in cases of high-level official corruption.

19 Our efforts on this third policy priority merit special mention because it was
20 during Ambassador Yovanovitch's tenure that we achieved the hard-fought passage of a
21 law establishing an independent court to try corruption cases. These efforts strained
22 Ambassador Yovanovitch's relationship with former President Poroshenko and some of
23 his allies, including Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko, who resisted fully empowering
24 truly independent anticorruption institutions that would help ensure that no Ukrainians,
25 however powerful, were above the law.

1 Despite this resistance, the Ambassador and the Embassy kept pushing
2 anticorruption and other priorities of our policy towards Ukraine.

3 Beginning in March 2019, the situation at the Embassy and in Ukraine changed
4 dramatically. Specifically, the three priorities of security, economy, and justice and our
5 support for Ukrainian democratic resistance to Russian aggression became overshadowed
6 by a political agenda promoted by former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and a cadre
7 of officials operating with a direct channel to the White House.

8 That change began with the emergence of press reports critical of Ambassador
9 Yovanovitch and machinations by then-Prosecutor General Lutsenko and others to
10 discredit her.

11 In mid-March 2019, an Embassy colleague learned from a Ukrainian contact that
12 Mr. Lutsenko had complained that Ambassador Yovanovitch had, quote, "destroyed him"
13 with her refusal to support him until he followed through with his reform commitments
14 and ceased using his position for personal gain.

15 In retaliation, Mr. Lutsenko made a series of unsupported allegations against
16 Ambassador Yovanovitch, mostly suggesting that Ambassador Yovanovitch improperly
17 used the Embassy to advance the political interests of the Democratic Party.

18 Among Mr. Lutsenko's allegations were that the Embassy had ordered the
19 investigation of a former Ukrainian official solely because that former official was
20 allegedly the main Ukrainian contact of the Republican Party and of President Trump
21 personally and that the Embassy had allegedly pressured Lutsenko's predecessor to close
22 a case against a different former Ukrainian official solely because of an alleged
23 connection between that official's company, Burisma, and former Vice President Biden's
24 son.

25 Mr. Lutsenko also claimed that he had never received \$4.4 million in U.S. funds

1 intended for his office and that there was a tape of a Ukrainian official saying that he was
2 trying to help Hillary Clinton win the 2016 election.

3 Finally, Mr. Lutsenko publicly claimed that Ambassador Yovanovitch had given him
4 a do-not-prosecute list containing the names of her supposed allies, an allegation the
5 State Department called an outright fabrication and that Mr. Lutsenko later retracted.

6 Mr. Lutsenko said that, as a result of these allegations, Ambassador Yovanovitch
7 would face serious problems in the United States.

8 Public opinion polls indicated the Ukrainians generally did not believe
9 Mr. Lutsenko's allegations. And on March 22nd, President Poroshenko issued a
10 statement in support of Ambassador Yovanovitch.

11 Following Mr. Lutsenko's allegations, Mr. Giuliani and others made a number of
12 public statements critical of Ambassador Yovanovitch, questioning her integrity and
13 calling for her removal from office. Mr. Giuliani was also making frequent public
14 statements pushing for Ukraine to investigate interference in a 2016 election and issues
15 related to Burisma and the Bidens.

16 For example, on May 1st, 2019, The New York Times reported that Mr. Giuliani
17 had, quote, "discussed the Burisma investigation and its intersection with the Bidens with
18 the ousted Ukrainian prosecutor general and the current prosecutor."

19 On May 9th, The New York Times reported that Mr. Giuliani said he planned to
20 travel to Ukraine to pursue investigations into the 2016 election interference and into the
21 involvement of former Vice President Biden's son in a Ukrainian gas company.

22 Over the next few months, Mr. Giuliani also issued a series of tweets asking,
23 quote, why Biden shouldn't be investigated; attacking, quote, the new President of
24 Ukraine, Zelensky, for being silent on the 2016 election and Biden investigations; and
25 complaining about The New York Times attacking him for, quote, exposing the Biden

1 family history of making millions from Ukrainian criminals.

2 Around this time, the Ukrainian Presidential election was approaching, and
3 political newcomer and entertainer Volodymyr Zelensky, who had played a president on
4 television, was surging in the polls, ahead of Mr. Lutsenko's political ally, President
5 Poroshenko.

6 On April 20th, I was present for Ambassador Yovanovitch's third and final meeting
7 with then-candidate Zelensky ahead of his landslide victory in the runoff election the next
8 day. As in her two prior meetings that I also attended, they had an entirely cordial,
9 pleasant conversation and signaled their mutual desire to work together.

10 However, the negative narratives about Ambassador Yovanovitch had gained
11 currency in certain segments of the United States press. And on April 26th, Ambassador
12 Yovanovitch departed for Washington, D.C., where she learned that she would be
13 recalled early.

14 The barrage of allegations directed at Ambassador Yovanovitch, a career
15 ambassador, is unlike anything I have seen in my professional career.

16 Following President-elect Zelensky's victory, our attention in the Embassy focused
17 on getting to know the incoming Zelensky administration and on preparations for the
18 inauguration scheduled for May 20th, the same day that Ambassador Yovanovitch
19 departed post permanently.

20 It quickly became clear that the White House was not prepared to show the level
21 of support for the Zelensky administration that we had originally anticipated. In early
22 May, Mr. Giuliani publicly alleged that Mr. Zelensky was, quote, "surrounded by enemies
23 of the U.S. President" and canceled a visit to Ukraine.

24 Shortly thereafter, we learned that Vice President Pence no longer planned to lead
25 the Presidential delegation to the inauguration. The White House then whittled down

1 an initial proposed list for the official Presidential delegation to the inauguration from
2 over a dozen individuals to just five: Secretary Perry, as its head; Special Representative
3 for Ukraine Negotiations Kurt Volker, representing the State Department; National
4 Security Council Director Alex Vindman, representing the White House; temporary Acting
5 Charge d'Affaires Joseph Pennington, representing the Embassy; and Ambassador to the
6 European Union Gordon Sondland.

7 While Ambassador Sondland's mandate as the accredited Ambassador to the
8 European Union did not cover individual member-states, let alone non-member countries
9 like Ukraine, he made clear that he had direct and frequent access to President Trump
10 and Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and portrayed himself as the conduit to the President
11 and Mr. Mulvaney for this group.

12 Secretary Perry, Ambassador Sondland, and Ambassador Volker later styled
13 themselves "the Three Amigos" and made clear they would take the lead on coordinating
14 our policy and engagement with the Zelensky administration.

15 Around the same time, I became aware that Mr. Giuliani, a private lawyer, was
16 taking a direct role in Ukrainian diplomacy. On April 25th, Ivan Bakanov, who was
17 Mr. Zelensky's childhood friend and campaign chair and was ultimately appointed the
18 head of the security services of Ukraine, indicated to me privately that he had been
19 contacted by, quote, "someone named Giuliani who said he was an advisor to the Vice
20 President." I reported Mr. Bakanov's message to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
21 George Kent.

22 Over the following months, it became apparent that Mr. Giuliani was having a
23 direct influence on the foreign policy agenda that the Three Amigos were executing on
24 the ground in Ukraine. In fact, at one point during a preliminary meeting of the
25 inaugural delegation, someone wondered aloud why Mr. Giuliani was so active in the

1 media with respect to Ukraine. My recollection is that Ambassador Sondland stated,
2 quote, "Dammit, Rudy. Every time Rudy gets involved, he goes and [F's] everything up."

3 The inauguration took place on May 20th, and I took notes in the delegation's
4 meeting with President Zelensky. During the meeting, Secretary Perry passed President
5 Zelensky a list that Perry described as, quote, "people he trusts." Secretary Perry told
6 President Zelensky that he could seek advice from the people on this list on issues of
7 energy-sector reform, which was the topic of subsequent meetings between Secretary
8 Perry and key Ukrainian energy-sector contacts. Embassy personnel were excluded
9 from some of these later meetings by Secretary Perry's staff.

10 On May 23rd, Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Sondland, Secretary Perry, and
11 Senator Ron Johnson, who had also attended the inauguration, though not on the official
12 delegation, returned to the United States and briefed President Trump. On May 29th,
13 President Trump signed a congratulatory letter to President Zelensky, which included an
14 invitation to visit the White House at an unspecified date.

15 It is important to understand that a White House visit was critical to President
16 Zelensky. President Zelensky needed to show U.S. support at the highest levels in order
17 to demonstrate to Russian President Putin that he had U.S. backing as well as to advance
18 his ambitious anticorruption reform agenda at home.

19 President Zelensky's team immediately began pressing to set a date for that visit.
20 President Zelensky and senior members of his team made clear that they wanted
21 President Zelensky's first overseas trip to be to Washington, to send a strong signal of
22 American support, and requested a call with President Trump as soon as possible.

23 We at the Embassy also believed that a meeting was critical to the success of
24 President Zelensky's administration and its reform agenda, and we worked hard to get it
25 arranged.

1 When President Zelensky's team did not receive a confirmed date for a White
2 House visit, they made alternative plans for President Zelensky's first overseas trip to be
3 to Brussels instead, in part to attend an American Independence Day event that
4 Ambassador Sondland hosted on June 4th. Ambassador Sondland hosted a dinner in
5 President Zelensky's honor following the reception, which included President Zelensky;
6 Jared Kushner; Secretary Pompeo's counselor, Ulrich Brechbuhl; senior European Union
7 officials; and comedian Jay Leno, among others.

8 Ambassador Bill Taylor arrived in Kyiv as Charge d'Affaires on June 17th. For the
9 next month, the focus of our activities, along with those of the Three Amigos, was to
10 coordinate a White House visit. To that end, we were working with the Ukrainians to
11 deliver things that we thought President Trump might care about, such as commercial
12 deals that would benefit the United States, which might convince President Trump to
13 agree to a meeting with President Zelensky.

14 The Ukrainian policy community was unanimous in recognizing the importance of
15 securing the meeting and President Trump's support. Ambassador Taylor reported that
16 Secretary Pompeo had told him prior to his arrival in Kyiv, quote, "We need to work on
17 turning the President around on Ukraine." Ambassador Volker told us that "the next
18 5 years could hang on what could be accomplished in the next 3 months." I took that to
19 mean that if we did not earn President Trump's support in the next 3 months, we could
20 lose the opportunity to make progress during President Zelensky's 5-year term.

21 Within a week or two, it became apparent that the energy-sector reforms, the
22 commercial deals, and the anticorruption efforts, on which we were making progress,
23 were not making a dent in terms of persuading the White House to schedule a meeting
24 between the Presidents.

25 On June 27th, Ambassador Sondland told Ambassador Taylor in a phone

1 conversation, the gist of which Ambassador Taylor shared with me at the time, that
2 President Zelensky needed to make clear to President Trump that President Zelensky was
3 not standing in the way of, quote, "investigations." I understood that this meant the
4 Biden/Burisma investigations that Mr. Giuliani and his associates had been speaking
5 about in the media since March.

6 While Ambassador Taylor did not brief me on every detail of his communications
7 with the Three Amigos, he did tell me that, on a June 28th call with President Zelensky,
8 Ambassador Taylor, and the Three Amigos, it was made clear that some action on
9 Burisma/Biden investigation was a precondition for an Oval Office visit.

10 Also on June 28th, while President Trump was still not moving forward on a
11 meeting with President Zelensky, we met with -- he met with Russian President Putin at
12 the G20 Summit in Osaka, Japan, sending a further signal of lack of support to Ukraine.

13 We became concerned that, even if a meeting between Presidents Trump and
14 Zelensky could occur, it would not go well, and I discussed with Embassy colleagues
15 whether we should stop seeking a meeting altogether. While the White House visit was
16 critical to the Zelensky administration, a visit that failed to send a clear and strong signal
17 of support likely would be worse for President Zelensky than no visit at all.

18 Congress has appropriated \$1.5 billion in security assistance for Ukraine since
19 2014. This assistance has provided crucial material and moral support to Ukraine in its
20 defensive war with Russia and has helped Ukraine build its armed forces virtually from
21 scratch into arguably the most capable and battle-hardened land force in Europe.

22 I have had the honor of visiting the main training facility in western Ukraine with
23 Members of Congress and members of this very committee -- Ms. Stefanik -- where we
24 witnessed firsthand U.S. National Guard troops, along with allies, conducting training for
25 Ukrainian soldiers. Since 2014, National Guard units from California, Oklahoma,

1 New York, Tennessee, and Wisconsin have trained shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukrainian
2 counterparts.

3 Given the history of U.S. security assistance to Ukraine and the bipartisan
4 recognition of its importance, I was shocked when, on July 18th, an Office of
5 Management and Budget staff member surprisingly announced the hold on Ukraine
6 security assistance.

7 The announcement came toward the end of a nearly 2-hour National Security
8 Council secure video conference call, which I participated in from the Embassy conference
9 room. The official said that the order had come from the President and had been
10 conveyed to OMB by Mr. Mulvaney with no further explanation.

11 This began a week or so of efforts by various agencies to identify the rationale for
12 the freeze, to conduct a review of the assistance, and to reaffirm the unanimous view of
13 the Ukraine policy community of its importance. NSC counterparts confirmed to us that
14 there had been no change in our Ukrainian policy but could not determine the cause of
15 the hold or how to lift it.

16 On July 25th, President Trump made a congratulatory phone call to President
17 Zelensky after his party won a commanding majority in Ukraine's parliamentary election.
18 Contrary to standard procedure, the Embassy received no readout of that call, and I was
19 unaware of what was discussed until the transcript was released on September 25th.

20 Upon reading the transcript, I was deeply disappointed to see that the President
21 raised none of what I understood to be our interagency agreed-upon foreign policy
22 priorities in Ukraine and, instead, raised the Biden/Burisma investigation and referred to
23 the theory about CrowdStrike and its supposed connection to Ukraine and the 2016
24 election.

25 The next day, July 26th, 2019, I attended meetings at the Presidential

1 Administration Building in Kyiv with Ambassador Taylor, Ambassador Volker, Ambassador
2 Sondland, and I took notes during those meetings.

3 Our first meeting was with President Zelensky's chief of staff. It was brief, as he
4 had already been summoned by President Zelensky to prepare for a subsequent broader
5 meeting. But he did say that President Trump had expressed interest during the
6 previous day's phone call in President Zelensky's personnel decisions related to the
7 Prosecutor General's office.

8 The delegation then met with President Zelensky and several other senior officials.
9 During the meeting, President Zelensky stated that, during the July 25th call, President
10 Trump had, quote, "three times raised some very sensitive issues" and that he would
11 have to follow up -- he, Zelensky -- would have to follow up on those issues when he and
12 President Trump met in person. Not having received a readout of the July 25th call, I did
13 not know at the time what those sensitive issues were.

14 After the meeting with President Zelensky, Ambassador Volker and Ambassador
15 Taylor quickly left the Presidential Administration Building for a trip to the front lines.
16 Ambassador Sondland, who was to fly out that afternoon, stayed behind to have a
17 meeting with Andriy Yermak, a top aide to President Zelensky.

18 As I was leaving the meeting with President Zelensky, I was told to join the
19 meeting with Ambassador Sondland and Mr. Yermak to take notes. I had not expected
20 to join that meeting and was a flight of stairs behind Ambassador Sondland as he headed
21 to meet with Mr. Yermak. When I reached Mr. Yermak's office, Ambassador Sondland
22 had already gone in to the meeting. I explained to Mr. Yermak's assistant that I was
23 supposed to join the meeting as the Embassy's representative and strongly urged her to
24 let me in, but she told me that Ambassador Sondland and Mr. Yermak had insisted that
25 the meeting be one-on-one with no note-taker.

1 I then waited in the anteroom until the meeting ended, along with a member of
2 Ambassador Sondland's staff and a member of the U.S. Embassy Kyiv staff.

3 When the meeting ended, the two staffers and I accompanied Ambassador
4 Sondland out of the Presidential Administration Building. Ambassador Sondland said
5 that he wanted to go to lunch, and I told Ambassador Sondland that I'd be happy to join
6 him and the two staffers for lunch if he wanted to brief me out on his meeting with Mr.
7 Yermak or discuss other issues, and Ambassador Sondland said that I should join.

8 The four of us went to a nearby restaurant and sat on an outdoor terrace. I sat
9 directly across from Ambassador Sondland, and the two staffers sat off to our sides. At
10 first, the lunch was largely social. Ambassador Sondland selected a bottle of wine that
11 he shared among the four of us, and we discussed topics such as marketing strategies for
12 his hotel business.

13 During the lunch, Ambassador Sondland said that he was going to call President
14 Trump to give him an update. Ambassador Sondland placed a call on his mobile phone,
15 and I heard him announce himself several times, along the lines of, "Gordon Sondland,
16 holding for the President." It appeared that he was being transferred through several
17 layers of switchboards and assistants, and I then noticed Ambassador Sondland's
18 demeanor changed and understood that he had been connected to President Trump.

19 While Ambassador Sondland's phone was not on speakerphone, I could hear the
20 President's voice through the earpiece of the phone. The President's voice was loud and
21 recognizable, and Ambassador Sondland held the phone away from his ear for a period of
22 time, presumably because of the loud volume.

23 I heard Ambassador Sondland greet the President and explain he was calling from
24 Kyiv. I heard President Trump then clarify that Ambassador Sondland was in Ukraine.
25 Ambassador Sondland replied, yes, he was in Ukraine, and went on to state that President

1 Zelensky, quote, "loves your ass."

2 I then heard President Trump ask, "So he's going to do the investigation?"

3 Ambassador Sondland replied that he is going to do it, adding that President Zelensky will
4 do "anything you ask him to do."

5 Even though I did not take notes of these statements, I have a clear recollection
6 that these statements were made. I believe that my colleagues who were sitting at the
7 table also knew that Ambassador Sondland was speaking with the President.

8 The conversation then shifted to Ambassador Sondland's efforts on behalf of the
9 President to assist a rapper who was jailed in Sweden, and I could only hear Ambassador
10 Sondland's side of the conversation. Ambassador Sondland told the President that the
11 rapper was, quote, "kind of [F'ed] there" and should have pled guilty. He recommended
12 that the President, quote, "wait until after the sentencing or it will only make it worse."
13 And he added that the President should "let him get sentenced, play the racism card, give
14 him a ticker-tape when he comes home."

15 Ambassador Sondland further told the President that Sweden, quote, "should've
16 released him on your word," but that "you can tell the Kardashians that you tried."

17 After the call ended, Ambassador Sondland remarked that the President was in a
18 bad mood, as Ambassador Sondland stated was often the case early in the morning.

19 I then took the opportunity to ask Ambassador Sondland for his candid impression
20 of the President's views on Ukraine. In particular, I asked Ambassador Sondland if it was
21 true that the President did not give a [expletive] about Ukraine. Ambassador Sondland
22 agreed that the President did not give a [expletive] about Ukraine.

23 I asked, why not? And Ambassador Sondland stated that the President only
24 cares about "big stuff." I noted there was big stuff going on in Ukraine, like a war with
25 Russia. And Ambassador Sondland replied that he met big stuff that benefits the

1 President, like the Biden investigation that Mr. Giuliani was pushing. And the
2 conversation then moved on to other topics.

3 Upon return to the Embassy, I immediately briefed my direct supervisor, the
4 Deputy Chief of Mission, about Ambassador Sondland's call with President Trump and my
5 subsequent conversation with Ambassador Sondland. I told others at the Embassy
6 about the call as well. I also emailed an embassy official in Sweden regarding the issue
7 with the U.S. rapper that was discussed on the call.

8 July 26 was my last day in the office, ahead of a long-planned vacation that ended
9 on August 6th. After returning to the Embassy, I told Ambassador Taylor about the
10 July 26th call. I also repeatedly referred to the call and the conversation with
11 Ambassador Sondland in meetings and conversations where the issue of the President's
12 interest in Ukraine was potentially relevant.

13 At that time, Ambassador Sondland's statement to the President -- statement of
14 the President's lack of interest in Ukraine was a particular focus. We understood that, in
15 order to secure a meeting between President Trump and President Zelensky, we would
16 have to work hard to find a way to explain Ukraine's importance to President Trump in
17 terms that he found compelling.

18 Over the ensuing weeks, we continued to try to identify ways to frame the
19 importance of Ukraine in ways that would appeal to the President, to determine how to
20 lift the hold on security assistance, and to move forward on the scheduling of a White
21 House visit by President Zelensky.

22 Ukrainian independence day, August 24th, presented another good opportunity to
23 show support for Ukraine. Secretary Pompeo had considered attending, as National
24 Security Advisor Bolton had attended in 2018 and Defense Secretary Mattis had attended
25 in 2017. But, in the end, nobody senior to Ambassador Volker attended.

1 Shortly thereafter, on August 27th, Ambassador Bolton visited Ukraine and
2 brought welcome news that President Trump had agreed to meet President Zelensky on
3 September 1st in Warsaw. Ambassador Bolton further indicated that the hold on
4 security assistance would not be lifted prior to the Warsaw meeting, where it would hang
5 on whether President Zelensky was able to, quote, "favorably impress President Trump."

6 I took notes in Ambassador Bolton's meetings that day with President Zelensky
7 and his chief of staff. Ambassador Bolton told Zelensky's chief of staff that the meeting
8 between the Presidents in Warsaw would be, quote, "crucial to cementing their
9 relationship."

10 However, President Trump ultimately pulled out of the Warsaw trip, so the hold
11 remained in place, with no clear means to get it lifted.

12 Between the meetings on August 27th, I heard Ambassador Bolton express to
13 Ambassador Taylor and National Security Council Senior Director Tim Morrison his
14 frustration about Mr. Giuliani's influence with the President, making clear there was
15 nothing he could do about it. He recommended that Mr. Lutsenko's replacement as
16 Prosecutor General open a channel with his counterpart, Attorney General Barr, in place
17 of the informal channel between Mr. Yermak and Mr. Giuliani.

18 Ambassador Bolton also expressed frustration about Ambassador Sondland's
19 expansive interpretation of his mandate.

20 After President Trump canceled his visit to Warsaw, we continued to try to appeal
21 to the President in foreign policy and national security terms. To that end, Ambassador
22 Taylor told me that Ambassador Bolton recommended that he, Ambassador Taylor, send
23 a first-person cable to Secretary Pompeo articulating the importance of the security
24 assistance.

25 At Ambassador Taylor's direction, I drafted and transmitted the cable on

1 Ambassador Taylor's behalf on August 29th, which further attempted to explain the
2 importance of Ukraine and the security assistance to U.S. national security.

3 By this point, however, my clear impression was that the security assistance hold
4 was likely intended by the President either as an expression of dissatisfaction with the
5 Ukrainians, who had not yet agreed to the Burisma/Biden investigation, or as an effort to
6 increase the pressure on them to do so.

7 On September 5th, I took notes at Senator Johnson and Senator Chris Murphy's
8 meetings with President Zelensky in Kyiv, where President Zelensky asked about the
9 security assistance. Although both Senators stressed strong, bipartisan congressional
10 support for Ukraine, Senator Johnson cautioned President Zelensky that President Trump
11 has a negative view of Ukraine and that President Zelensky would have a difficult time
12 overcoming it.

13 Senator Johnson further explained that he had been, quote, "shocked" by
14 President Trump's negative reaction during an Oval Office meeting on May 23rd, when he
15 and the Three Amigos proposed that President Trump meet President Zelensky and show
16 support for Ukraine.

17 On September 8th, Ambassador Taylor told me, quote, "Now they're insisting
18 Zelensky commit to the investigation in an interview with CNN," which I took to refer to
19 those Three Amigos.

20 I was shocked the requirement was so specific and concrete. While we had
21 advised our Ukrainian counterparts to voice a commitment to following the rule of law
22 and generally investigating credible corruption allegations, this was a demand that
23 President Zelensky personally commit on a cable news channel to a specific investigation
24 of President Trump's political rival.

25 On September 11th, the hold was finally lifted, after significant press coverage and

1 bipartisan congressional expressions of concern about the withholding of security
2 assistance.

3 Although we knew the hold was lifted, we were still concerned that President
4 Zelensky had committed, in exchange for the lifting, to give the requested CNN interview.
5 We had several indications that the interview would occur.

6 First, the YES conference in Kyiv was held from September 12th to 14th, and
7 CNN's Fareed Zakaria was one of the moderators.

8 Second, on September 13th, an Embassy colleague received a phone call from
9 another colleague who worked for Ambassador Sondland. My colleague texted me
10 regarding that call that, quote, "Sondland and the Zelensky interview" -- "Sondland said
11 the Zelensky interview is supposed to be today or Monday, and they plan to announce
12 that a certain investigation that was 'on hold' will progress." My colleague said he did
13 not know if this was decided or if Sondland was advocating for it. Apparently he's been
14 discussing this with Yermak.

15 Finally, also on September 13th, Ambassador Taylor and I ran into Mr. Yermak on
16 our way out of a meeting with President Zelensky in his private office. Ambassador
17 Taylor again stressed the importance of staying out of U.S. politics and said he hoped no
18 interview was planned. Mr. Yermak did not answer but shrugged in resignation, as if to
19 indicate that he had no choice.

20 In short, everybody thought there was going to be an interview and that the
21 Ukrainians believed they had to do it.

22 The interview ultimately did not occur.

23 On September 21st, Ambassador Taylor and I collaborated on input he sent to Mr.
24 Morrison to brief President Trump ahead of a September 25th meeting that had been
25 scheduled with President Zelensky in New York on the margins of the U.N. General

1 Assembly. The transcript of the July 25th call was released the same day. As of today,
2 I have still not seen a readout of the September 25th meeting.

3 As the impeachment inquiry has progressed, I have followed press reports and
4 reviewed the statements of Ambassadors Taylor and Yovanovitch. Based on my
5 experiences in Ukraine, my recollection is generally consistent with their testimony, and I
6 believed that the relevant facts were therefore being laid out for the American people.

7 However, in the last couple weeks, I read press reports expressing for the first
8 time that certain senior officials may have been acting without the President's knowledge
9 or freelancing in their dealings with Ukraine. At the same time, I also read reports
10 noting the lack of firsthand evidence in the investigation and suggesting that the only
11 evidence being elicited at the hearings was hearsay.

12 I came to realize that I had firsthand knowledge regarding certain events on
13 July 26 that had not otherwise been reported and that those events potentially bore on
14 the question of whether the President did, in fact, have knowledge that those senior
15 officials were using the levers of diplomatic power to influence the new Ukrainian
16 President to announce the opening of a criminal investigation against President Trump's
17 political opponent.

18 It is at that point that I made the observation to Ambassador Taylor that the
19 incident I had witnessed on July 26th had acquired greater significance, which is what he
20 reported in his testimony last week and is what led to the subpoena for me to appear
21 here today.

22 In conclusion, I'd like to take a moment to turn back to Ukraine. Today, this very
23 day, marks exactly 6 years since throngs of pro-Western Ukrainians spontaneously
24 gathered on Kyiv's Independence Square to launch what became known as the Revolution
25 of Dignity. While the protests began in opposition to a turn towards Russia and away

1 from the West, they expanded over 3 months to reject the entire corrupt, repressive
2 system that had been sustained by Russian influence in the country.

3 Those events were followed by Russia's occupation of Ukraine's Crimean
4 Peninsula, an invasion of Ukraine's Eastern Donbas region, and an ensuing war that, to
5 date, has cost almost 14,000 lives.

6 Despite the Russian aggression, over the past 5 years, Ukrainians have rebuilt a
7 shattered economy, adhered to a peace process, and moved economically and socially
8 closer to the West, toward our way of life.

9 Earlier this year, large majorities of Ukrainians again chose a fresh start by voting
10 for a political newcomer as President, replacing 80 percent of their parliament, endorsing
11 a platform consistent with our democratic values, our reform priorities, and our strategic
12 interests.

13 This year's revolution at the ballot box underscores that, despite its imperfections,
14 Ukraine is a genuine and vibrant democracy and an example to other post-Soviet
15 countries and beyond, from Moscow to Hong Kong.

16 How we respond to this historic opportunity will set the trajectory of our
17 relationship with Ukraine and will define our willingness to defend our bedrock
18 international principles and our leadership role in the world.

19 Ukrainians want to hear a clear and unambiguous reaffirmation that our
20 longstanding, bipartisan policy of strong support for Ukraine remains unchanged and that
21 we fully back it at the highest levels. Now is not the time to retreat from our
22 relationship with Ukraine but, rather, to double-down on it.

23 As we sit here today, Ukrainians are fighting a hot war on Ukrainian territory
24 against Russian aggression. This week alone, since I have been here in Washington, two
25 Ukrainian soldiers were killed and two injured by Russian-led forces in eastern Ukraine

1 despite a declared cease-fire. I learned overnight that seven more were injured
2 yesterday.

3 As Vice President Pence said after his meeting with President Zelensky in Warsaw,
4 the U.S.-Ukraine relationship has never been stronger. Ukrainians and their new
5 government earnestly want to believe that. Ukrainians cherish their bipartisan
6 American support that has sustained their Euro-Atlantic aspirations, and they recoil at the
7 thought of playing a role in U.S. domestic politics or elections.

8 At a time of shifting allegiances and rising competitors in the world, we have no
9 better friend than Ukraine -- a scrappy, unbowed, determined, and, above all, dignified
10 people who are standing up against Russian authoritarianism and aggression. They
11 deserve better.

12 We're now at a inflection point in Ukraine, and it is critical to our national security
13 that we stand in strong support of our Ukrainian partners. Ukrainians and
14 freedom-loving people everywhere are watching the example we set here of democracy
15 and the rule of law.

16 Thank you.

17 [The statement of Mr. Holmes follows:]

18

19 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1 RPTR MERTENS

2 EDTR HUMKE

3 [10:07 p.m.]

4 The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Holmes.

5 Dr. Hill.

6 Ms. Hill. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Do you want me to adjust the microphone?

7 The Chairman. Is the microphone on?

8 Ms. Hill. I believe it is now. Is that right?

9 The Chairman. Yes. Perfect.

10 Ms. Hill. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

11 Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Nunes, and members of the committee, thank

12 you for inviting me to testify before you today. I have a short opening statement.

13 I appreciate the importance of Congress' impeachment inquiry, and I'm appearing
14 today as a fact witness as I did during my deposition on October 14th in order to answer
15 your questions about what I saw, what I did, what I knew, and what I know with regard to
16 the subjects of your inquiry. I believe that those who have information that the
17 Congress deems relevant have a legal and a moral obligation to provide it.

18 I take great pride in the fact that I'm a nonpartisan foreign policy expert who has
19 served under three Republican and Democratic Presidents. I have no interest in
20 advancing the outcome of your inquiry in any particular direction except toward the
21 truth. I will not provide a long narrative statement because I believe that the interests
22 of Congress and the American people is best served by allowing you to ask me your
23 questions. And I'm happy to expand upon my October 14th deposition testimony in
24 response to your questions today.

25 But before I do so, I'd like to communicate two things. First, I'd like to share a

1 little bit about who I am. I'm an American by choice. I became a citizen in 2002. I
2 was born in the northeast of England in the same region that George Washington's
3 ancestors came from. Both my region and my family have deep ties to the United
4 States.

5 My paternal grandfather fought through World War I in the Royal field artillery,
6 surviving being shot, shelled, and gassed before American troops intervened to end the
7 war in 1918. During the second World War, other members of my family fought to
8 defend the free world from fascism alongside American soldiers, sailors, and airmen.

9 The men in my father's family were coal miners. His family has always struggled
10 with poverty. When my father Alfred was 14, he joined his father, brothers, brother,
11 uncles, and cousins in the coal mines to help put food on the table. When the last of the
12 local mines closed in the 1960s, my father wanted to emigrate to the United States to
13 work in the coal mines in West Virginia and Pennsylvania, but his mother, my
14 grandmother, had been crippled from hard labor, and my father couldn't leave, so he
15 stayed in northern England until he died in 2012. My mother still lives in my hometown
16 today.

17 While his dream of emigrating to America was thwarted, my father loved America,
18 its culture, its history, and its role as a beacon of hope for the world. He always wanted
19 someone in the family to make it to the United States. I began my university studies in
20 1984, and I just learned that I went to the same university as my colleague here,
21 Mr. Holmes, in St Andrews in Scotland. I just thought I would add that.

22 And in 1987, I won a place in an academic exchange to the Soviet Union. I was
23 there for the signing of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces or INF Treaty, and when
24 President Ronald Reagan met Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, in Moscow, this is a
25 turning point for me. An American professor who I met there told me about graduate

1 student scholarships to the United States, and the very next year, thanks to his advice, I
2 arrived in America to start my advanced studies at Harvard.

3 Years later, I can say with confidence that this country has offered me
4 opportunities I never would have had in England. I grew up poor with a very distinctive
5 working class accent. In England in the 1980s and 1990s, this would have impeded my
6 professional advancement. This background has never set me back in America.

7 For the best part of three decades, I have built a career as a nonpartisan,
8 nonpolitical national security professional focusing on Europe and Eurasia and especially
9 the former Soviet Union. I've served our country under three Presidents, in my most
10 recent capacity under President Trump, as well as in my former position under -- and in
11 my former position as National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia under
12 Presidents George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. In that role, I was the intelligence
13 community's senior expert on Russia and the former Soviet Republics including Ukraine.

14 It was because of my background and experience that I was asked to join the
15 National Security Council in 2017. At the NSC, Russia was part of my portfolio, but I was
16 also responsible for coordinating U.S. policy for all of western Europe, all of eastern
17 Europe, including Ukraine and Turkey, along with NATO and the European Union. I was
18 hired initially by General Michael Flynn, K.T. McFarland, and General Keith Kellogg, but
19 then I started working April 2017 when General McMaster was the National Security
20 Advisor.

21 I, and they, thought that I could help them with President Trump's stated goal of
22 improving relations with Russia while still implementing policies designed to deter
23 Russian conduct that threatens the United States, including the unprecedented and
24 successful Russian operation to interfere in the 2016 presidential election.

25 This relates the second thing I want to communicate. Based on questions and

1 statements I have heard, some of you on this committee appear to believe that Russia
2 and its security services did not conduct a campaign against our country and that
3 perhaps, somehow for some reason, Ukraine did. This is a fictional narrative that is
4 being perpetrated and propagated by the Russian security services themselves.

5 The unfortunate truth is that Russia was the foreign power that systematically
6 attacked our democratic institutions in 2016. This is the public conclusion of our
7 intelligence agencies confirmed in bipartisan and congressional reports. It is beyond
8 dispute, even if some of the underlying details must remain classified.

9 The impacts of the successful 2016 Russian campaign remains evident today.
10 Our Nation is being torn apart. Truth is questioned. Our highly professional, expert
11 career Foreign Service is being undermined. U.S. support for Ukraine which continues
12 to face armed Russian aggression is being politicized. The Russian Government's goal is
13 to weaken our country, to diminish America's global role, and to neutralize a perceived
14 U.S. threat to Russian interests.

15 President Putin and the Russian security services aim to counter U.S. foreign policy
16 objectives in Europe, including in Ukraine, where Moscow wishes to reassert political and
17 economic dominance. I say this not as an alarmist but as a realist. I do not think
18 long-term conflict with Russia is either desirable or inevitable. I continue to believe that
19 we need to seek ways of stabilizing our relationship with Moscow even as we counter
20 their efforts to harm us.

21 Right now, Russia's security services and their proxies have geared up to repeat
22 their interference in the 2020 election. We are running out of time to stop them.

23 In the course of this investigation, I would ask that you please not promote
24 politically-driven falsehoods that so clearly advance Russian interests. As Republicans
25 and Democrats have agreed for decades, Ukraine is a valued partner of the United States,

1 and it plays an important role in our national security. And as I told the committee last
2 month, I refuse to be part of an effort to legitimize an alternate narrative that the
3 Ukrainian Government is a U.S. adversary and that Ukraine, not Russia, attacked us in
4 2016. These fictions are harmful even if they're deployed for purely domestic political
5 purposes.

6 President Putin and the Russian security services operate like a Super PAC. They
7 deploy millions of dollars to weaponize our own political opposition research and false
8 narratives. When we are consumed by partisan rancor, we cannot combat these
9 external forces as they seek to divide us against each other, degrade our institutions, and
10 destroy the faith of the American people in our democracy.

11 I respect the work that this Congress does in carrying out its constitutional
12 responsibilities, including this inquiry, and I am here to help you to the best of my ability.
13 If the President or anyone else impedes or subverts the national security of the United
14 States in order to further domestic, political, or personal interests, that's more than
15 worthy of your attention. But we must not let domestic politics stop us from defending
16 ourselves against the foreign powers who truly wish us harm.

17 I'm ready to respond to your questions. Thank you.

18 [The statement of Ms. Hill follows:]

19

20 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1 The Chairman. Thank you, Dr. Hill. We'll now proceed to the first round of
2 questions. As detailed in the memo provided to committee members, there will be
3 45 minutes of questions conducted by the chairman or majority counsel followed by
4 45 minutes for the ranking member or minority counsel.

5 Following that, unless I specify, additional equal time for extended questioning
6 will proceed under the 5-minute rule, and every member will have a chance to ask
7 questions. I now recognize myself or majority counsel for the first round of questions.

8 First of all, thank you both for being here. Thank you for testifying. Dr. Hill,
9 your story reminds me a great deal of what we heard from Alexander Vindman. The few
10 immigrant stories that we have heard just in the course of these hearings are among the
11 most powerful, I think, I've ever heard. You and Dr. -- and Colonel Vindman and others
12 are the best of this country, and you came here by choice, and we are so blessed that you
13 did, so welcome.

14 My colleagues took some umbrage with your opening statement, but I think the
15 American people can be forgiven if they have the same impression listening to some of
16 the statements of my colleagues during this hearing that Russia didn't intervene in our
17 election, it was all the Ukrainians. There's an effort to take a tweet here and an op ed
18 there and a newspaper story here and somehow equate it with the systemic intervention
19 that our intelligence agencies found that Russia perpetrated in 2016 through an extensive
20 social media campaign and a hacking and dumping operation.

21 Indeed, the report my colleagues gave you that they produced during the
22 investigation calls into question the accuracy of the Intelligence Committee's finding that
23 Russia intervened to help one side, to help Donald Trump at the expense of Hillary
24 Clinton. No one in the Intelligence Community questions that finding, nor does the FBI,
25 nor does the Senate bipartisan Intelligence Committee report, nor does the minority

1 committee report of this committee. The House Republican report is an outlier.

2 But let me ask you, Dr. Hill, about your concern with that Russian narrative, that it
3 wasn't the Russians that engaged in interfering in the election of 2016, and, of course,
4 this was given a boost when President Trump in Helsinki in the presence of Putin said that
5 he questioned his own intelligence agencies. But why are the Russians pushing that
6 narrative that it was Ukraine? How does that serve Russian interests?

7 Ms. Hill. The Russians' interest, frankly, is to delegitimize our entire presidency.
8 So one issue that I do want to raise, and I think that this would resonate with our
9 colleagues on the committee from the Republican party, is that the goal of the Russians
10 was really to put whoever became the President, by trying to tip their hands on one side
11 of the scale, under a cloud. So if Secretary, former First Lady, former Senator Clinton
12 had been elected as President as, indeed, many expected in the run up prior to the
13 election in 2016, she too would have had major questions about her legitimacy.

14 And I think that, you know, what we're seeing here as a result of all of these
15 narratives is this is exactly what the Russian Government was hoping for. They seed
16 misinformation. They seed doubt. They have everybody questioning the legitimacy of
17 a presidential candidate, be it President Trump or potentially President Clinton, that they
18 would pit one side of our electorate against the other, that they would pit one party
19 against the other.

20 And that's why I wanted to make such a strong point at the very beginning
21 because there were certainly individuals in many other countries who had harsh words
22 for both of the candidates, who had harsh words for many of the candidates during the
23 primaries. We had a lot of people who were running for President on the Republican
24 side. There were many people who were trying themselves to game the outcome.

25 As you know, in the United Kingdom, the bookies take bets. You can go to Live

1 Brooks or William Hill and lay a bet on who you think is going to be the candidate. So
2 the Russian Government was trying to land their own bets, but what they wanted to do
3 was give a spread. They wanted to make sure that whoever they had bet on, whoever
4 they had tried to tip the scales would also experience some discomfort, that they would
5 beholden to them in some way, that they would create just the kind of chaos that we
6 have seen in our politics.

7 So I just want to again emphasize that we need to be very careful as we discuss all
8 of these issues not to give them more fodder that they can use against us in 2020.

9 The Chairman. I quite agree. There's an additional benefit, and I think you're
10 absolutely right. The Russians are equal opportunity meddlers. They will not only help
11 one side, but they'll also just seek to sow discord in the United States along ethnic lines,
12 religious lines, geographic lines. But there's also a benefit now, isn't there, for Russia to
13 put the blame on Ukraine, to cast doubt on whether they intervened at all in our election
14 and blame it on a U.S. ally as a way of driving a wedge between the U.S. and Ukraine.
15 Isn't that true?

16 Ms. Hill. Well, that's absolutely the case. And, in fact, you just made the point
17 about U.S. allies. The Russians like to put a lot of blame on U.S. allies for incidents that
18 they have perpetrated. We saw that recently with the United Kingdom and the Russian
19 secret service's attack on a former spy, Mr. Skripal, and his daughter in Salisbury in
20 England where you may recall that the Russians actually accused the British Government
21 of perpetrating this themselves.

22 So this falls into a long pattern of deflection and of the Russian Government trying
23 to pin the blame on someone else. And as my colleague, Mr. Holmes here, has laid out,
24 the Russians have a particular vested interest in putting Ukraine, and Ukrainians, and
25 Ukrainian leaders in a very bad light.

1 All of the issues that we started to discuss today and that you on committee have
2 been deeply involved in began with Russia's illegal unaccession of the peninsula of Crimea
3 from Ukraine in 2014 in response, and in 2015, and all of the different acts of aggression
4 that Russia has engaged in since starting the war in Donbass, shooting down Russian
5 operatives, a plane, an MH-17 over the Donbass at a later period. There is a great deal
6 of hostility and maligned intent towards Ukraine, and it suits the Russian Government
7 very much if we are also looking at Ukraine as somehow a perpetrator of maligned acts
8 against us.

9 The Chairman. Thank you.

10 Mr. Holmes, I want to ask you a quick couple of questions. And I guess often is
11 the case for people, you know, I was obviously at your deposition. I read your opening
12 testimony, but as you learn more facts, you start to see things in a different light even
13 though your opening statement is very much consistent with your opening statement
14 during the deposition, and I was struck in particular by something you said on page 10 of
15 your opening statement. While we had advised our Ukranian counterparts to voice a
16 commitment to following the rule of law and generally investigating credible corruption
17 allegations, this was a demand that President Zelensky personally commit on a cable
18 news channel to a specific investigation of President Trump's political rival.

19 This gets to a point I made at the close of our hearing yesterday about hypocrisy.
20 Here we are, and we are urging Ukranians to commit to following the rule of law, as you
21 said, and only investigate genuine and credible allegations. And what are we doing?
22 We're asking them to investigate the President's political rival.

23 Ukranians are pretty sophisticated actors, aren't they? They can recognize
24 hypocrisy when they see it. What does that do to our anticorruption efforts when the
25 Ukranians perceive that we're engaging in corruption ourselves?

1 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. So our longstanding policy is to encourage them to
2 establish and build rule of law institutions that are capable and that are independent and
3 that can actually pursue credible allegations. That's our policy. We've been doing that
4 for quite some time with some success. So focusing on particularly cases, including
5 particular cases where there is an interest of the President, it's just not part of what
6 we've done. It's hard to explain why we would do that.

7 The Chairman. Well, it harkens back to the conversation Ambassador Volker
8 testified about when he urged Ukraine not to investigate or prosecute Poroshenko, and
9 the reply from Mr. Yermak was oh, you mean like you want us to do with the Bidens and
10 the Clintons. They're sophisticated enough actors to recognize when we're saying do as
11 we say, not as we do. Are they not?

12 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

13 The Chairman. You also in your testimony, and I was struck by this anew today,
14 when even after the aid is lifted, Ukraine still felt pressure to make these statements.
15 And you and Ambassador Taylor were worried that they were going to do it on CNN.
16 And you said that Ambassador Taylor again stressed the importance of staying out of U.S.
17 politics and said he hoped no interview was planned.

18 Mr. Yermak did not answer but shrugged in resignation, as if to indicate that they
19 had no choice. In short, everyone thought there was going to be an interview and that
20 the Ukrainians believed they had to do it.

21 You're acknowledging, I think, Mr. Holmes, are you not, that Ukraine very much
22 felt pressured to undertake these investigations that the President, Rudy Giuliani, and
23 Ambassador Sondland, and others were demanding?

24 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. And although the hold on the security assistance may
25 have been lifted, there were still things they wanted that they weren't getting, including a

1 meeting with the President in the Oval Office. Whether the hold -- the security
2 assistance hold continued or not, Ukrainians understood that that's something the
3 President wanted, and they still wanted important things from the President.

4 And I think that continues to this day. I think they're being very careful. They
5 still need us now going forward. In fact, right now, President Zelensky is trying to
6 arrange a summit meeting with President Putin in the coming weeks, his first face-to-face
7 meeting with him to try to advance the peace process. He needs our support. He
8 needs President Putin to understand that America supports Zelensky at the highest levels.
9 So this doesn't end with the lifting of the security assistance hold. Ukraine still needs us,
10 and as I said, still fighting this war this very day.

11 The Chairman. Well, and I would underscore again as my colleague did so
12 eloquently, they got caught. That's the reason the aid was finally lifted.

13 Mr. Goldman.

14 Mr. Goldman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Good morning to both of you. Yesterday we heard testimony from Ambassador
16 Gordon Sondland from the European Union who testified that President Trump wanted
17 Ukraine to announce the investigations into the Bidens and Burisma and the 2016
18 elections because they would benefit him politically and that he used the leverage of that
19 White House meeting and the security assistance to pressure President Zelensky to do so.

20 Dr. Hill, you testified, I believe, that in mid-June, Ambassador Sondland told you
21 that he was in charge of Ukraine policy. Is that right?

22 Ms. Hill. That's correct, sir. Yes.

23 Mr. Goldman. Who did he tell you had put him in charge of Ukraine policy?

24 Ms. Hill. He told me it was the President.

25 Mr. Goldman. Mr. Holmes, did you also understand that Ambassador Sondland

1 had been given some authority over Ukraine policy from the President?

2 Mr. Holmes. We understood that he had been told to work with Mr. Giuliani.

3 Mr. Goldman. And did he hold himself out as having direct contact and
4 knowledge of the President's priorities and interests?

5 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

6 Mr. Goldman. Now, Mr. Holmes, I'm going to go to that July 26th date when you
7 overheard the conversation between Ambassador Sondland and President Trump, and
8 I'm going to ask you a little bit about the lead up to that conversation.

9 Before the lunch that you described, you said that you accompanied Ambassadors
10 Sondland, Volker, and Taylor to a meeting with President Zelensky. Is that right?

11 Mr. Holmes. That's correct.

12 Mr. Goldman. And you took notes at that meeting?

13 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

14 Mr. Goldman. And you reviewed those notes before you came here to testify
15 today?

16 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

17 Mr. Goldman. And they were helpful to refresh your recollection as to what
18 happened. Is that right?

19 Mr. Holmes. Sure. Yes.

20 Mr. Goldman. During that meeting, President Zelensky said that on his phone
21 call with President Trump the previous day that three times, President Trump had
22 mentioned sensitive issues. Did you understand what President Zelensky was referring
23 to when he said the sensitive issues?

24 Mr. Holmes. I couldn't be sure what he was referring to until I later read the
25 transcript of the July 25th call, but I was aware of various contacts between the Three

1 Amigos and his government about this set of issues.

2 Mr. Goldman. And after you read the call, what did you determine to be the
3 sensitive issues that President Zelensky referenced?

4 Mr. Holmes. The Burisma Biden investigation.

5 Mr. Goldman. After this meeting with President Zelensky, you testified that
6 Ambassador Sondland had a one on one meeting with Andriy Yermak, a top aide to
7 Zelensky, and that you were prohibited from going into that meeting to take notes. Is
8 that right?

9 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

10 Mr. Goldman. And yesterday, Ambassador Sondland testified that he probably
11 discussed the investigations with Mr. Yermak. Did Ambassador Sondland tell you at all
12 what they discussed?

13 Mr. Holmes. He did not.

14 Mr. Goldman. Now, after this meeting with Mr. Yermak, you went to lunch.
15 And can you just describe where you were sitting at the restaurant?

16 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. The restaurant has sort of glass doors that open onto a
17 terrace, and we were at the first tables on the terrace, so immediately outside of the
18 interior of the restaurant. The doors were all wide open. There were -- there was
19 tables, a table for four, while I recall it being two tables for two pushed together. In any
20 case, it was quite a wide table, and the table was set. There was sort of a table runner
21 down the middle. I was directly across from Ambassador Sondland. We were close
22 enough that we could, you know, share an appetizer between us, and then the two
23 staffers were off to our right at this next table.

24 Mr. Goldman. Now, you said that at some point, Ambassador Sondland pulled
25 out his cell phone and called President Trump. This was an unsecure cell phone. Is

1 that right?

2 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

3 Mr. Goldman. In the middle of a restaurant in Kyiv?

4 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

5 Mr. Goldman. Now, you said that you were able to hear President Trump's voice
6 through the receiver. How were you able to hear if it was not on speaker phone?

7 Mr. Holmes. It was several things. It was quite loud when the President came
8 on, quite distinctive. I believe Ambassador Sondland also said that he often speaks very
9 loudly over the phone, and I certainly experienced that.

10 When the President came on, he sort of winced and held the phone away from his
11 ear like this, and he did that for the first couple exchanges. I don't know if he then
12 turned the volume down, if he got used to it, if the President moderated his volume. I
13 don't know. But that's how I was able to hear.

14 Mr. Goldman. And so you were able to hear some of what President Trump said
15 to President Zelensky. Is that right?

16 Mr. Holmes. The first portion of the conversation, yes.

17 Mr. Goldman. And what did you hear President Trump say to -- I'm sorry, not
18 President Zelensky, to Ambassador Sondland?

19 Mr. Holmes. What did I hear the --

20 Mr. Goldman. The President say to Ambassador Sondland.

21 Mr. Holmes. Yeah. He clarified whether he was in Ukraine or not. He said,
22 yes, I'm here in Ukraine. And then Ambassador Sondland said -- said he loves your ass.
23 He'll do anything you want. He said, is he going to do the investigation?

24 Mr. Goldman. So you heard President Trump ask Ambassador Sondland is he
25 going to do the investigation?

1 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

2 Mr. Goldman. What was Ambassador Sondland's response?

3 Mr. Holmes. He said, oh, yeah. He's going to do it. He'll do anything you ask.

4 Mr. Goldman. And was that the end of the Ukraine portion of the conversation?

5 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

6 Mr. Goldman. Afterwards, you described a follow-on conversation that you had
7 with Ambassador Sondland where you asked him, I think, generally what did President
8 Trump think of Ukraine. Is that right?

9 Mr. Holmes. Correct.

10 Mr. Goldman. What did Ambassador Sondland say to you?

11 Mr. Holmes. He said he doesn't really care about Ukraine.

12 Mr. Goldman. Did he use slightly more colorful language than that?

13 Mr. Holmes. He did.

14 Mr. Goldman. What did he say that he does care about?

15 Mr. Holmes. He said he cares about big stuff.

16 Mr. Goldman. Did he explain what he meant by big stuff?

17 Mr. Holmes. Well, I asked him, well, what kind of big stuff? We've got big stuff
18 going on here like a war with Russia, and he said, no, big stuff like the Biden investigation
19 that Mr. Giuliani is pushing.

20 Mr. Goldman. Now, were you familiar with the Biden investigation that he
21 referenced at that point?

22 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

23 Mr. Goldman. And how do you have such a specific and clear recollection of this
24 conversation with the President and your conversation with Ambassador Sondland?

25 Mr. Holmes. Yeah. So this was a very distinctive experience. I've never seen

1 anything like this in my Foreign Service career, of someone at a lunch in a restaurant
2 making a call on a cell phone to the President of the United States, being able to hear his
3 voice. He has a very distinctive personality. You've all seen him on television. Very
4 colorful language was used. They were directly addressing something that I had been
5 wondering about and working on for weeks and even months, a topic that had led to the
6 recall of my former boss, the former ambassador.

7 And so here was a person who said he had direct contact with the President and
8 had said that over the course of time. Here he is actually having that contact with the
9 President, hearing the President's voice, and them talking about this issue of the Biden
10 investigation that I had been hearing about.

11 Mr. Goldman. So just to summarize, during the phone call, that you overheard
12 Ambassador Sondland have with President Trump, you heard President Trump himself
13 ask -- the only question that you really heard him ask, I believe, is whether he was going
14 to do the investigation, to which Ambassador Sondland responded that he would, and he
15 would, in fact, do anything that President Zelensky wants. Is that an accurate recitation
16 of what happened?

17 Mr. Holmes. That's correct.

18 Mr. Goldman. And then after that call, you had a subsequent conversation with
19 Ambassador Sondland where he, in sum and substance, told you that the President
20 doesn't care about Ukraine. He only cares about big stuff related to himself and
21 particularly the Biden investigation that Giuliani was pushing?

22 Mr. Holmes. Correct.

23 Mr. Goldman. Now, a day before your lunch with Ambassador Sondland,
24 President Trump did speak with President Zelensky, as you referred, and certainly the
25 President made it clear to President Zelensky that he cared about the Biden investigation.

1 Now, neither of you did listen to this call, but as you testified, you both read it
2 subsequent to its publication.

3 Dr. Hill, you during your time, 2 and a half years in the White House, listened to a
4 number of presidential phone calls. Is that right?

5 Ms. Hill. That's right.

6 Mr. Goldman. Can you estimate approximately how many?

7 Ms. Hill. I can't, actually. I mean, sometimes there would be multiple calls
8 during the week. I was there for more than 2 years, so it's a fair number.

9 Mr. Goldman. Have you ever heard a call like this one that you read?

10 Ms. Hill. I don't want to comment on this call because this is, in my view,
11 executive privilege.

12 Mr. Goldman. Counsel?

13 Ms. Hill. In terms of the testimony -- yes.

14 Mr. Wolosky. Yeah. I think that -- as a threshold matter, I think that there are
15 issues of classification regarding head of state communications so we do want to be
16 sensitive to in this forum, among other issues.

17 Mr. Goldman. Understood.

18 I'm really just focused on this one call that has been declassified and published
19 and just asking you whether you had ever heard any Presidential phone call along these
20 lines.

21 Ms. Hill. Well, again, I'd like just to focus in this testimony on this particular call,
22 and I will just say that I found this particular call's subject matter and the way it was
23 conducted surprising.

24 Mr. Goldman. You said in your deposition testimony that you were very shocked
25 and very saddened to read it.

1 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

2 Mr. Goldman. Why was that?

3 Ms. Hill. Because of the nature of the discussion, the juxtaposition of the issues
4 in which they were raised, and also given the fact that I myself had actually opposed,
5 along with Ambassador Bolton for some period, having a call unless it was very well
6 prepared and that we were confident that the issues that Ukraine and the United States
7 were most generally together interested in were going to be raised, and I saw in this call
8 that this was not the case.

9 Mr. Goldman. You also testified that you were concerned that this call was
10 turning a White House meeting into some kind of asset. Do you recall that testimony?

11 Ms. Hill. I don't think it was specifically about that call, but I recall the testimony
12 because this was clearly the discussion preceding the call. Remember, I left on July
13 19th, and the call took place the following week.

14 In the months leading up to that, from May onwards, it became very clear that the
15 White House meeting itself was being predicated on other issues, namely, investigations
16 and the questions about the election interference in 2016.

17 Mr. Goldman. Mr. Holmes, you indicate in your opening statement that the chief
18 of staff to President Zelensky had indicated to you that in this phone call on July 25th,
19 there was a discussion about personnel issues related to the Prosecutor General's office.
20 After you read the call, did you understand who and what that was referring to?

21 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. In that brief meeting with the chief of staff, it was very
22 confusing to me why -- in only the few minutes we had, why that would have been the
23 issue he raised. So it wasn't until I read the transcript of the call on the 25th that I
24 understood that the President had specifically mentioned Prosecutor General Lutsenko
25 who the Zelensky administration was in the process of replacing and carving out all his

1 sort of underlings who had been, you know, collaborating with him on some of the
2 corruption we saw there.

3 Mr. Goldman. And I believe you also said that President Lutsenko was the
4 source of some of Mr. Giuliani's public views and allegations. Is that right?

5 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. So about 2 weeks before the press kind of wave that we
6 saw targeting Ambassador Yovanovitch became public, an embassy contact had reported
7 to us privately that Mr. Lutsenko was sending these messages and had met with an
8 American journalist to try to get those messages out.

9 Mr. Goldman. What was the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine's view of Prosecutor
10 General Lutsenko?

11 Mr. Holmes. He was not a good partner. He had failed to deliver on the
12 promised reforms that he had committed to when he took office, and he was using his
13 office to insulate and protect political allies while presumably enriching himself.

14 Mr. Goldman. Is another way to describe that corrupt?

15 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

16 Mr. Goldman. Now, I want to take a look at a couple of excerpts from this July
17 25th call with you, and the first one occurs right after President Zelensky thanked
18 President Trump for the United States' support in the area of defense.

19 And President Trump immediately then says, I would like you to do us a favor,
20 though, because our country has been through a lot, and Ukraine knows a lot about it. I
21 would like you to find out what happened with this whole situation with Ukraine, they say
22 CrowdStrike. I guess you have one of your wealthy people, the server. They say
23 Ukraine has it.

24 Now, Dr. Hill, is this a reference to this debunked conspiracy theory about Ukraine
25 interference in the 2016 election that you discussed in your opening statement as well as

1 with Chairman Schiff?

2 Ms. Hill. The reference to CrowdStrike and the server, yes, that's correct.

3 Mr. Goldman. And it is your understanding that there is no basis for these
4 allegations. Is that correct?

5 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

6 Mr. Goldman. Now, isn't it also true that some of President Trump's most senior
7 advisors had informed him that this theory of Ukraine interference in the 2016 election
8 was false?

9 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

10 Mr. Goldman. So is it your understanding, then, that President Trump
11 disregarded the advice of his senior officials about this theory and instead listened to
12 Rudy Giuliani's views?

13 Ms. Hill. That appears to be the case, yes.

14 Mr. Goldman. And I also, then, want to just show one other exhibit that goes
15 back to what you were testifying earlier, Dr. Hill, about Russia's interest in promoting this
16 theory. This is an excerpt from a February 2nd, 2017, news conference between -- with
17 President Putin and Prime Minister Orban of Hungary where Putin says second, as we all
18 know, during the presidential campaign in the United States, the Ukrainian Government
19 adopted a unilateral position in favor of one candidate. More than that, certain
20 oligarchs, certainly with the approval of the political leadership, funded this candidate, or
21 female candidate, to be more precise.

22 Mr. Holmes, you spent 3 years as well in the U.S. Embassy in Russia. Why would
23 it be to Vladimir Putin's advantage to promote this theory of Ukraine interference?

24 Mr. Holmes. First of all, to deflect from the allegations of Russian interference.
25 Second of all, to drive a wedge between the United States and Ukraine which Russia

1 wants to essentially get back into its sphere of influence. Thirdly, to besmirch Ukraine
2 and its political leadership, to degrade and erode support for Ukraine from other key
3 partners in Europe and elsewhere.

4 Mr. Goldman. And Dr. Hill, by promoting this theory of Ukrainian interference in
5 the 2016 election, was President Trump adopting Vladimir Putin's view over his own
6 senior advisors and intelligence officials?

7 Ms. Hill. I think we have to be very careful about the way that we phrase that.
8 This is a view that President Putin and the Russian security services and many actors in
9 Russia have promoted, but I think that this view has also got some traction, perhaps in
10 parallel and separately here in the United States, and those two things have over time
11 started to fuse together.

12 Mr. Goldman. Well, back in May of this year, do you recall that President Trump
13 had a phone conversation in early May with President Putin?

14 Ms. Hill. I do.

15 Mr. Goldman. And that he also then met in mid-May with Prime Minister Orban
16 who had joined President Putin at this press conference?

17 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

18 Mr. Goldman. Now, that happened in between the time when President
19 Zelensky was elected on April 21st and his inauguration on May 20th. Is that right?

20 Ms. Hill. Correct.

21 Mr. Goldman. And in fact, isn't it true that President Trump had asked Vice
22 President Pence to attend the inauguration after his phone call with President Zelensky
23 on April 21st?

24 Ms. Hill. I'm not sure that I can say that President Trump had asked Vice
25 President Pence. I was not in any meeting in which that took place. I can say that I

1 myself and many others at the NSC and in the State Department were quite keen, very
2 eager to have Vice President Pence go to Ukraine to represent the United States
3 Government and the President.

4 Mr. Goldman. And is that also your recollection, Mr. Holmes, that you wanted
5 Vice President Pence to attend?

6 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. And we understood that that was the plan.

7 Mr. Goldman. Now, Jennifer Williams, from the Office of the Vice President,
8 testified here that on May 13th, which is the same day that President Trump met with
9 Prime Minister Orban, that the President called off Vice President Pence's trip for
10 unknown reasons but before the inauguration date had been scheduled.

11 And, Dr. Hill, were you aware also that during that period, there was a lot of
12 publicity, and I think, Mr. Holmes, you referenced this in your opening statement as well,
13 about Rudy Giuliani's interest in these investigations in Ukraine?

14 Ms. Hill. I was certainly aware, yes.

15 Mr. Goldman. And around this time, Dr. Hill, you also, I believe, testified that
16 Ambassador Bolton had expressed some views to you about Mr. Giuliani's interests in
17 Ukraine. Do you recall what you said?

18 Ms. Hill. Yes.

19 Mr. Goldman. Or what he said to you, rather?

20 Ms. Hill. I do -- I do recall, yes. It was part of a conversation about the things
21 that Mr. Giuliani was saying very frequently in public. We saw them often -- or saw him
22 often on television making these statements. And I had also already brought to
23 Ambassador Bolton's attention the attacks, the smear campaign against Ambassador
24 Yovanovitch and expressed great regret about how this was unfolding and, in fact, the
25 shameful way in which Ambassador Yovanovitch was being smeared and attacked.

1 And I had asked if there was anything that we could do about it, and Ambassador
2 Bolton had looked pained, basically indicated with body language that there was nothing
3 much that we could do about it. And he then in the course of that discussion said that
4 Rudy Giuliani was a hand grenade that was going to blow everyone up.

5 Mr. Goldman. Did you understand what he meant by that?

6 Ms. Hill. I did, actually.

7 Mr. Goldman. What did he mean?

8 Ms. Hill. Well, I think he meant that obviously what Mr. Giuliani was saying was
9 pretty explosive, in any case. He was frequently on television making quite incendiary
10 remarks about everyone involved in this and that he was clearly pushing forward issues
11 and ideas that would, you know, probably come back to haunt us. And, in fact, I think
12 that that's where we are today.

13 Mr. Goldman. Mr. Holmes, did the Ukrainians understand that Rudy Giuliani
14 represented the President's views?

15 Mr. Holmes. I believe they did. At first, he was reaching out to them directly.
16 He also -- Ambassador Yovanovitch's removal, I think, is relevant to this course of inquiry
17 because she was removed following this media campaign in which Rudy Giuliani and his
18 associates were very prominent and criticizing her for not taking seriously some of the
19 theories and issues that later came up.

20 And so when she was removed, you know, commentators in Ukraine believed that
21 Lutsenko, working with Giuliani, had succeeded in getting her removed. So they were
22 already aware of Mr. Giuliani and his influence, the issues that he was promoting, and
23 ultimately that he was able to get an ambassador removed partly because of that.

24 So he was someone to contend with. And then in addition, immediately after
25 the inauguration, he began reaching out to the Zelensky administration, key figures in the

1 Zelensky administration, and he continued to do that.

2 Mr. Goldman. Let's focus on the inauguration for a minute. You escorted, for
3 lack of a better word, the U.S. delegation around?

4 Mr. Holmes. So I joined them in some of their meetings but not for the entire
5 day.

6 Mr. Goldman. And who was the official -- who was on the official delegation?

7 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. It was five people, so it was -- the head of the delegation
8 was Secretary Perry, and then it was Ambassador Volker representing the State
9 Department. Ambassador Sondland, our temporary Charge, Joseph Pennington, and
10 Alex Vindman representing the White House.

11 Mr. Goldman. And did the delegation have a meeting with President Zelensky
12 that you attended?

13 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

14 Mr. Goldman. And you testified, I think, in your -- previously that Secretary Perry
15 gave a list of some sort to President Zelensky at that meeting. Do you recall that?

16 Mr. Holmes. Yes. In the meeting with the President, Secretary Perry, as the
17 head of the delegation, opened the meeting for the American side and had a number of
18 points he made. And during that period, he handed over a piece of paper. I did not
19 see what was on the paper, but Secretary Perry described what was on the paper as a list
20 of trusted individuals and recommended that Secretary -- that President Zelensky could
21 draw from that list for advice on energy sector reform issues.

22 Mr. Goldman. Do you know who was on that list?

23 Mr. Holmes. I didn't see the list. I don't know. Other colleagues -- there are
24 other people who have been in the mix for a while on that set of issues, other people
25 Secretary Perry has mentioned as being people to consult on reform.

1 Mr. Goldman. And are they Americans?

2 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

3 Mr. Goldman. Now, do you also recall that Colonel Vindman spoke to President
4 Zelensky in that meeting?

5 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

6 Mr. Goldman. And what did he say to President Zelensky in terms of some of the
7 issues that we're addressing here in this investigation?

8 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. He was the last to speak. He made a general point
9 about the importance of Ukraine to our national security, and he said it's very important
10 that the Zelensky administration stay out of U.S. domestic politics.

11 Mr. Goldman. Was it your understanding that President Zelensky and the
12 Ukrainians were already starting to feel some pressure to conduct these political
13 investigations?

14 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

15 Mr. Goldman. And those were the ones related to Biden, and Burisma, and the
16 2016 election?

17 Mr. Holmes. Correct.

18 Mr. Goldman. Now, Dr. Hill, you also testified around this same time in May, you
19 learned that President Trump was receiving information from someone else at the
20 National Security Council. Is that right?

21 Ms. Hill. That is not quite right. I was told in passing that someone else at the
22 National Security Council, that the President may want to speak to them because of some
23 materials related to Ukraine.

24 Mr. Goldman. And did that person indicate that the President thought that was
25 the Director of Ukraine?

1 Ms. Hill. That was correct.

2 Mr. Goldman. Who --

3 Ms. Hill. It was a very brief conversation, just to be clear.

4 Mr. Goldman. Who is the Director of Ukraine?

5 Ms. Hill. The Director of Ukraine is Alex Vindman, Colonel Vindman.

6 Mr. Goldman. And who did this individual in the executive secretary's office
7 refer to?

8 Ms. Hill. The individual just said the name Kash.

9 Mr. Goldman. Did you know who that was?

10 Ms. Hill. Initially, when I was thinking about it, but I had to search my mind, and
11 the only Kash that I knew at the National Security Council was Kash Patel.

12 Mr. Goldman. And Kash Patel did not work on Ukraine matters that you
13 oversaw. Is that right?

14 Ms. Hill. Not that I oversaw, no.

15 Mr. Goldman. So the indication is that Kash Patel had provided some
16 information directly to the President without your knowledge?

17 Ms. Hill. That seemed to be the indication.

18 Mr. Goldman. Now, I want to go back to the July 25th call right now where
19 President Trump in another excerpt asked President Zelensky about his
20 political -- potential political opponent, Vice President Joe Biden. In this excerpt, the
21 President said, the other thing, there's a lot of talk about Biden's son, that Biden stopped
22 the prosecution, and a lot of people want to find out about that so whatever you can do
23 with the Attorney General would be great. Biden went around bragging that he stopped
24 the prosecution, so if you can look into it. It sounds horrible to me.

25 Now, Dr. Hill, this was, of course, one of the allegations that Rudy Giuliani was

1 pushing. Is that right?

2 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

3 Mr. Goldman. And now confirmed in this July 25th call that the President was
4 also interested in it?

5 Ms. Hill. Yes.

6 Mr. Goldman. Ambassadors Volker and Sondland have tried to draw a
7 distinction between their understanding of the connection between Burisma and the
8 Bidens. But Dr. Hill, was it apparent to you that when President Trump, Rudy Giuliani, or
9 anyone else was pushing for an investigation into Burisma that the reason why they
10 wanted that investigation related to what President Trump said here, the Bidens?

11 Ms. Hill. It was very apparent to me that that was what Rudy Giuliani intended,
12 yes, intended to convey, that Burisma was linked to the Bidens, and he said this publicly,
13 repeatedly.

14 Mr. Goldman. And Mr. Holmes, you also understood that Burisma was code for
15 Bidens?

16 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

17 Mr. Goldman. And do you think that anyone involved in Ukraine matters in the
18 spring and the summer would understand that as well?

19 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

20 Mr. Goldman. Now, are either -- Dr. Hill, are you aware of any evidence to
21 support the allegations against Vice President Biden?

22 Ms. Hill. I am not, no.

23 Mr. Goldman. And, in fact, Mr. Holmes, the former Prosecutor General of
24 Ukraine who Vice President Biden encouraged to fire was actually corrupt. Is that right?

25 Mr. Holmes. Correct.

1 Mr. Goldman. And was not pursuing corruption investigations and prosecutions,
2 right?

3 Mr. Holmes. My understanding is the Prosecutor General at the time, Shokin,
4 was not at that time pursuing investigations of Burisma or the Bidens.

5 Mr. Goldman. And in fact, removing that corrupt Prosecutor General was part of
6 the United States' anticorruption policy. Isn't that correct?

7 Mr. Holmes. That's correct. And not just us but all of our allies and other
8 institutions who were involved in Ukraine at the time.

9 Mr. Goldman. Now, Dr. Hill, you indicated earlier that you had understood that a
10 White House meeting was conditioned on the pursuit by Ukraine of these investigations,
11 and I want to focus on the July 10th meeting in the White House where that came to
12 light. You indicated that in your testimony that there was a large meeting that
13 Ambassador Bolton ran where Ambassadors Sondland, Volker, and Secretary Perry also
14 attended. Is that right?

15 Ms. Hill. That's correct, yes.

16 Mr. Goldman. And why were they included in that meeting with two Ukrainian
17 officials about national security matters?

18 Ms. Hill. Well, the initial intent had not been to include them. We had
19 anticipated that the two Ukrainian officials would have a number of meetings as is usually
20 the procedure and that there would be meetings at the State Department, potentially
21 also at the Energy Department.

22 And then there was a request to have Ambassadors Sondland and Volker included
23 coming directly from their offices, and as a result of that, clearly given the important role
24 that Secretary Perry was playing in the energy sector reform in Ukraine and the fact that
25 he had also been in the delegation to the Presidential inauguration in Ukraine, we

1 decided that it would be better, then, to include all three of them.

2 Mr. Goldman. Now, toward the end of this meeting, the Ukrainians raised their
3 ongoing desire for an Oval Office meeting. Is that right?

4 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

5 Mr. Goldman. And what happened after they did that?

6 Ms. Hill. Well, I listened very carefully to Ambassador Sondland's testimony
7 yesterday, so I want to actually point out something where I think it's easy to explain why
8 he had a different interpretation of how this came into being.

9 The meeting, in addition to being scheduled for about 45, you know, minutes to
10 an hour, it was definitely in the wrap-up phase of the meeting when this occurred. We
11 had gone through a series of discussions.

12 Oleksandr Danylyuk, who was at this point the designated National Security
13 Advisor of Ukraine, really wanted to get into the weeds of how we might reform the
14 National Security Council. He talked to me about this prior to the meeting, and he was
15 hoping and had this opportunity with the National Security Advisor in the United States to
16 get his firsthand opinions and thoughts on what might happen.

17 We also wanted to go through discussion about how important it was for Ukraine
18 to get its energy sector reform underway, and clearly, Secretary Perry had some talking
19 points. This is an issue that Ambassador Bolton was also interested in. And then we
20 knew that the Ukrainians would have on their agenda inevitably the question about a
21 meeting.

22 And so as we get through the main discussion, we're going into that wrap-up
23 phrase. Ukrainians Mr. Danylyuk starts to ask about a White House meeting, and
24 Ambassador Bolton was trying to parry this back. Although he's the National Security
25 Advisor, he's not in charge of scheduling the meeting. We have input recommending

1 the meetings, and this goes through a whole process.

2 So it's not Ambassador Bolton's role to start pulling out the schedule and start
3 saying, right, well, we're going to look and see if this Tuesday in this month is going to
4 work with us. And he does not as a matter of course like to discuss the details of these
5 meetings. He likes to leave them to, you know, the appropriate staff for this. So this
6 was already going to be an uncomfortable issue.

7 As Ambassador Bolton was trying to move that part of the discussion away, I think
8 he was going to try to deflect it onto another wrap-up topic, Ambassador Sondland
9 leaned in basically to say, well, we have an agreement that there will be a meeting, and
10 the specific investigations are put underway, and that's when I saw Ambassador Bolton
11 stiffen. I was sitting behind him in the chair, and I saw him sit back slightly like this. He
12 had been more moving forward like I am to the table. And, for me, that was an
13 unmistakable body language, and it caught my attention.

14 And then he looked up to the clock, and, you know, at his watch or at his wrist, in
15 any case. Again, I was sitting behind him and basically said well, you know, it's been
16 really great to see you. I'm afraid I've got another -- another meeting.

17 Mr. Goldman. And did Ambassador Sondland say who his agreement on this
18 White House meeting was with?

19 Ms. Hill. In that particular juncture, I don't believe so. It was later, I'm sure
20 you'll want to talk about, that he did say more specifically.

21 Mr. Goldman. And what did he say later?

22 Ms. Hill. Later, he said that he had an agreement with Chief of Staff Mulvaney
23 that in return for investigations, this meeting would get scheduled.

24 Mr. Goldman. And was he specific at that point later about the investigations
25 that he was referring to?

1 Ms. Hill. He said the investigations in Burisma.

2 Mr. Goldman. Now, did you have a conversation with Ambassador Bolton after
3 this subsequent meeting with Ambassador Sondland?

4 Ms. Hill. I had a discussion with Ambassador Bolton both after the meeting in his
5 office, a very brief one, and then one immediately after was the subsequent meeting.

6 Mr. Goldman. So the subsequent meeting -- or after both meetings when you
7 spoke to him and relayed to him what Ambassador Sondland said, what did Ambassador
8 Bolton say to you?

9 Ms. Hill. Well, I just want to highlight, first of all, that Ambassador Bolton
10 wanted me to hold back in the room immediately after the meeting. Again, I was sitting
11 on the sofa with a colleague --

12 Mr. Goldman. Right. But just in that second meeting, what did he say?

13 Ms. Hill. Yes, but he was -- he was making a very strong point that he wanted to
14 know exactly what was being said. And when I came back and related it to him, he had
15 some very specific instructions for me. And I'm presuming that that's the question that
16 you're asking.

17 Mr. Goldman. What was the specific instruction?

18 Ms. Hill. The specific instruction was that I had to go to the lawyers, to John
19 Eisenberg, our senior counsel for the National Security Council, to basically say, you tell
20 Eisenberg, Ambassador Bolton told me, that I am not part of this whatever drug deal that
21 Mulvaney and Sondland are cooking up.

22 Mr. Goldman. What did you understand him to mean by the drug deal that
23 Mulvaney and Sondland were cooking up?

24 Ms. Hill. I took it to mean investigations for a meeting.

25 Mr. Goldman. Did you go speak to the lawyers?

1 Ms. Hill. I certainly did.

2 Mr. Goldman. And you relayed everything that you just told us and more?

3 Ms. Hill. I relayed it, precisely, and then more of the details of how the meeting
4 had unfolded as well which I gave a full description of this in my October 14 deposition.

5 Mr. Goldman. Mr. Holmes, you have testified that by late August, you had a
6 clear impression that the security assistance hold was somehow connected to the
7 investigations that President Trump wanted. How did you conclude -- how did you
8 reach that clear conclusion?

9 Mr. Holmes. Sir, we'd been hearing about the investigation since March, months
10 before, and we'd been -- President Zelensky had received a letter, a congratulatory letter
11 from the President saying he would be pleased to meet him following his inauguration in
12 May.

13 And we hadn't been able to get that meeting, and then the security hold came up
14 with no explanation. And I'd be surprised if any of the Ukrainians, you said earlier or we
15 discussed earlier, you know sophisticated people, when they received no explanation for
16 why that hold was in place, they would have drawn that conclusion.

17 Mr. Golden. Because the investigations were still being pursued?

18 Mr. Holmes. Correct.

19 Mr. Golden. And the hold was still remaining without explanation?

20 Mr. Holmes. Correct.

21 Mr. Golden. So this, to you, was the only logical conclusion that you could
22 reach?

23 Mr. Holmes. Correct.

24 Mr. Golden. Sort of like 2 plus 2 equals 4?

25 Mr. Holmes. Exactly.

1 Mr. Golden. Chairman, I yield.

2 The Chairman. That concludes the majority questioning. We are expected to
3 have votes, I think, fairly soon. This will be an appropriate time to break, and we'll
4 resume with the minority in 45 minutes.

5 If people before they leave could allow the witnesses to leave first, and if
6 committee members could come back promptly after votes.

7 The committee stands in recess.

8 [Recess.]

1 RPTR MOLNAR

2 EDTR CRYSTAL

3 [1:01 p.m.]

4 The Chairman. The committee will come to order.

5 The chair now recognizes the ranking member or their counsel for the first round
6 of their 45-minute questions.

7 Mr. Nunes. I thank the gentleman.

8 I want to get a few basic facts on the table of individuals that were involved in the
9 2016 election, just to see who you know and who you've met with. So I'll start with you,
10 Mr. Holmes.

11 Have you met with or do you know Alexandra Chalupa?

12 Mr. Holmes. No.

13 The Chairman. Mr. Holmes, could you put your microphone on?

14 Mr. Holmes. No.

15 Mr. Nunes. Do you know Nellie Ohr? Have you met with Nellie Ohr?

16 Mr. Holmes. No.

17 Mr. Nunes. Bruce Ohr?

18 Mr. Holmes. No.

19 Mr. Nunes. Glenn Simpson?

20 Mr. Holmes. No.

21 Mr. Nunes. Thank you.

22 Same question for you, Dr. Hill. Do you know or have you met with Alexandra
23 Chalupa?

24 Ms. Hill. No.

25 Mr. Nunes. Nellie Ohr?

1 Ms. Hill. No.

2 Mr. Nunes. Bruce Ohr?

3 Ms. Hill. Only in the course of my previous position as the national intelligence
4 officer for Russia, where he attended some of the meetings I presided over.

5 Mr. Nunes. Years ago?

6 Ms. Hill. That's a long time ago, correct.

7 Mr. Nunes. Glenn Simpson?

8 Ms. Hill. No.

9 Mr. Nunes. Dr. Hill, in your testimony, you said that -- in your deposition, excuse
10 me -- that Christopher Steele was your counterpart at one time. Is this correct?

11 Ms. Hill. That's correct, yes.

12 Mr. Nunes. You testified that you met with Christopher Steele in 2016. I
13 assume that's still correct?

14 Ms. Hill. That's correct, yes.

15 Mr. Nunes. And the only thing we didn't get on that is, do you know about when
16 that was in 2016 and how many times?

17 Ms. Hill. I'm afraid I don't. I actually had met with him -- well, you asked me
18 actually in the deposition when the most recent time that I had met with him in 2016?

19 Mr. Nunes. Uh-huh.

20 Ms. Hill. And he retired from the British intelligence services in 2009, which is
21 the same time --

22 Mr. Nunes. Right. I'm asking about 2016.

23 Ms. Hill. 2016, I don't recall, but I did meet with him some times before 2016.

24 Mr. Nunes. But you don't remember the date?

25 Ms. Hill. I don't, I'm afraid, no.

1 Mr. Nunes. Okay. You stated in your deposition that a colleague had showed
2 you the Steele dossier before it was published. Who was that colleague?

3 Ms. Hill. That was one of my colleagues at the Brookings Institution.

4 Mr. Nunes. And who was that?

5 Ms. Hill. That was the Brookings Institution president, Strobe Talbott, who had
6 been sent a copy of this.

7 Mr. Nunes. And he shared it with you?

8 Ms. Hill. That was the day before it was published in BuzzFeed.

9 Mr. Nunes. You mentioned in your deposition also that you thought that it was
10 a -- let's get the exact quote -- that the dossier was a rabbit hole. Is that still your
11 testimony?

12 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

13 Mr. Nunes. Do you know who paid Christopher Steele to do -- to generate the
14 Steele dossiers? There were several of them.

15 Ms. Hill. At the time I did not know. I understand from the media that it was
16 through GPS Fusion. If that's not correct --

17 Mr. Nunes. Do you know who was -- and there was a law firm involved, but you
18 know who the source of the money was?

19 Ms. Hill. I didn't at the time, no, I didn't know.

20 Mr. Nunes. Do you know who --

21 Ms. Hill. Well, now I've read it in reports, and thanks to your colleagues as well,
22 that it was the DNC, as I'm led to believe.

23 Mr. Nunes. And the Clinton campaign?

24 Ms. Hill. I don't know that for sure.

25 Mr. Nunes. Okay.

1 Mr. Castor.

2 Mr. Castor. Good afternoon. Welcome back from lunch. Hope you had some
3 sandwiches or something delicious.

4 Ms. Hill. Hope you did, too.

5 Mr. Castor. Dr. Hill, thank you for your service. And also thank you for your
6 participation in the deposition on October 14th, Columbus Day. We were with you most
7 of the day, so I appreciate that.

8 Mr. Holmes, thank you as well. You're a late entrant into this situation, and
9 things sure did escalate quickly. We spoke with you last Friday night about what we
10 thought was going to be a 30-second vignette about a 2-minute phone call, and turns out,
11 you know, with your 40-minute opener today, you have a lot of information to share.
12 So we appreciate you being here.

13 Dr. Hill, your last day at the National Security Council was July 19th. Is that
14 correct?

15 Ms. Hill. That's correct, yes.

16 Mr. Castor. So you weren't involved with the July 25th call and you weren't
17 involved with any of the relevant activities related to the pause in the aid?

18 Ms. Hill. I was not, that's correct.

19 Mr. Castor. And as of July 19th, did you believe that a call was going to be
20 scheduled for the 25th?

21 Ms. Hill. I personally did not believe that it was going to be scheduled at that
22 date, no.

23 Mr. Castor. And what was the thinking at the NSC as of July 19th about such a
24 call?

25 Ms. Hill. Well, I've learned from other depositions, to be clear here, that perhaps

1 there was some awareness that there might be a call. Ambassador Sondland, if you may
2 recall, showed an exchange with the person who was taking over for my position, Tim
3 Morrison, in which he indicated that there would be a call coming up. I was not aware
4 of that.

5 Mr. Castor. Okay. Were you in favor of --

6 Ms. Hill. And there were differences, let's just say, obviously, and understanding
7 about that call.

8 Mr. Castor. And were you in favor of such a call as of the 19th?

9 Ms. Hill. Actually, I was not, and I did say something about that in the opening
10 part of the sessions today.

11 Mr. Castor. Okay. And how about Ambassador Bolton, to your knowledge?

12 Ms. Hill. Well, I know that Ambassador Sondland said in that email that Bolton
13 was in agreement. To my knowledge, Bolton was not in agreement at that particular
14 juncture, to my knowledge.

15 Mr. Castor. And do you know what his opposition was?

16 Ms. Hill. It was based on the fact that he didn't feel the call had been properly
17 prepared, and as I said earlier, that we wanted to make sure there was going to be a
18 fulsome bilateral U.S.-Ukraine agenda that was discussed, which is usual with these calls.

19 Mr. Castor. And you -- were you surprised that a call ultimately was scheduled?

20 Ms. Hill. I was when I learned about it, that's right.

21 Mr. Castor. And did you have any communications with anyone back at your old
22 staff with -- about how that came to be?

23 Ms. Hill. I did not, no.

24 Mr. Castor. Okay. You did learn about the pause in the security assistance
25 aid shortly before --

1 Ms. Hill. I learned about that on July 18th, so the day before I left, that's correct.

2 Mr. Castor. Okay. And there were several meetings about this, I believe you
3 testified to.

4 Ms. Hill. I said that I knew there was going to be a meeting in that timeframe,
5 and there was one put onto the schedule for the following week. But, of course, I had
6 left and so I didn't attend that.

7 Mr. Castor. And is it fair to say that stops and starts in aid like this sometimes do
8 happen?

9 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

10 Mr. Castor. And I believe you had testified that there was a freeze put on all
11 kinds of aid and assistance because it was in the process -- at that time there were
12 significant reviews of foreign assistance going on?

13 Ms. Hill. That's also correct, yes.

14 Mr. Castor. What else can you tell us about that?

15 Ms. Hill. About the foreign assistance review?

16 Mr. Castor. Yes.

17 Ms. Hill. As I understood them, there had been a directive for whole-scale
18 review of our foreign policy, foreign policy assistance, and the ties between our foreign
19 policy objectives and the assistance. This had been going on actually for many months.
20 And in the period when I was wrapping up my time there, there had been more scrutiny
21 than specific assistance to specific sets of countries as a result of that overall
22 view -- review.

23 Mr. Castor. And at this time, as well, Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Sondland,
24 they had become a little bit more involved with Ukraine policy?

25 Ms. Hill. Well, Ambassador Volker was always involved in Ukraine policy, at least

1 since the beginning of his appointment as the special envoy for negotiations towards the
2 war between Ukraine and Russia in Donbas.

3 Mr. Castor. And what can you tell us about Ambassador Volker?

4 Ms. Hill. Ambassador Volker is an extraordinarily accomplished diplomat. I've
5 worked with him in many capacities previously. You know, his bio, he's been the
6 Ambassador to NATO. He's had a number of positions at the State Department. And
7 actually I know him personally.

8 So, you know, and the truth that we're trying to get at is who knows who and
9 who's met. I know Ambassador Volker really well, on a personal level as well.

10 Mr. Castor. Okay. And you said he's a man of integrity?

11 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

12 Mr. Castor. And always acted in of the best interest of the United States?

13 Ms. Hill. Absolutely, yes.

14 Mr. Castor. When did you first learn of Ambassador Sondland's involvement?

15 Ms. Hill. Well, it came in different ways. Ambassador Sondland, as the
16 Ambassador to the EU, had some perfectly logical involvement in the Ukraine portfolio.
17 We work very closely with the European Union on matters related to Ukraine.

18 The Ukrainian dialogue with Russia was in a format known as the Minsk Process,
19 which was led by the French and the Germans. And Ambassador Volker was trying to
20 find out ways in which he could work closely with the French and Germans to move along
21 the resolution of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

22 And obviously the European Union, as the umbrella organization for Europe in
23 terms of funding and assistance, was heavily active in offering financial assistance to the
24 Ukrainian government, as well as humanitarian assistance in the conflict. So it was
25 perfectly logical that Ambassador Sondland would play some kind of role as our

1 ambassador to the European Union.

2 Mr. Castor. Did you have any concerns when he presented himself to you as
3 somebody with a major role?

4 Ms. Hill. I did at the time in which he presented it to me. This was after
5 Ambassador Yovanovitch had been pushed out of her position. And it was at that
6 juncture that Ambassador Sondland's role seemed to grow larger.

7 Mr. Castor. And did you express any concerns to him directly?

8 Ms. Hill. I did express concerns to him directly.

9 Mr. Castor. What were those concerns?

10 Ms. Hill. I asked him quite bluntly in a meeting that we had in June of 2019, so
11 this is after the Presidential inauguration when I had seen that he had started to step up
12 in much more of a proactive role on Ukraine, you know, what was his role here. And he
13 said that he was in charge of Ukraine. And I said, well, who put you in charge,
14 Ambassador Sondland. And he said, the President.

15 Mr. Castor. And did it surprise you when he told you that?

16 Ms. Hill. It did surprise me. We'd had no directive. We hadn't been told this.
17 Ambassador Bolton had never indicated in any way that he thought that Ambassador
18 Sondland was playing a leading role in Ukraine.

19 Mr. Castor. All right. And I believe you used the term a large remit, that he
20 characterized he had been given a large remit from the President?

21 Ms. Hill. I can't remember whether I said remit, but it was portfolio. He was
22 constantly -- you know, these are all synonyms -- he was talking to us about the fact that
23 he'd been given a very broad portfolio by the President. He said his job was to go out
24 and make deals in Europe.

25 And as you know yourself, I listened to his testimony yesterday very carefully as

1 well, he said that anything that had to do with the EU itself and the European Union
2 member states was within his portfolio.

3 Mr. Castor. All right. We asked Ambassador Sondland about that at his
4 deposition, and he conceded that he may have been spinning a little bit when he said that
5 the President specifically gave him that role. And he indicated that his authority was
6 coming at least a little bit from -- more from the Secretary of State.

7 At any point in time was that related to you?

8 Ms. Hill. At different points he mentioned talking directly to the Chief of Staff
9 Mulvaney, and he also talked about Secretary Pompeo. But he was very -- in fact, there
10 were other people in the room, in the meeting in which he asserted this to me, that it was
11 the President who had put him in charge of this.

12 Mr. Castor. Were you encouraged as of your last day in the office that U.S.
13 policy towards the Ukraine was headed in the right direction?

14 Ms. Hill. I was not.

15 Mr. Castor. And why was that?

16 Ms. Hill. Well, I was concerned about two things in particular. One was, again,
17 the removal of our ambassador. And again, I will say for the record that the President
18 has a perfect right to remove any ambassador at any time for any reason. But I was very
19 concerned about the circumstances in which her reputation had been maligned,
20 repeatedly, on television and in all kinds of exchanges. I felt that that was completely
21 unnecessary.

22 If the President wanted to remove an ambassador, which he did quite frequently,
23 there was a number of ambassadors removed who were not political but career officials,
24 that was done, but without these kinds of interventions. I wondered what that message
25 was being sent. So there was that.

1 And then on the second front, it was very clear at this point that there was, let's
2 just say, a different channel in operation in relations to Ukraine, one that was domestic
3 and political in nature, and it was very different from the channel or the loop, however
4 you like it, that I and my colleagues were in, where we were focused on bilateral relations
5 and U.S. foreign policy towards Ukraine. And these two things had diverged at this
6 point.

7 Mr. Castor. In the run-up to Ambassador Yovanovitch's separation from post,
8 did you have any communications with officials at the State Department about your
9 concerns?

10 Ms. Hill. I did.

11 Mr. Castor. And who did you relate those concerns to?

12 Ms. Hill. I related those concerns directly to my counterpart, who was Acting
13 Assistant Secretary Phil Reeker, who I know you've spoken to.

14 I also spoke to David Hale in the context of, you know, larger meetings about
15 many other issues. I mean, again, I covered a broad portfolio myself, and we often
16 would talk about individual items.

17 And I had private discussions with Deputy Secretary Sullivan. And he, of course,
18 has appeared before committees here in the course of his nomination to be ambassador
19 to Russia and has spoken about that himself.

20 Mr. Castor. Okay. And you advocated to all those officials about your concerns
21 about the information being spread about Ambassador Yovanovitch?

22 Ms. Hill. I did, that's correct.

23 Mr. Castor. The Trump administration changed courses from its predecessor and
24 provided lethal defensive assistance to the Ukraine. Were you in favor of arming the
25 Ukrainians with the Javelins?

1 Ms. Hill. I was not initially in 2015 before I joined the government, and I'm sure
2 that many people on the committee have seen that I wrote an opinion piece with a
3 colleague at the Brookings Institution in that juncture, because I was very worried at that
4 particular point in time that the Ukrainian military was not in a fit state to really take on
5 board sophisticated weapons, be they defensive or offensive weapons. And I worried
6 that there was not a long-term sustainable plan, given the overwhelming force that the
7 Russians could apply against the Ukrainians.

8 However, when I came into government in 2017 and started to interact with all of
9 my colleagues in the Pentagon -- and you had Laura Cooper here yesterday -- I realized, in
10 fact, that there had been an awful lot of work done on this and that there was a clear and
11 consistent plan for the sustainability long-term of the Ukrainian military. So I changed
12 my mind.

13 Mr. Castor. Okay. And you're, in fact, one of the -- I believe the only witness
14 that we've spoken to that has been able to articulate the opposition to providing the
15 Javelins. And as we understand it, during the Obama administration the interagency
16 consensus was, in fact, to provide the Javelins, but they were not provided.

17 Were you aware of the decision back then?

18 Ms. Hill. I was, and I think it was very much made on a political basis about
19 concerns that this would provoke the Russians, depending on how this was presented.
20 And we were very mindful of that also when there were the discussions internally about
21 the lethal defensive weapons inside of the administration.

22 Mr. Castor. Mr. Holmes, you're on the ground in Kyiv, and the Javelins have now
23 been authorized, provided. What's the view from the field, the U.S. Embassy, as to the
24 effectiveness of the Javelins?

25 Mr. Holmes. They're an important strategic deterrent. They're not actively

1 employed in combat operations right now, but the mere idea that were the Russians to
2 advance substantially using certain kinds of armor, that the Ukrainians would have this
3 capability, deters them from doing so. It also thereby sends a very important
4 symbol -- symbolic message to the Ukrainian military that they have access to this
5 high-end technology and that we trust them to do it.

6 I'd only add also, they've offered to buy some using their own funds. The initial
7 tranche was provided through basically a program to do that, but they have now offered
8 to spend their own money to buy more. So I think they think they're important.

9 Mr. Castor. And Ambassador Taylor has testified, Mr. Kent has testified that this
10 is, in fact, the consensus of the interagency, providing the Javelins.

11 Is it the -- in your experience working with Ambassador Taylor, was he also very
12 much an advocate for this?

13 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

14 Mr. Nunes. Mr. Holmes, I want to go back to -- named some Americans. Now I
15 want to talk a little bit about Ukrainians, Ukrainian government officials.

16 Mr. Holmes. Uh-huh.

17 Mr. Nunes. Are you familiar with Serhiy Leshchenko?

18 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

19 Mr. Nunes. Have you met with him?

20 Mr. Holmes. I have.

21 Mr. Nunes. Okay. He was a journalist, then he was in the Parliament. Is he
22 currently in the Parliament?

23 Mr. Holmes. Journalist again.

24 Mr. Nunes. Journalist again.

25 Are you aware that when he was in the Parliament, that he had provided

1 information to a Fusion GPS operative named Nellie Ohr.

2 Mr. Holmes. I'm not aware of Nellie Ohr. I'm not aware of who he provided
3 information to. I'm aware that as a journalist he's provided information.

4 Mr. Nunes. Well, this is -- he was in the Parliament at the time. This was in the
5 2016 campaign. He provided widely known as the black ledger. Have you ever heard
6 of the black ledger?

7 Mr. Holmes. I have.

8 Mr. Nunes. And the black ledger, is that seen as credible information?

9 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

10 Mr. Nunes. The black ledger is credible?

11 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

12 Mr. Nunes. Bob Mueller did not find it credible. Do you dispute what Bob
13 Mueller's findings were? They didn't use it in the prosecution or in the report.

14 Mr. Holmes. I'm not aware that Bob Mueller did not find it credible. I think it
15 was evidence in other criminal proceedings, and its credibility was not questioned in
16 those proceedings. But I'm not an expert on that matter.

17 Mr. Nunes. So the motivation for Leshchenko was reported to -- was to go after
18 a Trump campaign official and undermine Trump's candidacy. Are you aware of that?

19 Mr. Holmes. If you mean by the release of the black ledger, I think Leshchenko's
20 motivation was the same motivation he's always expressed, which is to expose corruption
21 in Ukraine.

22 Mr. Nunes. Right. But he's admitted motivation was to partly at least
23 undermine the Trump candidacy that he did not support.

24 Mr. Holmes. He has not said that to me. If he said that to you, I'll take your
25 word for it.

1 Mr. Nunes. And you're aware that the -- you heard Dr. Hill's testimony that the
2 Steele dossier, that contained initially that initial information that was fed in the FBI.
3 Were you aware that the Democrats had paid for that information?

4 Mr. Holmes. So, sir, I never had any involvement directly with --

5 Mr. Nunes. I'm not accusing you of involvement. I'm just asking if you -- and
6 not even if you knew at the time, but you now know today that the Democrats had paid
7 for that information?

8 Mr. Holmes. So I do want to be clear that all that happened before I arrived in
9 Ukraine. So I don't have any firsthand --

10 Mr. Nunes. Not accusing any involvement of you with the Steele dossier.

11 Mr. Holmes. Understood. But I do want to be clear about that. And then in
12 addition, I have read about those issues, but I'm not an expert on them.

13 Mr. Nunes. But you're not disputing that the Democrats and the Clinton
14 campaign were the source of funds that funded the Steele dossier?

15 Mr. Holmes. I wouldn't be in a position to dispute that, sir.

16 Mr. Nunes. Do you think it's appropriate for political parties to run operatives in
17 foreign countries to dig up dirt on their opponents?

18 Mr. Holmes. No.

19 Mr. Nunes. Dr. Hill, do you think it's appropriate for political parties to pay
20 operatives to dig up dirt on their opponents?

21 Ms. Hill. I do not.

22 Mr. Nunes. Mr. Castor.

23 Mr. Castor. I want to turn to President Zelensky's inauguration. Ambassador
24 Volker testified that he was very pleased with the size of the delegation. Although the
25 Vice President was unable to make the trip, Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker,

1 Ambassador Sondland -- and I understand, Dr. Hill, you were involved with some of the
2 logistics in putting the delegation together.

3 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

4 Mr. Castor. What can you tell us about the Vice President's role in attending or
5 not attending?

6 Ms. Hill. Well, I know that you've heard the testimony of Jennifer Williams from
7 the Vice President's office, and I defer to her as being much closer to the decisionmaking
8 about the Vice President's attendance.

9 I will say that I, and many others, hoped that the Vice President would be able to
10 attend. What I know from my perspective, because I was not involved intimately in
11 discussions with the Vice President or his immediate staff, was that there were some
12 questions about the schedule.

13 As you all know, the President and Vice President cannot be out of the country at
14 the same time. And there were some questions about Presidential travel in the same
15 timeframe. And, you know, there was quite a bit of back-and-forth as to whether it
16 would be really feasible for the Vice President in that timeframe to go.

17 So that was what I was aware of. I wasn't aware to the extent of the discussions
18 that obviously Ms. Williams was involved in.

19 Mr. Castor. Right. The President was in traveling in Japan, and then he was
20 headed to Europe for the D-Day Anniversary. The Vice President's office, according to
21 Ms. Williams, provided 4 days at the end of May, the 29th, 30th, 31st, June 1st.

22 And as it turned out, the Ukrainians decided -- I believe it was on May 16th -- to
23 schedule the inauguration for 4 days later. And by this point in time, the Vice President
24 had been rerouted for a trip to Canada about the USMCA.

25 And just want to ask you whether, you don't have any evidence that the Vice

1 President was encouraged not to attend for any other reason, do you?

2 Ms. Hill. I personally do not, but again, I defer to Ms. Williams.

3 Mr. Castor. The -- and Ms. Williams' testimony was that she just -- she heard
4 from the chief of staff's assistant that the Vice President was not able to go. The leap
5 that the reason for that was related to any of these investigations hasn't been fully
6 established.

7 I want to just note, from the materials you provided for your deposition, there is
8 discussion whether President Orban may have influenced President Trump's decision on
9 that May 13th day.

10 Do you remember when the meeting was with President Orban?

11 Ms. Hill. I do.

12 Mr. Castor. When was that?

13 Ms. Hill. That was in May, that's correct.

14 Mr. Castor. But do you remember what time of day it was on the 13th?

15 Ms. Hill. To be honest, usually these meetings are around lunch time, sometime
16 in that timeframe, in the kind of early to mid-part of the day. But I can't speak for sure,
17 and I just want to be very clear that I cannot speak about head of state engagements.

18 Mr. Castor. Okay. Jennifer Williams testified that she learned about 11 or
19 11:15 the meeting with President Orban was not scheduled until later in the afternoon.
20 According to your schedule it was right around 1:45. Is that consistent with your
21 recollection?

22 Ms. Hill. Right about the lunchtime timeframe, yeah, depending on when one
23 has lunch, I guess.

24 Mr. Castor. Okay. But overall, given the 4 days' notice, given Secretary Perry's
25 involvement, do you think the delegation was a good sized group?

1 Ms. Hill. I do. And let me also make a point that we don't try to make these
2 delegations large. This is on the taxpayers' dime, and it's pretty expensive getting
3 people there if you have to get military air, and you know, we try to keep them small. If
4 we had a longer lead time, you know, perhaps we would have made other arrangements,
5 but, you know, 4 days is not a lot of time to make an arrangement.

6 Mr. Castor. And Secretary Perry had become interested in some of the
7 energy-related issues in the Ukraine?

8 Ms. Hill. I actually recommended that Secretary Perry be the lead, along with
9 others.

10 Mr. Castor. And what can you tell us about his involvement in some of the
11 Ukrainian policy?

12 Ms. Hill. Well, Secretary's Perry's engagement -- and this made, again, perfect
13 sense, given his role as Secretary of Energy, also his deep knowledge of the energy
14 industry, his former governorship.

15 You know, Secretary Perry himself is an extraordinarily good advocate of U.S.
16 interests, particularly in the energy sphere. And one of Ukraine's Achilles' heel, in
17 addition to its military disadvantage with Russia, is in fact energy. Ukraine remains for
18 now the main transit point for Russian oil and gas and pipelines to Europe, and this has
19 been manipulated repeatedly, especially since 2006, by the Russian government.

20 And, in fact, I mean, many of you here will remember, in the Reagan era there was
21 a huge dispute between the United States and Europe about the -- about whether it
22 made sense for Europe to build pipelines from the then Soviet Union to bring gas to
23 European markets.

24 Mr. Castor. Mr. Holmes, what was your view of the delegation? Do you think it
25 was the right sized group, right level of prestige to signal to the incoming Zelensky

1 administration that the U.S. stands behind them?

2 Mr. Holmes. I think it was fine in that regard.

3 Mr. Castor. Okay.

4 Mr. Nunes. Since we're on the topic of Ukraine energy, I think it's a good way for
5 us to segue into Burisma, which I assume both of you are familiar with. You've heard
6 about it for many, many years.

7 You're on the ground there now, Mr. Holmes. I know you weren't there at the
8 time, but in September 2015 then Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt,
9 Obama-appointed career ambassador -- I'm sure you know him.

10 Mr. Holmes. I do.

11 Mr. Nunes. Credible?

12 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

13 Mr. Nunes. Successful ambassador, I'm sure.

14 He called for an investigation into Zlochevsky, the owner of Burisma, the president
15 of Burisma. Are you familiar with that?

16 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

17 Mr. Nunes. Did you know about Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Kent's
18 concerns about the potential conflict of interest with Hunter Biden sitting on the board of
19 Burisma?

20 Mr. Holmes. I would defer to George Kent, who was involved at the time and is
21 an expert on those issues.

22 Mr. Nunes. Did you know that the financial records show that this Ukrainian
23 natural gas company, Burisma, routed more than \$3 million to the American accounts of
24 Hunter Biden?

25 Mr. Holmes. I've heard that.

1 Mr. Nunes. Were you familiar with that, Dr. Hill?

2 Ms. Hill. Only from newspaper reports.

3 Mr. Nunes. Okay. Did you know that Burisma's American -- and this is back to
4 you, Mr. Holmes -- did you know that Burisma's American legal representatives met with
5 Ukrainian officials just days after the Vice President forced the firing of the country's chief
6 prosecutor?

7 Mr. Holmes. No.

8 Mr. Nunes. Did you know that Burisma's American lawyers tried to secure a
9 meeting with the new state prosecutor the same day that predecessor Viktor Shokin's
10 firing was announced?

11 Mr. Holmes. No.

12 Mr. Nunes. Did you know that Joe Biden called Ukrainian President Poroshenko
13 at least three times in February 2016, shortly after the president and owner of Burisma's
14 home was raided on February 2nd by the state prosecutor's office?

15 Mr. Holmes. No.

16 Mr. Nunes. Did you know that Devon Archer and Hunter Biden reached out to
17 the deputy secretary of state, Tony Blinken, shortly after the raid on Burisma?

18 Mr. Holmes. No.

19 Mr. Nunes. Dr. Hill, did you know about -- I don't want to go through and ask all
20 those questions over again --

21 Ms. Hill. I also did not know, that's correct.

22 Mr. Nunes. You did not know about any of this?

23 Ms. Hill. I did not know, no.

24 Mr. Nunes. Okay. So you obviously know that the President had concerns
25 about Burisma, had concerns about 2016 election meddling by the Ukrainians. When

1 you were in there as the head of the Ukraine --

2 Ms. Hill. Right.

3 Mr. Nunes. -- desk, did you ever raise any of these -- did you ever brief the
4 President or raise it up to Ambassador Bolton about any concerns through 2017 and '18
5 that concerned 2016 election meddling or Burisma concerns?

6 Ms. Hill. The whole briefing process didn't really work in the way that you're
7 suggesting there. So if the President had asked about any of this information, it would
8 have been provided for him.

9 Just to be very clear, Ukraine was not a top foreign policy priority in this period, in
10 the same way that many other issues that we could talk about, from Syria to Turkey and
11 others, are. So there weren't that frequent briefings on Ukraine. The briefings would
12 take place when there was a scheduled meeting with a Ukrainian head of state. And as
13 we know, there haven't been too many of those.

14 Mr. Nunes. So just to -- as far as you know, you did no briefings, no papers,
15 answered no questions as it relates to the 2016 election or Burisma during your time
16 there?

17 Ms. Hill. I did not, no.

18 Mr. Nunes. Okay. Thank you.

19 Mr. Castor.

20 Mr. Castor. Dr. Hill, you told us during your deposition that, indeed, that there
21 are perceived conflict of interest troubles when the child of a government official is
22 involved with something that that government official has an official policy role in,
23 correct?

24 Ms. Hill. I think any family member of any member of the U.S. Government,
25 Congress or the Senate, is open to all kinds of questions about optics and of perhaps

1 undue outside influence, if they take part in any kind of activity that could be
2 misconstrued as being related to their parent or the family member's work. So as a
3 matter of course, yes, I do think that's the case.

4 Mr. Castor. Getting back to Ambassador Sondland, you testified that every now
5 and then he made a habit of name-dropping his interactions with the President.

6 Ms. Hill. That's correct, yes.

7 Mr. Castor. And I believe you also told us that there were instances where you
8 would run into him on the campus, and he would say, oh, I'm here to see the President,
9 or, I've been in to see the President, and you had an occasion to circle back and found out
10 that wasn't the case?

11 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

12 Mr. Castor. And I just want to give you an opportunity. He testified about
13 some sort of coffee he had with you on your last day. And I think when the deposition
14 transcript was released, your counsel indicated that that was completely fabricated on
15 Ambassador Sondland's part. And I just want to give you an opportunity to address
16 that.

17 Ms. Hill. Yes. So, I mean, unfortunately this is the Federal Government, we
18 don't have coffee machines, you know, readily in our office. If you had come to my
19 office in that time, the best I could have offered you was a cup of water from the water
20 fountain outside of my office.

21 So, you know, the coffee that Ambassador Sondland and I shared was actually, we
22 ran into each other -- or rather he found out I was going to be there and then asked me to
23 meet him for coffee in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in 2018, in August. So this is a full year
24 before I left.

25 That was a very nice coffee. So perhaps he, you know, conflated those two

1 meetings together.

2 The meeting that he was referring to, he had come in to meet with our director
3 for the European Union. This was in my last week in the office. And as I was in the
4 office at the same time, for a brief period, before going into another meeting, and it was
5 my last week in the office, we agreed to sit down with the director of the European
6 Union, with actually Colonel Vindman, and the assistant that Ambassador Sondland had
7 brought with him from the State Department. So there were actually four of us in that
8 meeting, and unfortunately it wasn't over coffee.

9 Mr. Castor. And, you know, he went on to indicate that you were upset and you
10 were upset with Ambassador --

11 Ms. Hill. Actually, there were five of us really in that meeting. Obviously I can't
12 do math. Sorry.

13 Mr. Castor. Fair enough.

14 He indicated you were upset and you were upset with Ambassador Bolton and
15 upset with the way things were going. And I believe your counsel said that was an
16 outright fabrication?

17 Ms. Hill. Well, I think you might recall in my deposition on October 14th that I
18 said that very unfortunately I had a bit of a blowup with Ambassador Sondland, and I had
19 a couple of testy encounters with him.

20 One of those was in June 2018 when I actually said to him, Who put you in charge
21 of Ukraine? And, you know, I'll admit, I was a bit rude. And that's when he told me
22 the President, which shut me up.

23 And this other meeting, it was about 15, 20 minutes, exactly as he depicted it was.
24 I was actually, to be honest, angry with him. And, you know, I hate to say it, but often
25 when women show anger it's not fully appreciated. It's often, you know, pushed onto

1 emotional issues perhaps or deflected onto other people. And what I was angry about
2 was that he wasn't coordinating with us.

3 I've actually realized, having listened to his deposition, that he was absolutely
4 right, that he wasn't coordinating with us because we weren't doing the same thing that
5 he was doing.

6 So I was upset with him that he wasn't fully telling us about all of the meetings
7 that he was having. And he said to me, But I am briefing the President, I'm briefing Chief
8 of Staff Mulvaney, I'm briefing Secretary Pompeo, and I've talked to Ambassador Bolton.
9 Who else do I have to deal with?

10 And the point is, we have a robust interagency process that deals with Ukraine.
11 It includes Mr. Holmes. It includes Ambassador Taylor as the charge in Ukraine. It
12 includes a whole load of other people.

13 But it struck me when yesterday, when you put up on the screen Ambassador
14 Sondland's emails and who was on these emails, and he said, These are the people who
15 need to know, that he was absolutely right. Because he was being involved in a
16 domestic political errand, and we were being involved in national security foreign policy,
17 and those two things had just diverged.

18 So he was correct. And I had not put my finger on that at the moment, but I was
19 irritated with him and angry with him that he wasn't fully coordinating. And I did say to
20 him, Ambassador Sondland, Gordon, I think this is all going to blow up. And here we
21 are.

22 And after I left to my next meeting, our director for the European Union talked to
23 him much further, for a full half hour or more later, trying to ask him about how we could
24 coordinate better, how others could coordinate better, after I had left the office. And
25 his feeling was that the National Security Council was always trying to block him.

1 What we were trying to do was block us from straying into domestic or personal
2 politics, and that was precisely what I was trying to do.

3 But Ambassador Sondland is not wrong that he had been given a different remit
4 than we had been. And it was at that moment that I started to realize how those things
5 had diverged. And I realized, in fact, that I wasn't really being fair to Ambassador
6 Sondland, because he was carrying out what he thought he had been instructed to carry
7 out, and we were doing something that we thought was just as -- or perhaps even more
8 important, but it wasn't in the same channel.

9 Mr. Castor. Dr. Hill --

10 Mr. Nunes. Dr. Hill, I just want to drill down on this a little bit. The President of
11 the United States, Commander in Chief, was concerned about the 2016 elections and
12 Burisma. He had his personal attorney working these issues because he was under
13 investigation by Robert Mueller, special counsel, partly beginning with an investigation
14 that started with the Steele dossier, that we've already established that the Democrats
15 had paid for and had been fed into the FBI.

16 So at the end of the day, the Commander in Chief, concerned about 2016 election
17 meddling by Ukraine, it sounds like you had just earlier testified that you weren't aware
18 of that, but if that was the concern of the President, to try to get to the bottom of it, and
19 it's the concern of Ambassador Sondland, who was trying to set up meetings on behalf
20 of -- to ensure, really, that meetings occurred and phone calls occurred to strengthen the
21 relationship, I'm a little -- I mean, I understand the people at the NSC, people at the State
22 Department had issues with that, but at the end of the day, isn't it the Commander in
23 Chief that makes those decisions?

24 Ms. Hill. My point, Mr. Nunes, is that we at the National Security Council were
25 not told either by the President directly or through Ambassador Bolton that we were to

1 be focused on these issues as a matter of U.S. foreign policy towards Ukraine.

2 So when you're talking about Ukraine in 2016, I never personally heard the
3 President say anything specific about 2016 and Ukraine. I've seen him saying plenty of
4 things publicly, but I was not given a directive. In fact, I was given a directive on July
5 10th by Ambassador Bolton, very clearly, to stay out of domestic politics.

6 Mr. Castor. Just for sake of the timeline, I think as of July 19th they hadn't even
7 engaged with Rudy Giuliani yet. I don't believe that happened until a little bit later. So
8 you believe by July 19th they were already engaged in those types of activities?

9 Ms. Hill. We had already had a discussion with Kurt Volker, which was in the
10 depositions of his assistant Chris Anderson, that indicated that he had met with Rudy
11 Giuliani at this point. And Ambassador Sondland made comments about meeting with
12 Giuliani, and as we know, in the May 23rd meeting, they had been instructed to meet
13 with Giuliani.

14 Mr. Castor. Right.

15 Ms. Hill. They gave us every impression that they were meeting with Rudy
16 Giuliani at this point, and Rudy Giuliani was also saying on the television, and indeed has
17 said subsequently, that he was closely coordinating with the State Department.

18 Mr. Castor. Okay.

19 Ms. Hill. So it was my belief that they were meeting with him.

20 Mr. Castor. Okay. And there's some -- I mean, there's some ambiguity in the
21 direction to work with Rudy Giuliani. Ambassador Volker said the President dismissed
22 Ukraine and said, Oh, if you want to work on it, just go talk to Rudy. And Ambassador
23 Sondland took that a little bit differently. And I believe that Ambassador Volker was
24 primarily the interlocutor with Mr. Giuliani, and that was happening -- didn't start until
25 the end of July.

1 Ms. Hill. I only learned that subsequently from Ambassador Volker's deposition.
2 So I just want to tell you, in that particular timeframe I was not aware of that. And in
3 fact, Gordon Sondland did refer to Rudy Giuliani, and again, Ambassador Bolton had
4 warned Ambassador Volker not to meet with Rudy Giuliani in a meeting.

5 Mr. Castor. Mr. Morrison told us both in his deposition and in his public hearing
6 that you had related concerns about Colonel Vindman's judgment?

7 Ms. Hill. I did not relate any concerns in general terms about Colonel Vindman's
8 judgment. So I was somewhat surprised when I heard Mr. Morrison make that assertion
9 when I read his deposition.

10 There was a very specific point that was made. And again, these are personnel
11 issues, and I'm sure that nobody here would like to have their private personnel issues
12 put before a committee, but you've asked me about this.

13 So I had a couple of very short transition meetings with Mr. Morrison. And,
14 again, Mr. Morrison did not work in our directorate. He was taking over the position,
15 which he held for 3 months. I had worked as the director, the senior director for Europe
16 and Eurasia, it was at the time, for more than 2 years at this point, and I'd been working
17 for a year with Colonel Vindman, with Mr. Vindman.

18 And in the course of one of the meetings, sometime in the June timeframe, I sat
19 down with Mr. Morrison and with a deputy referred to him in his deposition, John Erath,
20 who was also working, and we went through our organizational charts. We went
21 through who was staying, who was rotating out and leaving in the summer, and we talked
22 about everybody's strengths and weaknesses.

23 And I always asked my staff to do upward feedback as well, to talk about what I
24 wasn't doing right either. I would like to learn, too. And I said that I was concerned
25 about the way things were trending in Ukraine policy.

1 So Colonel Vindman is a highly distinguished, decorated military officer. He
2 came over to us from the Chairman's office in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And we were
3 evaluating and looking at him in the context of what his future positions would be in the
4 context of the U.S. Army.

5 And I was concerned that if, for example, Colonel Vindman might decide to leave
6 the military, that perhaps he wasn't as well suited for something that would be much
7 more political. I did not feel that he had the political antenna to deal with something
8 that was straying into domestic politics. Not everyone is suited for that.

9 That does not mean in any way that I was questioning his overall judgment, nor
10 was I questioning in any way his substantive expertise. He is excellent on issues related
11 to Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, on Russian defense issues.

12 He had been in charge of the Russia campaign, thinking through at the Chairman's
13 office and in the Pentagon. This is a very specific issue. Because by June, we saw that
14 things were diverging and needed a completely different sensitivity.

15 Some people in my office have worked at the highest levels of advisory positions,
16 and Mr. Morrison had come from Capitol Hill. He knew politics inside out. And we
17 said that Colonel Vindman did not, and we were concerned about how he would manage
18 what was becoming a highly charged and potentially partisan issue which had not been
19 before.

20 Mr. Castor. And Colonel Vindman related to us during his deposition that he
21 subsequently was sort of cut out of a lot of the decisionmaking and involvements with the
22 embassy in Ukraine. Was that something you recommended?

23 Ms. Hill. Not with the embassy in Ukraine. I mean, we did pull him back from
24 the meeting in May in the Oval Office. And subsequently we were very concerned
25 about these political aspects to this, and we did not feel -- when July 10th, Colonel

1 Vindman was justifiably alarmed when he realized that there was this highly political
2 aspect of the meeting that we were looking for eventually with President Zelensky.

3 Mr. Castor. And, Mr. Holmes, I want to -- at the end of August, we understand
4 that Ambassador Taylor was engaged in obtaining some information for the President
5 about European allies burden sharing in the region as the decision about aid was being
6 debated.

7 Mr. Holmes. So, sir, after the hold was placed on the security assistance, many
8 people, I think, were scrambling to try to understand why. I believe it was Senator
9 Johnson who had said that the President was concerned about burden sharing, perhaps
10 others as well.

11 And so trying to interpret why this might have happened, and we were looking
12 into the facts of what the Europeans have provided and what we have provided, it was
13 very illuminating what we learned.

14 The United States has provided combined civilian and military assistance to
15 Ukraine since 2014 of about \$3 billion, plus two \$1 billion -- three \$1 billion loan
16 guarantees. That is not -- those get paid back largely. So just over \$3 billion.

17 The Europeans, at the level of the European Union, plus the member states
18 combined, since 2014, my understanding, have provided a combined \$12 billion to
19 Ukraine.

20 Mr. Castor. And you were able to communicate that information back at the end
21 of August?

22 Mr. Holmes. I believe so, yeah. This was done in collaboration with other
23 missions, to the EU, to NATO, and others, yes.

24 Mr. Castor. And do you think that was the information the White House was
25 looking for?

1 Mr. Holmes. We don't know. If the concern was that we weren't -- that others
2 weren't spending as much as we were to support Ukraine, then that information showed
3 a different story.

4 Mr. Castor. Okay. And the aid was subsequently lifted -- the pause in the aid
5 was lifted shortly thereafter?

6 Mr. Holmes. It was -- yes, in early September -- in mid-September.

7 Mr. Castor. Yield back.

8 The Chairman. That concludes the 45-minute rounds. We'll now go to member
9 questioning. I'll recognize myself for 5 minutes.

10 First, as a threshold matter, I want to say to the witnesses to be a bit cautious
11 when Members represent, are you aware of this fact, are you aware of that fact, do you
12 know that so and so testified to this or testified to that. If you have personal knowledge
13 of it, that's fine, but -- and I'm not saying this is deliberate -- sometimes Members get it
14 wrong.

15 So let me just clear the record on one of the things that was suggested to you,
16 that the Vice President canceled his trip because of a conflict with a trip to Canada. That
17 was not Ms. Williams' testimony. Her testimony was: I asked my colleague why we
18 should stop trip planning and why the Vice President would not be attending, and I was
19 informed that the President had decided the Vice President would not attend the
20 inauguration.

21 So just offer that caution.

22 Dr. Hill, I want to ask you, you may be aware of some of the attacks on Colonel
23 Vindman suggesting that he has a dual loyalty, that he's not really loyal to America, he's
24 loyal to Ukraine. I want to ask you, as a fellow immigrant, what you think of those kind
25 of accusations when they're leveled against Colonel Vindman or other Americans?

1 Ms. Hill. I think it's very unfortunate. I mean, this is a country of immigrants.
2 You know, with the exception, you know, perhaps of very few people still here, everyone
3 immigrated to the United States at some point in their family history.

4 And this is what, for me, really does make America great. I mean, I'm sure that
5 every single person here -- some people perhaps came reluctantly, others came by
6 choice, as I did. But this is, for me, this is the essence of America. It's why I wanted to
7 be here and why I wanted to stay here. And I think it's unfair to castigate anyone.

8 Everyone has some kind of epaulet to them. I'm Anglo American perhaps, or I'm
9 a British American, I'm a naturalized citizen. I do not believe that my loyalty is to the
10 United Kingdom. My loyalty is here to the United States. This is my country and the
11 country that I serve.

12 And I know for a fact that every single one of my colleagues -- and there were
13 many naturalized citizens in my office and across the National Security Council -- felt
14 exactly the same way. I think it's deeply unfair.

15 The Chairman. I thank you.

16 You mentioned something in your testimony -- I might not have this exactly
17 right -- that I think Ambassador Sondland at one point told you his role was to make
18 deals. Is that right?

19 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

20 The Chairman. I want to ask you --

21 Ms. Hill. And he told other people that as well, to be clear.

22 The Chairman. I want to ask you about one of those deals, the one that
23 Ambassador Bolton described as a drug deal. I had the suggestion -- or the indication,
24 rather -- when Mr. Goldman was asking you questions about the July 10th meeting and
25 the fact there were two meetings -- one in Ambassador Bolton's presence and then

1 another in the Ward Room -- that there was more you had to say about that. Do you
2 want to walk us through that in a little more detail?

3 Ms. Hill. Well, the reference that Ambassador Bolton made was after I returned
4 from the Ward Room and related to him what I had heard, because as -- so there was the
5 sequencing of meetings, which I know that there's been some concern about the
6 sequencing here and discrepancies between various depositions.

7 So what happened immediately after the meeting that Ambassador Bolton caught
8 a little short was that he told me to hold back in the room. And he was escorting out
9 the Ukrainian visitors, along with Secretary Perry and Ambassadors Volker and Sondland,
10 and I guess they wanted to take a quick photograph outside of his office. And I know
11 that Secretary Perry and others have tweeted out that photograph, beautiful sunny day,
12 and there's a picture of all of them standing just outside of Ambassador Bolton's office.

13 This was very quick. He came back in, and at that point I guess they were already
14 moving down to the Ward Room, because on the way out of Ambassador Bolton's office,
15 Ambassador Sondland had said, let's regroup in the Ward Room for, you know, a quick
16 huddle on next steps.

17 Which, to be honest, was quite unusual. You don't usually huddle in a room in
18 the White House to discuss next steps with foreign delegations. Because we took it to
19 being next steps on setting up the meeting, which already, as I had said, Ambassador
20 Bolton wasn't prepared to do.

21 And when Ambassador Bolton came back into the office, that's when he gave me
22 the very strong instruction to go downstairs, find out what was being discussed, and to
23 come right back up and report it to him.

24 And as I came into the Ward Room, Alex Vindman, Colonel Vindman, and
25 Ambassador Sondland were in an exchange, and that's when I noticed that Colonel

1 Vindman looked quite alarmed.

2 Now, I know that Ambassador Sondland was asked yesterday -- because, again, I
3 watched all of his testimony and I watched it very carefully -- that there were some
4 questions about yelling and shouting. I certainly never said that, and there was no
5 yelling and shouting. That's some embellishment that's crept in perhaps in media
6 depictions or how people like to retell these stories and add things to them.

7 When I came in, Ambassador Sondland was in an exchange with Colonel Vindman
8 along the lines of, well, we have an agreement to have this meeting. And I came in and I
9 asked, what's going on here? And he said -- and this is, again, the Ukrainians are there,
10 Ambassador Volker was there. But at this point I also want to stress, Secretary Perry
11 had left. He was not in the Ward Room when I came. As I was coming in, Secretary
12 Perry and his colleagues were leaving. So Secretary Perry has no recollection of this
13 meeting, because he was not in it.

14 And so when I came in, Gordon Sondland was basically saying, well, look, we have
15 a deal here that there will be a meeting -- I have a deal here with Chief of Staff Mulvaney,
16 there will be a meeting if the Ukrainians open up or announce these investigations into
17 2016 and Burisma.

18 And I cut it off immediately there. Because by this point, having heard
19 Mr. Giuliani over and over again on the television and all of the issues that he was
20 asserting, by this point it was clear that Burisma was code for the Bidens, because Giuliani
21 was laying it out there.

22 I could see why Colonel Vindman was alarmed, and he said, this is inappropriate,
23 we're the National Security Council, we can't be involved in this. And I've learned, you
24 know, since, from Mr. Holmes' rendition here today, that Colonel Vindman has already
25 warned the Ukrainians or, in fact, President Zelensky, no less, to stay out of American

1 politics, domestic politics.

2 So I cut off this line and I said to Ambassador Sondland, look, we need procedures
3 for here, Ambassador Bolton just made it clear we can't set up the meeting right now, we
4 have to properly prepare this through the proper process, I know this sounds all very
5 boring, but, you know, we have national security procedures to do this. And I said, and
6 we really shouldn't be litigating this or talking about this in front of our colleagues from
7 Ukraine. It was completely inappropriate for us to be thrashing this out in front of
8 them.

9 And he agreed, and we asked our Ukrainian colleagues to move into the corridor
10 outside the Ward Room. And I explained where this is in the deposition, which is also
11 extraordinarily awkward, because they shouldn't have been standing around in a corridor
12 in the -- you know, basically in the West Wing at this particular juncture.

13 And that's when I pushed back on Ambassador Sondland and said, look, I know
14 there's differences about when we should have this meeting, we're trying to figure out
15 whether we should have it after the Ukrainian democratic -- sorry -- parliamentary
16 elections, the Rada elections, which by that point I think had been set for July 21st -- it
17 must have been, because this is July 10th at this point -- and Ambassador Bolton would
18 like to wait until after that to basically see whether President Zelensky gets the majority
19 in the Parliament, which would enable him to form a cabinet and then we can move
20 forward.

21 Ambassador Sondland then said, okay, fair enough. He realized he wasn't going
22 to, you know, be able to push this further.

23 Ambassador Volker didn't say anything at this particular juncture. And then he
24 said he had another meeting, and they all left.

25 And I went back up and relayed this to Ambassador Bolton, which is when he gave

1 me the very specific instruction that we've already been through, to go to talk to
2 Mr. Eisenberg, John Eisenberg, in the NSC counsel's office.

3 The Chairman. Thank you.

4 Mr. Nunes.

5 Mr. Nunes. I assume we're getting 8 minutes there.

6 The Chairman. Mr. Nunes, I don't cut off a witness in the middle of their answer.
7 You may proceed.

8 Ms. Hill. Sorry, that was a long answer.

9 The Chairman. Mr. Jordan.

10 Mr. Jordan. Mr. Holmes, why didn't your boss talk about it?

11 Mr. Holmes. What's that, sir?

12 Mr. Jordan. Why didn't your boss bring up the call that you overheard, the
13 reason you're here today? I mean, you're their closing witness. Yet their star witness,
14 their first witness, Ambassador Taylor, didn't even bring it up.

15 And when we deposed you, you said this was extremely distinctive experience,
16 one of the most remarkable events of my life. You described it like this. You said, after
17 the call happens, I immediately told deputy chief of mission and others at the embassy
18 about the call. Then you said you went on vacation. You told several friends and
19 family about the call. Then you come back on August 6th, and you tell Ambassador
20 Taylor about the call.

21 And then in your deposition statement, you said in your statement today as well, I
22 repeatedly referred to the call in meetings and conversations where the issue of the
23 President's interest in Ukraine was relevant. I repeatedly referred to the call in
24 meetings and conversations where the issue of the President's interest in Ukraine was
25 relevant. That sounds like government speak for you told everybody.

1 Yet their star witness, their first witness, Ambassador Taylor, when he came here,
2 he related 13 different conversations he had between July 18th, when the aid is frozen,
3 September 11th, when it's released, 13 different conversations, never once mentioning
4 this call.

5 July 19th, Dr. Hill and Colonel Vindman told Taylor what Sondland told them.
6 July 19th, Sondland told Taylor about the upcoming Trump-Zelensky call. July 20th,
7 Sondland told Taylor what Sondland told Zelensky to tell Trump. July 20th, Danylyuk
8 tells Taylor what Zelensky told Danylyuk. July 28th, Morrison tells Taylor what
9 happened on the Trump-Zelensky call. August 16th, Volker tells Taylor what Yermak
10 told Volker. August 21st, Brechbuhl talks to Taylor. August 22nd, Morrison talks to
11 Taylor. August 29th, Yermak talks to Taylor. September 1st, Morrison tells Taylor
12 what Sondland told Morrison about what Yermak told Sondland. September 2nd,
13 Morrison tells Taylor what Danylyuk told Morrison. September 7th, Morrison tells
14 Taylor what Sondland told Trump. And September 8th, Sondland tells Taylor what
15 Trump told Sondland.

16 Nowhere, nowhere, is there a Holmes tells Taylor what the President of the
17 United States told Sondland. Thirteen conversations --

18 Mr. Holmes. May I answer that question?

19 Mr. Jordan. Yeah, I'll get to you. I'll give you a chance here in a second.

20 Mr. Holmes. Thank you.

21 Mr. Jordan. But 13 conversations, 13 conversations from their star witness,
22 you're their closing witness, and he can't remember a call from a guy he works with every
23 single day. Why?

24 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. So immediately when I went back to the embassy after
25 this lunch on the 26th, I told my direct supervisor, the deputy chief of mission. I would

1 have told Ambassador Taylor immediately except he was on the front lines that
2 afternoon.

3 I then went on, as I've testified, my vacation on Saturday. Came back the
4 following Monday. And on Tuesday I was back in the ambassador's office, where I
5 referred to the call.

6 In that week-plus that I was away it was my assumption that the deputy chief of
7 mission would have informed other people about the call as well.

8 So my recollection is when I did refer to the call in that meeting, that Ambassador
9 Taylor nodded, knowingly, as though he had been briefed on it.

10 So I referred to the call and I mentioned some of my takeaways from the call.
11 And at the time, the main takeaway from the call was, the President doesn't care about
12 Ukraine. So we're going to have a tough road ahead to convince him that it's important
13 enough for him to schedule an Oval Office meeting for President Zelensky and ultimately
14 to release this hold on security assistance.

15 That was the takeaway. And that's what I referred to repeatedly in the coming
16 weeks whenever it became relevant.

17 And I'll remind you, sir, that --

18 Mr. Jordan. Maybe --

19 Mr. Holmes. -- one more important point.

20 Throughout this time, as I've testified, we were trying to find a formula, things we
21 could do with the Ukrainians that would convince the President that they were worth
22 talking to.

23 Mr. Jordan. Maybe, maybe, Mr. Holmes, the takeaway was, he thought it was no
24 big deal because he already knew. He didn't remember it because we already had the
25 transcript.

1 Mr. Holmes. No --

2 Mr. Jordan. He didn't remember the -- he didn't remember the -- we had the
3 Trump-Zelensky transcript had been out for 2 months.

4 Mr. Holmes. Sir, I believe that when I --

5 Mr. Jordan. Even though you're repeatedly bringing this conversation up, as you
6 said, to everybody, when it's -- anytime there's a talk about Ukraine, you recall this
7 conversation.

8 Maybe it was -- the transcript -- the call happened on the July 25th, that's 4
9 months ago. The transcript's been out for 2 months. Maybe the Ambassador thought
10 this is nothing new here.

11 But, shazam, last week, you come forward with supposedly this new information.
12 There is nothing different in there than what we had on the transcript. Maybe that's the
13 reason their star witness, their first witness, didn't bring it up.

14 But they had to have something, so you're their closing witness because you
15 overheard -- you overheard the President talking to Ambassador Sondland.

16 Mr. Holmes. Sir, if I could answer -- I see 4 seconds left on the clock. I
17 believe --

18 The Chairman. Mr. Holmes, you may talk as long as you need.

19 Mr. Holmes. Thank you, sir.

20 I believe that Ambassador Taylor did already know when I briefed him, when I
21 returned from vacation on the 6th. He -- it was not news to him that the President was
22 pressing for a Biden investigation.

23 Mr. Jordan. That's not what I asked. I asked why he didn't share it with us.

24 The Chairman. Mr. Jordan, Mr. Jordan, please do not interrupt the witness any
25 further.

1 Mr. Holmes --

2 Mr. Holmes. This is exactly --

3 The Chairman. -- Mr. Jordan's time has expired, but yours has not.

4 Mr. Holmes. Okay, thank you, sir.

5 The Chairman. You may answer the question.

6 Mr. Holmes. It's exactly my point. I briefed the call in detail to the deputy chief
7 of mission. Went away for a week. Come back. I referred to the call, and everyone is
8 nodding. Of course that's what's going on. Of course the President is pressing for a
9 Biden investigation before he'll do these things the Ukrainians want. There was nodding
10 agreement.

11 So did I go through every single word in the call? No, because everyone by that
12 point agreed, it was obvious what the President was pressing for. And Ambassador
13 Taylor, as you've just outlined, had all those other interactions with all these other --

14 Mr. Jordan. But he didn't share it with us.

15 The Chairman. Mr. Jordan, please do not interrupt.

16 Mr. Holmes. But, sir, sir -- but, sir, my vivid recollection of an event I was
17 involved with was a touchstone experience that to me validated --

18 Mr. Jordan. And --

19 Mr. Holmes. -- what -- sir, if I could --

20 The Chairman. Mr. Jordan, please do not interrupt.

21 Mr. Holmes. -- what we believed. And Ambassador Taylor was not in that call.

22 Mr. Jordan. And so all of a sudden, last week, you got to come tell us, right?

1 RPTR PANGBURN

2 EDTR HOFSTAD

3 [2:00 p.m.]

4 The Chairman. Mr. Jordan, we will allow the witness to answer the question.

5 Mr. Holmes. I'll finish with this.

6 The Chairman. Thank you.

7 Mr. Holmes. He was involved in a number of other interactions, as you've
8 outlined, that brought him to the same conclusion. It is quite possible that that --

9 Mr. Jordan. So he doesn't share the one that --

10 The Chairman. Mr. Jordan --

11 Mr. Jordan. -- the guy he worked with --

12 The Chairman. Mr. Jordan --

13 Mr. Jordan. -- he didn't share that one.

14 The Chairman. Mr. Jordan, you may not like the witness's answer, but --

15 Mr. Jordan. No, I --

16 The Chairman. -- we will hear it.

17 Mr. Jordan. That wasn't an answer; that was a filibuster.

18 The Chairman. Mr. Jordan, we will hear the witness's answer.

19 Have you concluded, Mr. Holmes?

20 Mr. Holmes. I have, sir. Thank you.

21 The Chairman. Thank you.

22 Mr. Himes.

23 Mr. Himes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Dr. Hill and Mr. Holmes, thank you for your testimony.

25 Dr. Hill, you made a fairly dramatic comment in your opening statement to which

1 the ranking member took some exception. I'm more interested in the Ukraine piece of
2 this, but you said, "Some of you on this committee appear to believe that Russia and its
3 security services did not conduct a campaign against our country and that, perhaps,
4 somehow, for some reason, Ukraine did."

5 I'm really much more interested in the Ukraine piece of this, but I do want to
6 defend you briefly. I don't know what my colleagues believe, but I do have a pretty
7 good sense of what the effects are of creating ambiguity, of lacking clarity and conviction
8 around the Russian attack on the election of 2016.

9 In response to your comment, the ranking member offered up a report, which
10 varies in material respects from the report that was created by the 17 agencies of the
11 Intelligence Community. A day does not go by in which Ranking Member Nunes does
12 not speak of the "Russia hoax." And this is an area in which context is pretty important.

13 Dr. Hill, let me read you a comment by another senior official. "Why did
14 Democratic National Committee turn down the DHS offer to protect against hacks? It's
15 all a big Dem HOAX," all caps. "Why did the DNC refuse to turn over its server to the
16 FBI? It's all a big Dem scam."

17 Dr. Hill, do you know who said those things?

18 Ms. Hill. I don't.

19 Mr. Himes. That's the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump. So you
20 might be forgiven for your --

21 Ms. Hill. I must have missed that. Yeah.

22 Mr. Himes. Yeah. You didn't miss much.

23 But my point is -- and tell me if you agree or disagree. Ambiguity, a failure to
24 name and shame the Russians for the attack in 2016, that is not in the service of our
25 national security, is it?

1 Ms. Hill. It's not, no.

2 Mr. Himes. It's not.

3 So let's turn to Ukraine. Dr. Hill, have you seen a -- you've characterized the idea
4 that Ukraine interfered in the election as a "fictional narrative." Have you seen any
5 evidence at all that Ukraine interfered in the 2016 election?

6 Ms. Hill. Well, I brought with me two exhibits that I was pointed to, in fact, by
7 our colleagues during the deposition that I gave on October 14th. And, actually, I'm
8 quite grateful that they pointed me in this direction. I was presented during my
9 deposition with two articles, or, at least, two pieces of information.

10 One was an op-ed that the Ukrainian Ambassador Chaly wrote in 2016 in The Hill.
11 So this is during the Presidential campaign, when President Trump was then the nominee
12 for the Republican Party. And this is Ambassador Chaly, who was then, you know, still
13 the Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States, being critical of President Trump, who
14 was then the nominee for the Republican Party, for making comments about Ukraine,
15 Crimea, and Russia.

16 Mr. Himes. May I interrupt you there?

17 Let me be very specific about what those comments were. The President, when
18 he was a candidate, said, quote, "The people of Crimea, from what I've heard, would
19 rather be with Russia than where they were."

20 So Ambassador Chaly is responding to that in that article, correct?

21 Ms. Hill. That's correct. And he just uses this as a peg, because, to be honest,
22 the whole article is actually about Ukraine. And this is classic, standard for anyone who
23 wants to write an op-ed. I've written plenty of them myself. You pick a peg by --

24 Mr. Himes. Right.

25 Ms. Hill. -- something that you or somebody else might have said, and then you

1 proceed to say what you want to say.

2 Mr. Himes. Right. So here it is --

3 Ms. Hill. So this is what Ambassador Chaly does, is he talks about Ukraine's
4 position vis-à-vis Russia and Russian aggression against Ukraine.

5 Mr. Himes. Yeah. And let me just read, because it's worth people hearing this
6 severe attack on candidate Trump, who has suggested that the Crimeans would rather be
7 with Russia.

8 Ambassador Chaly writes, "Even if Trump's comments are only speculative and do
9 not really reflect a future foreign policy, they call for appeasement of an aggressor and
10 support the violation of a sovereign country's territorial integrity and another's breach of
11 international law."

12 Dun, dun, dun. That's the attack on candidate Trump.

13 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

14 Mr. Himes. Does that sound like election interference to you?

15 Ms. Hill. Well, I would say that it's probably not the most advisable thing to do
16 for an ambassador, because you never know who's going to win.

17 And I think that the second piece that was presented to me at great length -- and I
18 want to thank Mr. Castor for making me go back and read it again.

19 Because when you asked me the questions about it, I did remember the
20 piece -- Kenneth Vogel is a very well-known and, you know, as you've pointed out,
21 extremely good journalist. And I'd remembered reading this back in the day, in January
22 of 2017, but it'd been a long time between then and October. And you gave me a copy,
23 and I went back and read it again, because I think it actually is extraordinarily important.
24 It gets to this issue here.

25 Mr. Vogel points out that the Ukrainian Government -- again, you know, they

1 wouldn't have done very well at the bookies, picking up the issue I pointed out in the
2 beginning of today. They bet on the wrong horse. They bet on Hillary Clinton winning
3 the election. And so, you know, they were trying to curry favor with the Clinton
4 campaign, it's quite evident in here.

5 And he relates, you know, to some extent, individuals and some Ukrainian
6 officials, like Mr. Avakov, the Interior Minister, and a number of other people that he
7 names here and that have been named at various points, and talks about how they were
8 trying to collect information, as Ranking Member Nunes said, on Mr. Manafort and on
9 other people as well.

10 However, I do want to point out that the crux of the article here by Mr. Vogel is he
11 said, there was little evidence of a top-down effort by Ukraine. And he makes a
12 distinction between the Russian effort that was personally directed by Russian President
13 Putin and involved the country's military and foreign intelligence services. Now, I don't
14 think that those two things are exactly the same.

15 I also mentioned in my deposition of October 14th, that, in fact, many officials
16 from many countries, including Ukraine, bet on the wrong horse. They believed that
17 Secretary Clinton, former Senator Clinton, former First Lady Clinton, was going to win.
18 And many said some pretty disparaging and hurtful things about President Trump, and I
19 can't blame him for feeling aggrieved about them.

20 And when we were setting up head-of-state visits -- and, remember, I have a
21 portfolio of 50-plus countries, plus NATO and the European Union -- we thought it
22 prudent to collect as much as possible about comments that people might have said
23 about the President during the campaign, when he was either one of the candidates to be
24 the nominee for the Republican Party or when he was actually the candidate running
25 against Hillary Clinton.

1 And I'm sorry to say that an awful lot -- and perhaps I shouldn't name them here,
2 because it will have consequences -- an awful lot of senior officials in many governments,
3 including our allied governments, said some pretty hurtful things about the President.
4 And I would also personally take offense at some of the things that were said, if I were
5 the President.

6 Now, the difference here, however, is that that hasn't had any major impact on his
7 feelings towards those countries, not that I have seen.

8 But I've also heard the President say -- and he said it in public, so I'm not revealing
9 any kind of executive privilege here -- that "Ukraine tried to take me down." What I
10 have seen is that some ill-advised Ukrainian officials -- Ambassador Chaly has been
11 removed as being the Ambassador from here -- made some pretty, you know, unpleasant
12 statements or some ill-advised op-eds. But I could list a whole host of ambassadors
13 from allied countries who tweeted out, who had public comments about the President as
14 well, and it did not affect security assistance, having meetings with them. If it would,
15 there'd have been a lot of people he wouldn't have met with.

16 Mr. Himes. Thank you, Dr. Hill.

17 Mr. Chairman, I seek unanimous consent to add to the record a Politico article of
18 December 1st, 2016, entitled "Russia Accuses Ukraine of Sabotaging Trump." It outlines
19 Russian senior officials making allegations that there was Ukrainian interference in the
20 2016 election.

21 The Chairman. Without objection.

22 [The article follows:]

23

24 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1 The Chairman. Mr. Conaway?

2 Mr. Conaway. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 I yield to Mr. Ratcliffe 5 minutes.

4 Mr. Ratcliffe. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

5 I want to pick up where my colleague across the aisle, Congressman Himes, left off
6 earlier. Respectfully, Dr. Hill, he was not defending you; he was defending himself and
7 Democrats.

8 I want to make sure the record's very clear. Ranking Member Nunes was
9 correct. He correctly noted in his opening that Republicans, not Democrats, on this
10 committee were the first ones, the first ones, to raise the issue of Russian interference in
11 the 2016 election. The disagreement wasn't about Russian meddling. The
12 disagreement was about whether or not President Trump conspired with Russia -- a false
13 allegation peddled by the Democrats generally and specifically by some Democrats on
14 this committee.

15 With that, Mr. Holmes, I want to turn to you and the part of the conversation,
16 your testimony, where you said you heard President Trump say, "Is he going to do the
17 investigation?", and Ambassador Sondland said, "He's going to do it. He'll do anything
18 you ask him to." Is that right?

19 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

20 Mr. Ratcliffe. What did President Trump say next?

21 Mr. Holmes. He said -- he said, "Good. What about Sweden?"

22 Mr. Ratcliffe. He said what?

23 Mr. Holmes. Sir, he -- I'm sorry. I need to look back at where we are in the
24 middle of the conversation here. Where are we in the testimony?

25 Exactly. It says, "Then they turned to the Sweden conversation."

1 Mr. Ratcliffe. What did President Trump say next?

2 Mr. Holmes. He said, "Good. What about Sweden?"

3 Mr. Ratcliffe. "Good. What about Sweden?" "Good. What about Sweden?"
4 Why isn't that in your statement?

5 Mr. Holmes. Sir, it's not a word-for-word, every single word in the conversation.

6 Mr. Ratcliffe. But it's the most important part of the conversation.

7 Mr. Holmes. Well, then they turned to Sweden. They turned to the other
8 topic.

9 Mr. Ratcliffe. Respectfully, Mr. Holmes, this impeachment inquiry is based on
10 the call the day before, where President Trump, as part of a bribery scheme, as part of an
11 extortion scheme, as part of a quid pro quo, according to the Democrats, demanded
12 investigations in exchange for either military aid or a White House meeting. And the
13 next day, you were witness to President Trump receiving word that the bribery scheme
14 was successful, the extortion scheme was successful. And his response was, "Good.
15 What about Sweden?"

16 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. The Ukraine portion of that conversation was extremely
17 brief.

18 Mr. Ratcliffe. What was the first thing the President said on the call?

19 Mr. Holmes. The -- this was --

20 Mr. Ratcliffe. You had a clear recollection of this conversation.

21 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

22 The Chairman. Mr. Ratcliffe, please allow Mr. Holmes to answer.

23 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. Sondland greeted the President --

24 Mr. Ratcliffe. How?

25 Mr. Holmes. He said, I'm in -- he said, "Hello, Mr. President. I'm in Kyiv." And

1 the President correct -- said, "Are you in Ukraine?"

2 Mr. Ratcliffe. You think he said, "I think you're in Ukraine"? He said what?

3 Mr. Holmes. He said, "Are you in" -- "Is Kyiv Ukraine?"

4 Mr. Ratcliffe. What did you hear President Trump say about A\$AP Rocky?

5 Mr. Holmes. I did not hear President Trump's side of the conversation about
6 A\$AP Rocky.

7 Mr. Ratcliffe. You said -- how did we go from, the conversation was very loud
8 and his voice was recognizable, to, as you say here, when the conversation shifted, I could
9 only hear Ambassador Sondland's side of the conversation?

10 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir. As I have testified, the initial part of the call, Ambassador
11 Sondland, sort of -- when the President came on the call, he sort of winced and held the
12 phone away from his ear for the initial portion of the call.

13 And then, at some point in the call, he stopped doing that. And I don't know
14 why. I don't know if he turned the volume down; I don't know if the President spoke
15 more quietly; I don't know if he got used to the volume; I don't know what changed --

16 Mr. Ratcliffe. What did change? It's important. This was memorable.

17 Mr. Holmes. I don't know, sir. It was -- Ambassador Sondland stopped moving
18 the phone away from his ear. That's what --

19 Mr. Ratcliffe. That's what it was?

20 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

21 Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

22 How did the conversation end?

23 Mr. Holmes. I only heard Ambassador Sondland's side of the conversation, sir.

24 And at the end of the conversation, he said -- he said -- he was giving the President advice
25 on how to deal with this A\$AP Rocky situation. And he said, you know, "They should've

1 released him on your word," and "You can tell the Kardashians you tried."

2 Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

3 So, to be clear, when President Trump received word that President Zelensky had
4 agreed to the investigations, he said, "Good. What about Sweden?"

5 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

6 Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

7 When exactly did Gordon Sondland ask President Zelensky about the
8 investigations?

9 Mr. Holmes. I'm sorry, sir?

10 Mr. Ratcliffe. When did he ask about the investigations?

11 Mr. Holmes. When did Gordon Sondland ask Zelensky about the investigations?

12 Mr. Ratcliffe. Yeah.

13 Mr. Holmes. Are you asking in which meeting did he raise the investigations?

14 Mr. Ratcliffe. Well, it was raised the day before on a call --

15 Mr. Holmes. Yeah.

16 Mr. Ratcliffe. -- and, the next day, Gordon Sondland said the answer to that
17 was --

18 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

19 Mr. Ratcliffe. -- he's going to do the investigations. So when did he ask about
20 the investigations?

21 Mr. Holmes. My assumption is he did it in a closed-door meeting with Yermak.

22 Mr. Ratcliffe. Well, I want to --

23 The Chairman. The time of the gentleman has expired.

24 Mr. Ratcliffe. I appreciate that, but I want to make sure the record's clear that,
25 yesterday, Ambassador Sondland testified --

1 The Chairman. The time of the gentleman --

2 Mr. Ratcliffe. -- that the topic of conversations did not come up on that day.

3 I yield back.

4 The Chairman. The time of the gentleman has expired.

5 Ms. Sewell, you're recognized.

6 Ms. Sewell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 I'd like to thank both of our witnesses for being here today.

8 I'd like to turn our discussion to the campaign to remove career diplomat

9 Ambassador Yovanovitch. Both of you, in your various capacities, had to work with her,
10 and both of you witnessed what I would call a smear campaign.

11 I wanted to know your thoughts, Dr. Hill. What was your view of Ambassador
12 Yovanovitch's experience and quality of her work in the Ukraine? And do you consider it
13 to be a smear campaign?

14 Ms. Hill. I have the highest regard for Ambassador Yovanovitch, both in terms of
15 her integrity and the high standards of work that she was carrying out as Ambassador in
16 Ukraine and across her whole career.

17 I do believe that there was a smear campaign. And I just want to say, again, for
18 the record, that I think it was unnecessary. If there was a decision to have a political
19 ambassador put in place in Ukraine, that would be perfectly acceptable. It's exactly the
20 right of the President to be able to do that. I just did not see why it was necessary to
21 malign Ambassador Yovanovitch to such an extent.

22 Ms. Sewell. Mr. Holmes, would you agree with that? And can you talk about
23 the character, integrity, and performance of Professor -- I mean, Ambassador Yovanovitch
24 both in Ukraine?

25 Mr. Holmes. Yes, ma'am. She was extremely professional, respected in

1 Ukraine by Ukrainians, I think also by visiting American senior officials, including members
2 of this committee and of Congress, who came to visit. She is extremely dedicated,
3 hard-working.

4 Ms. Sewell. Did you see it as a smear campaign as well?

5 Mr. Holmes. I did, yes.

6 Ms. Sewell. And what was the effect that it had on the morale of other
7 professionals that you worked with in the Ukraine?

8 Mr. Holmes. It was a very confusing time. As I have said before, the President
9 has the right to remove an ambassador for any or no reason at all. It was not clear to us
10 why this was happening or why people weren't standing up for her.

11 Ms. Sewell. I'd like to now turn, Dr. Hill, to your boss. Your boss was
12 Ambassador Bolton, right?

13 Ms. Hill. That's correct, yes.

14 Ms. Sewell. Did your boss, Ambassador Bolton, tell you that Giuliani was, quote,
15 "a hand grenade"?

16 Ms. Hill. He did, yes.

17 Ms. Sewell. What do you think he met by his characterization of Giuliani as a
18 hand grenade?

19 Ms. Hill. What he meant by this was pretty clear to me in the context of all of
20 the statements that Mr. Giuliani was making publicly, that the investigations that he was
21 promoting, that the story line he was promoting, the narrative he was promoting was
22 going to backfire. I think it has backfired.

23 Ms. Sewell. Was that narrative also inclusive of falsehoods about Ambassador
24 Yovanovitch?

25 Ms. Hill. At the particular juncture that Ambassador Bolton made that comment,

1 absolutely, because that was in the context of my discussions with him about what was
2 happening to Ambassador Yovanovitch.

3 Ms. Sewell. I was particularly struck by your testimony, Dr. Hill, about receiving
4 hateful calls and being accused of being a source, mole, in the White House. Are you a
5 Never Trumper, or have you been true to your profession and remain nonpartisan?

6 Ms. Hill. I honestly don't know what the definition of a Never Trumper is, as I
7 think many of my colleagues are feeling the same way, that it's a puzzling term to be
8 applied to career or nonpartisan officials. And I chose to come into the administration.
9 I could easily have said no when I was approached by the people --

10 Ms. Sewell. Yes, but you didn't sign up to have hateful calls and the like?

11 Ms. Hill. I guess, unfortunately, where we are today in America, that's coming
12 with the territory. They're continuing, honestly. I mean, we're constantly having to
13 block Twitter posts of my name and address on the internet. We've been doing this
14 over the last couple of days.

15 Ms. Sewell. I think that you would agree --

16 Ms. Hill. And as I said in my deposition, this could happen to any single person in
17 this room, be it members of the press, be it Members of Congress, and be it the staff.
18 And I think we have to find ways of combating this. And, again, this gets back, sadly, to
19 things that our adversaries can also exploit.

20 Ms. Sewell. Exactly. I think you would agree with me that this shouldn't
21 become the new normal. Would you agree?

22 Ms. Hill. It should not.

23 Ms. Sewell. I also think that this kind of behavior, instead of keeping you down,
24 would make you undeterred. Are you more determined to continue to do your work
25 and to do it professionally?

1 Ms. Hill. I am, and I think that all my colleagues are as well. Because, just as
2 you said, we can't let this stand. And I don't think anyone here wants to let this stand.
3 I actually don't believe that this is a partisan issue. I don't think anybody wants to come
4 under personal attack.

5 Ms. Sewell. Yeah. I, unfortunately, think that this has become the new norm
6 and that we're being led by the very top of the food chain, which is our President, which
7 is unfortunate.

8 I'm especially disheartened by his treatment of women, and I think that the fact of
9 the matter is that there's a long line of strong, talented women who have been smeared
10 and victimized by this President. And we can either choose to ignore it or do something
11 about it.

12 And, frankly, I think that whether you voted for him or whether you supported
13 him or not, that doing so is wrong. You could simply just remove someone. You don't
14 have to smear them.

15 Thank you. I yield back my time.

16 The Chairman. Mr. Turner.

17 Mr. Turner. Right. I just want to echo that sentiment and certainly lament the
18 attacks that have been levied against our colleague, Elise Stefanik, on this panel, which
19 have been vile and hateful.

20 For those of you keeping score at home, the efforts to accuse our President of
21 coercion, extortion, or bribery with these witnesses, as we now come to the closing
22 session of this, basically break down as follows:

23 We have Kent and Ambassador Taylor who spoke of hearsay. Their hearsay of
24 these matters that they said that they had heard were all statements that they'd heard
25 from others who have also testified in front of us. So there's no one that's missing,

1 there's no one out there. Kent and Taylor basically said that they'd heard it from
2 Morrison and Sondland. Morrison indicated he'd heard it from Sondland. Sondland
3 testified yesterday he'd heard it from no one on the planet.

4 Vindman and Morrison both have direct testimony of the phone call with the
5 President of the United States. Beyond that, they only had contact with Sondland.
6 And, again, Sondland indicated he had contact with no one on the planet.

7 Volker testified that he did have direct contact both with the Ukrainians and with
8 the President of the United States and indicated that the President of the United States
9 did not condition either a phone call, a meeting, or aid upon Ukraine undertaking
10 investigations and also testified that the Ukrainians did not believe that either.

11 We also have the direct statements from the President of Ukraine and the Foreign
12 Minister that they did not feel any pressure to undertake investigations. And we also
13 have the evidence that we're all very much aware of, which is, they did not undertake any
14 investigations.

15 We also have Yovanovitch and Dr. Hill. Yovanovitch, obviously, left before the
16 time period. Dr. Hill, we appreciate your being with us today, and Mr. Holmes.

17 Dr. Hill, you have provided me probably the greatest piece of evidence that's
18 before us to illustrate the problem with hearsay. So you said, based on questions and
19 statements, "I have heard some of you on this committee" -- that'd be us -- "appear to
20 believe that Russia and its security services did not conduct a campaign against our
21 country, and, perhaps, somehow, for some reason, it was Ukraine."

22 So this was held up by Devin Nunes. This is the "Report on Russian Active
23 Measures" that was voted on by all of us. It begins with this sentence: "In 2015,
24 Russia began engaging in a covert influence campaign aimed at the U.S. Presidential
25 election." Every one of us.

1 A little, small, like, you know, effort on your part, Dr. Hill, and you would have
2 known that what you just said was not true, what you had heard. But you felt the need
3 to put it in your eight-page statement before you went on to tell us a bunch of other
4 things that you heard about other people, no matter how convinced you were of, also
5 which were not necessarily true, one of which was that you said that Ambassador
6 Sondland met with Giuliani.

7 Actually, Ambassador Sondland testified here that he had not, as Ambassador,
8 met with Giuliani. He'd briefly met him in his lifetime by shaking his hand. And
9 Giuliani issued a statement that they had never met either.

10 This is the problem with, no matter how convinced we are, Dr. Hill, no matter how
11 much we believe we know that what we've heard is true, it is still just what we've heard.

12 But so far in this hearing, in this series of hearings, the only thing that we have is
13 Volker saying, I spoke to the President and I've spoke to Ukrainians, neither of which
14 believed that aid was conditioned, neither of which believed that the President was
15 requiring it, and Ambassador Sondland, which said no one on the planet told him that
16 that was the case. That's the sole evidence.

17 Now, I've got to tell you, the one thing that's interesting is Ambassador Sondland
18 did say it's his belief that a meeting with the President was conditioned upon
19 investigations. Ambassador Volker, who I think is a man of very significant integrity, said
20 that that was not the case.

21 Now, even if Ambassador Sondland is correct that somebody -- and, Dr. Hill, you
22 testified -- and, again, it's hearsay; you don't know -- that supposedly Mulvaney told him
23 that, because he didn't testify to that. But let's say somebody beside the President told
24 him that, you guys want to be the laughing stock of history, to impeach a President of the
25 United States because he didn't take a meeting? Oh, please, dear God. Please

1 undertake that.

2 Now, Mr. Holmes, I've got to tell you --

3 The Chairman. Is there a question for Dr. Hill?

4 Mr. Turner. Mr. Holmes, in your testimony, you said that Sondland said "he
5 loves your ass" and also said, "He'll do anything that you want."

6 Mr. Holmes. Uh-huh.

7 Mr. Turner. Mr. Holmes, that information had nothing whatsoever to do with
8 the subject matter of any of these hearings. It was anecdotal. It was extraneous.

9 Your statements that your interests are protecting Ukraine are very dubious when
10 you embarrass President Zelensky by making those statements that you didn't have to
11 make. Who cares that Ambassador Sondland said that?

12 And, you know, you didn't embarrass Ambassador Sondland; you embarrassed
13 Zelensky. Because you know he got asked this question in his own country, and people
14 are hearing that statement as if it's true --

15 The Chairman. The time of the gentleman has expired.

16 Mr. Turner. -- and it's totally dubious for you to do that.

17 The Chairman. Mr. Carson, you are recognized.

18 Mr. Turner. I yield back.

19 Mr. Carson. Thank you, Chairman.

20 Thank you both for your service.

21 Dr. Hill, I'd like to talk a little bit more in depth about Chief of Staff Mick
22 Mulvaney's role in the events under investigation.

23 You testified, ma'am, that Mr. Mulvaney and Ambassador Sondland were both
24 involved with a letter President Trump sent to the Ukrainian President on May 29th
25 congratulating him on his inauguration. Do you recall that, ma'am?

1 Ms. Hill. I did, yes.

2 Mr. Carson. And towards the end of that letter, President Trump closed with,
3 quote, "I would like to invite you to meet me at the White House in Washington, D.C., as
4 soon as we can find a mutually convenient time," end quote.

5 Dr. Hill, was this congratulatory letter drafted through the normal procedures at
6 the NSC that the NSC uses to send letters to foreign heads of state?

7 Ms. Hill. The first part of it was, except the last paragraph.

8 Mr. Carson. You also testified that Ambassador Sondland told you that he had
9 dictated that line to the President and that Mr. Mulvaney -- he told Mr. Mulvaney to add
10 that to the letter. Is that correct, ma'am?

11 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

12 Mr. Carson. You said that you were nervous about that. Why were you
13 nervous, Dr. Hill?

14 Ms. Hill. Because, at this juncture, it had become quite apparent that the
15 President wasn't very keen on having a meeting with Mr. Zelensky, for all the reasons that
16 we've been trying to lay out today. And we were -- once one puts in a letter like that,
17 you raise the expectation of an invitation coming shortly.

18 Mr. Carson. Dr. Hill, you also testified, ma'am, that Ambassador Sondland was
19 frequently meeting with Mr. Mulvaney. Mr. Giuliani's campaign of lies ultimately led to
20 Ambassador Yovanovitch being recalled from her post in April 2019.

21 You've also testified, ma'am, that her removal was pretty dispiriting and a turning
22 point for you. Can you explain to us why, ma'am?

23 Ms. Hill. Well, again, as we've all made clear, Ambassador Yovanovitch -- and
24 you saw for yourselves in her deposition -- is a person of great integrity. She's one of
25 our finest Foreign Service officers, career Foreign Service officers.

1 And if there'd been a decision to remove her, to replace her with a political
2 appointee, again, that is perfectly within the rights of the President. Sometimes it's
3 highly advisable, in fact, to emphasize to a country just exactly how close the relationship
4 is likely to be, to have an appointee who is close to the President, if it's an important
5 relationship.

6 But what was dispiriting was all of the accusations that were being fired at
7 Ambassador Yovanovitch, leading her to be tweeted, including by members of the
8 President's family. We all firmly believed that Mr. Giuliani and others, including people
9 who were recently indicted, the Ukrainian-American gentlemen, had for some reason
10 decided that Ambassador Yovanovitch was some kind of personal problem for them and
11 that they had then decided to engage in just the kinds of things we've been discussing
12 about. And, frankly, she was an easy target as a woman.

13 And I'm very sorry to hear about what's happened to Congressman Stefanik.
14 And I think that this just illustrates the point and the problem that we're dealing with
15 here today.

16 Mr. Carson. Certainly.

17 I was also struck by your testimony that you were also the target of false
18 accusations during your time in the Trump administration. You testified, ma'am, about
19 receiving hateful calls and being accused of being, quote, "a mole in the White House."

20 You testified about death threats and calls at your home. Is that right?

21 Ms. Hill. That's correct. That was in 2017.

22 Mr. Carson. Well, I'm sorry you've had to go through all of this, ma'am. You
23 don't strike me as a woman who is easily deterred. You're not easily deterred, are you,
24 Dr. Hill?

25 Ms. Hill. I'm not, no.

1 Mr. Carson. Thank you both for your service.

2 I yield back, Chairman.

3 Ms. Hill. Thank you, sir.

4 The Chairman. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

5 Just another fact check. And, again, my caution to both of you that
6 representations about what prior witnesses said or what you have even said may not be
7 consistent with the facts.

8 This was from Ambassador Sondland's opening statement. "After the Zelensky
9 meeting, I also met with Zelensky's senior aide, Andriy Yermak. I don't recall the
10 specifics of our conversation, but I believe the issue of investigations was probably a part
11 of that agenda or meeting."

12 I now recognize Dr. Wenstrup.

13 Dr. Wenstrup. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 And thank you both for being here.

15 You know, in 1998, I voluntarily joined the United States Army Reserve because I
16 saw our country under attack time and time again. Bill Clinton was the President. I
17 didn't vote for Bill Clinton, but he was my Commander in Chief. It didn't matter that I
18 didn't vote for him.

19 I'm grateful to live in a country that gets to legitimately elect our leaders. And
20 I've been to places where people don't get to, and it's not pretty. And I respect our
21 system, and I accept the results that are determined by the American people.

22 I deployed to Iraq 2005-2006 as an Army surgeon with soldiers from many
23 backgrounds. The most important thing was we were all Americans. That was first
24 and foremost.

25 In our mission, we treated our troops, we treated the enemy, winning over the

1 hearts and minds of people that never knew us because of their dictator, Saddam
2 Hussein, who told them that we were responsible for all their problems, and that was his
3 narrative.

4 And speaking of narratives, Dr. Hill, I'm sorry, I have to say this. You said, based
5 on statements you've heard, that some on this committee believe Russia did not conduct
6 a campaign against our country -- is false. That's Mr. Schiff's narrative. That's where
7 you've heard it. We did a whole report on it. And we agree that Russia has done this
8 since the Soviet Union, and they've actually gotten better at it. That's a problem.

9 But, at the same time, certain Ukrainians did work against candidate Trump, some
10 with the DNC. And if that's debunked, why is it Mr. Schiff has denied DNC operative
11 Alexandra Chalupa from testifying to come forward and debunk it?

12 I ask America, was it good for the country for the DNC and the Clinton campaign to
13 pay Christopher Steele to dig up fake dirt with other Foreign Service sources on their
14 political rival?

15 Was it good for America to claim having evidence of the President colluding with
16 Russians when he did not, costing the taxpayer millions and being debunked by special
17 counsel? I'd say the false narrative got caught.

18 Was it good for the country for Americans and foreigners alike to attempt to
19 entrap members of a United States Presidential campaign, specifically the Trump
20 campaign? Sadly, I've come to believe through all this that some in power do think it's
21 good. They think it's okay.

22 And now we're here at an impeachment proceeding -- certainly a right that
23 Congress has and, apparently, even with very partisan rules. But I'm curious. This
24 impeachment inquiry was announced by the Speaker before the whistleblower complaint
25 was even out. I'm curious why the lawyer for the whistleblower announced that the

1 coup to impeach the President -- that he announced that right after Trump won. That's
2 pretty damning.

3 I know it hurts after losing an election, especially as Americans. We usually get
4 over it. And I imagine it would hurt even more if you were promised a position in the
5 next administration and lost and your hopes and your dreams are dashed.

6 You know, I've seen hatred for political reasons, specifically on June 14th, 2017, at
7 a ball field in Virginia. And I've seen hatred in war. And I know that hatred blinds
8 people. I've been in war, and I've studied war. And coups create division. And it's
9 time for this phase of the publicly announced and proclaimed Democrat coup to end.

10 Thank you for your service. Thanks for being here.

11 And I yield back.

12 Ms. Hill. Could I actually say something? Because we've had three --

13 The Chairman. Doctor, I was going to ask you if you'd like to respond. There
14 have been a number --

15 Dr. Wenstrup. No. I yielded back. Let me ask the question.

16 The Chairman. The gentleman will suspend.

17 Dr. Hill, you may respond.

18 Ms. Hill. No, I think that what Dr. Wenstrup said was very powerful, about the
19 importance of overcoming hatred and, certainly, partisan division. And it's unfortunate
20 that Congressmen Turner and Ratcliffe have both left, as well. Because I think all of us
21 who came here under a legal obligation also felt we had a moral obligation to do so. We
22 came as fact witnesses.

23 When I was referring to questions that I'd heard, it was in the context of the
24 deposition that I gave on October 14th. Because I was very worried about the turn
25 which some of the questions were taking.

1 And I understand that the point is being raised about individuals, as you have just
2 said, Dr. Wenstrup, and that these articles lay out, taking different positions in our
3 elections. I don't believe there should be any interference of any kind in our election.
4 I think it was unfair for people to already call the election and to make attacks also on
5 candidate Trump and on President Trump. And I know that this has put a huge cloud
6 over this Presidency and also over our whole democratic system.

7 That's actually why, as a nonpartisan person and as an expert on Russia and an
8 expert on Vladimir Putin and on the Russian security services, I wanted to come in to
9 serve the country, to try to see if I could help.

10 I heard President Trump say that he wanted to improve the relations with Russia.
11 I believe we have to. We can't be in this unending confrontation with Russia. We have
12 to find a way to stabilize that relationship and to professionalize that relationship, as well
13 as to stop them from doing what they did in 2016 again in 2020.

14 This is really the crux of the issue that I and others are trying to put across and, I
15 think, that you've put across very eloquently.

16 The other matters related to this inquiry, we're here just to provide what we know
17 and what we've heard. I understand that, for many members, this may be hearsay.
18 I've talked about things I heard with my own ears. I understand that Ambassador
19 Sondland has said a lot of things. I have told you what he told me and what others told
20 me.

21 A lot of other people have said things to me again, as well, and also to Mr.
22 Holmes, and we're here to relate to you what we heard, what we saw, and what did and
23 to be of some help to all of you in really making a very momentous decision here. We
24 are not the people who make that decision.

25 And I do again want to underscore what you said here, Dr. Wenstrup -- it was very

1 eloquent and very moving -- about your service and trying to bring us all together again as
2 Americans. We need to be together again in 2020 so the American people can make a
3 choice about the future and make their vote in a Presidential election without any fear
4 that this is being interfered in from any quarter whatsoever.

5 And so I just want to thank you for making what I think was also a very elegant
6 and eloquent and heartfelt defense.

7 Dr. Wenstrup. Thank you.

8 The Chairman. Thank you, Dr. Hill.

9 Ms. Speier?

10 Ms. Speier. Chairman, thank you.

11 And, Dr. Hill and Mr. Holmes, thank you both for being fact witnesses. We are
12 here as fact-finders, and we appreciate very much your presentations.

13 Dr. Hill, I want to verify this story. I understand that when you were 11 years old
14 there was a schoolboy who set your pigtails on fire. And you were taking a test. You
15 turned around and, with your hands, snuffed out the fire and then proceeded to finish
16 your test.

17 Is that a true story?

18 Ms. Hill. It is a true story. I was a bit surprised to see that pop up today. It's
19 one of the stories I occasionally tell because it had some very unfortunate consequences
20 afterwards. My mother gave me a bowl haircut. So, for the school photograph later in
21 that week, I looked like Richard the III or as if I'm going to be in a permanent --

22 Ms. Speier. Well, I think it underscores the fact that you speak truth, that you
23 are steely. And I truly respect that.

24 Let me move to your testimony in your deposition. You had indicated you were
25 deeply troubled by Ambassador Yovanovitch's -- the attacks on her. And you

1 underscored again today that all ambassadors serve at the pleasure of the President.
2 And, certainly, in the case of Ambassador Yovanovitch, he could've just asked her to come
3 home. But that didn't happen. In fact, there was a systematic character assassination
4 that went on. It went on from 2018, if I'm not mistaken.

5 But you say, "And the most obvious explanation, at this point, it has to be said,
6 seemed to be business dealings of individuals who wanted to improve their investment
7 positions inside of Ukraine itself."

8 You were then asked, "Who do you understand was responsible for her removal?"
9 And you said, "I understand this to be the result of the campaign that Mr. Giuliani had set
10 in motion in conjunction with people who were writing articles and, you know,
11 publications that I would have expected better of. And, also, you know, just the
12 constant drumbeat of these accusations that he was making on the television."

13 So Rudy Giuliani was playing fast and furious in Ukraine, it would appear. Is that
14 correct?

15 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

16 Ms. Speier. And he had no official tasking within the administration. Is that
17 correct?

18 Ms. Hill. Not that I had been told of.

19 Ms. Speier. But he frequently met with Ukrainian officials to request that they
20 open an investigation?

21 Ms. Hill. So I was led to understand, yes.

22 Ms. Speier. You testified that Mr. Giuliani's involvement was, quote, "a massive
23 complication in terms of our engagement with Ukraine."

24 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

25 Ms. Speier. Would you like to explain that?

1 Ms. Hill. Well, I think I already laid that out in an earlier part of response to
2 some of the questions. We were actually conducting -- which, you know, for a lot of the
3 American people might seem to be a rather boring, standard bilateral policy toward
4 Ukraine, pushing them on issues of reform in the energy sector. And, more broadly, we
5 were concerned, obviously, about corruption in Ukraine. We were trying to help
6 Ukraine regain its sovereignty after the attacks by Russia --

7 Ms. Speier. So how did Mr. Giuliani's involvement affect --

8 Ms. Hill. Well, we basically had worked out over a course of 2 years, in
9 conjunction, close conjunction with the Embassy in Kyiv, an interagency-agreed action
10 plan. And these are things that, in fact, Colonel Vindman and others were working on,
11 basically moving forward on the various issues that were on the list of items.

12 Clearly, Rudy Giuliani and other people didn't care at all about this. Frankly --

13 Ms. Speier. All right.

14 Ms. Hill. -- Ambassador Sondland wasn't particularly interested in it either. It's
15 quite boring. It wouldn't make for good copy in the press. And it's the kind of thing
16 that everybody in a routine moves forward on.

17 Ms. Speier. Mr. Holmes, you talked about the extraordinary power that Russia
18 tries to assert against Ukraine. So, since President Zelensky never got his White House
19 meeting, doesn't that make Ukraine look weak, and doesn't that benefit Russia?

20 Mr. Holmes. Absolutely it does.

21 Ms. Speier. All right. So promoting Putin's false claim of Ukraine intervention
22 into the U.S. election also benefits Russia, doesn't it?

23 Mr. Holmes. It does.

24 Ms. Speier. So, when President Trump meets privately with Vladimir Putin at the
25 G20 summit, who does that benefit?

1 Mr. Holmes. Well, it doesn't help Ukraine.

2 Ms. Speier. It doesn't help Ukraine.

3 And by President Trump calling Ukraine corrupt, and not North Korea, for
4 instance, does that accrue to Russia's benefit?

5 Mr. Holmes. Again, it doesn't help Ukraine.

6 Ms. Speier. All right. I thank you.

7 And, Mr. Chairman, I'll yield the rest of my time to you.

8 The Chairman. You're yielding me 3 seconds. Not even I can make use of
9 3 seconds.

10 Mr. Stewart.

11 Mr. Stewart. Thank you.

12 Dr. Hill, Mr Holmes, thank you for being here.

13 I actually have no questions for you that haven't already been asked or made any
14 points that haven't already been made, and I guess I'll just conclude by something I've
15 said before.

16 This impeachapalooza tour finally comes to an end. I mean, a year of resistance,
17 2-1/2 years of these absurd accusations against the President of Russia and collusion.
18 We've gone from quid pro quo to bribery to extortion, 7 weeks of hearings, 16 secret
19 closed-door sessions, 12 public hearings, now of which you are the last, hundreds of
20 hours of testimony.

21 And I really think that, for those who hate the President, they haven't changed
22 their minds, but there's a lot of Americans who look at this and they think, is that it?
23 Really? You're going to impeach and remove a President for this?

24 Now, like I said, if you don't like the President, you've already come to that
25 conclusion. Many people wanted this 3 years ago. But for a lot of Americans, they

1 really look at that, and they can see this: no evidence, zero evidence of any bribery,
2 zero evidence of extortion, zero evidence firsthand of any quid pro quo. And yet
3 impeachment is almost inevitable. And why? Because the leadership of this
4 committee has been unfair and dishonest.

5 And I know we hear these crocodile tears from some of my colleagues who are
6 heartbroken because they finally have to impeach this President, and we know that's
7 absurd. There's no heartbroken, there's no prayerful tears over this. They're giddy
8 over this. And there's not a person in the country who doesn't know that. Everyone
9 knows what they're going to do next. They're going to impeach the President, and
10 they're going to send it on to the Senate. But that is the good news. That's good
11 news.

12 You know, we've all been to a concert. You've got the warm-up band, and then
13 you've got the main act. And what we've seen here is the warm-up band. This is kind
14 of like the Sioux City Crooners; this is a band that no one's ever heard of. But the
15 warm-up band is over, and now we're going to go on to the main event, and that's in the
16 U.S. Senate.

17 And, in the U.S. Senate, there won't be any secret testimony. There's not going
18 to be dishonest leadership or a chairman who refuses to let us ask appropriate questions
19 or to deny a defense. Where in the world, where in the country do you have a trial
20 where the prosecution presents their case and the defense isn't able to? So we'll finally
21 be able to get to the truth.

22 And so I'm talking now to my colleagues in the Senate: These are some of the
23 witnesses that you need to call, and these are some of the questions that you need to
24 ask.

25 First, you have to hear from the whistleblower. Now, they can choose to do that

1 in closed session if they want to. I leave that up to them. But you can't initiate an
2 impeachment of the President of the United States and not have to answer some
3 questions.

4 Who did he get his information from? Did he have the classification and the
5 clearances to get that information? What's his relationship with Vice President Biden?
6 Who has he shared that information with, including some members of the committee
7 here?

8 I think our own chairman needs to be called. What interactions did he or his
9 staff have with the whistleblower? Did they help to coordinate or in any way facilitate
10 the complaint? Did they coordinate and facilitate with him counsel?

11 What about Hunter Biden? How did he get his job? What did he do to earn his
12 salary?

13 And here's the key to this. Look, if he goes there and makes money, knock
14 yourself out. I don't care. But I want to know, did he have conversations with
15 government officials and was government policy changed at a particularly high level
16 because of some of those?

17 Devon Archer, former board member from Burisma. Alexandra Chalupa, former
18 DNC official who admitted she provided anti-Trump information to the DNC and to Hillary
19 Clinton. Nellie Ohr from Fusion GPS, who helped to create the ridiculous Steele dossier.

20 I'd like to remind us what I said yesterday. The American people expect a lot in
21 politics. They understand the tussle, the fight, the debate. But they also expect basic
22 fairness. And these proceedings have been anything but fair. The Senate has an
23 opportunity to fix that. I am confident they will. And I look forward to them
24 completing the job that we could have done here.

25 And, with that, I will yield back.

1 The Chairman. Mr. Quigley.

2 Mr. Quigley. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Thank you both for being here.

4 Dr. Hill, when we last left, July 10th, I believe Ambassador Bolton said to you, "You
5 go and tell Eisenberg that I am not part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney
6 are cooking up on this, and you go tell them what you heard and what I've said." That's
7 correct; is that right?

8 Ms. Hill. That's correct, sir, yes.

9 Mr. Quigley. And John Eisenberg, he's the chief lawyer for the National Security
10 Council, correct?

11 Ms. Hill. He is, yes.

12 Mr. Quigley. And you went to see him.

13 Ms. Hill. I did go to see him.

14 Mr. Quigley. And what did you say to him that day?

15 Ms. Hill. I basically gave him the same summary that I've given to you on the
16 10th of July.

17 Mr. Quigley. Of what took place.

18 Ms. Hill. Of what took place, correct, including some of the details that I shared
19 with you as well, the sequencing and what transpired as I was walking in.

20 Mr. Quigley. Now, did you have one or two meetings with him about that?

21 Ms. Hill. He did not have a great deal of time on the 10th, and I gave him the
22 quick summary, and we agreed that we would meet again on the 11th, on July 11th, the
23 next day.

24 And I also wanted to bring in with me my colleague Wells Griffith, our Senior
25 Director for Energy, who'd been sitting with me on the sofa for the first portion of the

1 meeting.

2 And I also suggested that he speak to Colonel Vindman separately as well.
3 Because Colonel Vindman was in the Ward Room when I arrived and had obviously been
4 engaged in some discussion before I got there, because as I got into the room, they were
5 clearly in the course of conversation. And I thought it was important for John Eisenberg
6 to hear from Colonel Vindman himself what his recollections of the meeting were.

7 Mr. Quigley. Did you raise the concerns that Ambassador Bolton had raised to
8 you to Mr. Eisenberg?

9 Ms. Hill. I certainly did. The first thing I related to him was exactly and
10 precisely what Ambassador Bolton had asked me to.

11 Mr. Quigley. In the course of those two meetings, what was Mr. Eisenberg's
12 response?

13 Ms. Hill. Mr. Eisenberg took it all very seriously. He said, for example, that
14 Colonel Vindman should feel free -- he said this to me -- in the future to go and bring any
15 concerns to him about these meetings. Similarly myself and any others, if there was any
16 subsequent followup in terms of these issues being raised again with any of the parties in
17 the future.

18 Mr. Quigley. He didn't say anything in response about how he took that meeting
19 or how he would describe it or if he had any -- did he raise any concerns about what you
20 told him that took place?

21 Ms. Hill. No, he did not. He listened very carefully to all of the information that
22 we imparted.

23 Mr. Quigley. Now, back to that July 10th meeting, the second meeting that's in
24 the Ward Room, correct?

25 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

1 Mr. Quigley. Now, who was in that meeting besides yourself? The two
2 Ukrainians?

3 Ms. Hill. Mr. Danylyuk, Mr. Yermak, Mr. Yermak's aide, Ambassador Volker,
4 Ambassador Sondland, and then a couple of people I think within the State Department.
5 I wondered for a while if one of Secretary Perry's group had been there too, but I honestly
6 cannot remember.

7 Mr. Quigley. But Ambassador Volker was there during that entire --

8 Ms. Hill. He was there, but he didn't actually speak very much during that
9 meeting. And I heard his deposition and I read his deposition where he didn't really
10 recall that encounter. Again, he didn't really speak. Ambassador Sondland was doing
11 most of the speaking.

12 Mr. Quigley. Yeah. And as I think you described it, as you came in, Ambassador
13 Sondland was talking about how he had an agreement with Chief of Staff Mulvaney for a
14 meeting with the Ukrainians if they were going forward with the investigations.

15 While this was taking place and afterwards, how were the Ukrainians reacting to
16 what was being said?

17 Ms. Hill. Well, at the time, Mr. Yermak was quite impassive. I said that he had
18 an aide with him, and his aide was sitting next to him in the original meeting with
19 Ambassador Bolton and was, you know, from time to time -- actually, he was on this
20 side -- whispering to him.

21 So I wasn't sure myself, because I had not met Mr. Yermak before, about how
22 good his English was. So I wasn't sure -- and perhaps Mr. Holmes might be able to
23 reflect on that -- as to whether he was, you know, having some points of clarification
24 from the aide.

25 Mr. Quigley. But he understood what was happening.

1 Ms. Hill. Yeah, so I wasn't entirely sure if he was following all of the
2 back-and-forth.

3 Mr. Danylyuk, who I know very well and speaks very good English, looked quite
4 alarmed. I think he was more alarmed at the fact that there was this back-and-forth
5 between Ambassador Sondland and Colonel Vindman than with me about the meeting.
6 Clearly, they very much wanted to have this meeting, and here are some U.S. officials
7 arguing about the meeting in front of him, and that was obviously very uncomfortable for
8 him.

9 Mr. Quigley. Did you have any followup to that, sir?

10 Mr. Holmes. Oh, I would just add that Danylyuk speaks perfect English, and
11 Yermak can get by in meetings but often does ask for clarifications.

12 Mr. Quigley. Given the time, I would yield back.

13 The Chairman. Ms. Stefanik.

14 Ms. Stefanik. Before I turn to our witnesses, I just wanted to say to my
15 Democratic colleagues, not a single Republican member of this committee has said that
16 Russia did not meddle in the 2016 elections. As the ranking member stated, we
17 published a report focused on Russian active measures in 2016, with policy
18 recommendations as to how we strengthen our cyber resiliency and election security to
19 counter Russia. I, myself, have worked with members of this very committee on this
20 issue but also on the House Armed Services Committee.

21 So to have our Democratic colleagues say these untruthful statements just reeks
22 of political desperation in their continued obsession to manipulate mainstream media
23 coverage.

24 But the good news is the American people understand that this has been a
25 partisan process from the start -- the Democratic coordination with the whistleblower;

1 the incessant and astounding leaks; the unprecedented closed-door process, closed to
2 the majority of Members, closed to the press, closed to the people; starting this inquiry
3 without taking a vote; and then, when finally forced to take a vote, the vote was with
4 bipartisan opposition.

5 Now, with 4 minutes left, I'm going to turn to our two witnesses.

6 Thank you both for your service.

7 Thank you, Dr. Hill, for your comments on the personal attacks.

8 I wanted to ask you each fact-based questions.

9 Dr. Hill, you testified that you handed over your duties on the NSC to Tim
10 Morrison on July 15th and that you physically left the White House on July 19th, correct?

11 Ms. Hill. That is correct, yes.

12 Ms. Stefanik. So that means that by the time there was the July 25th call with
13 President Trump and President Zelensky you were no longer on the NSC, correct?

14 Ms. Hill. Actually, I was still technically on the payroll of the NSC until the end of
15 August, August 30th of 2019. But I was not physically in the building, and I'd handed
16 over my duties to Mr. Morrison.

17 Ms. Stefanik. And you were not on the call.

18 Ms. Hill. I was not on the call. That is absolutely correct.

19 Ms. Stefanik. And it's also correct that you did not participate in the preparation
20 of talking points or the specific coordination of setting up the call?

21 Ms. Hill. Not for that call. But let me just state for the record that there had
22 been a long anticipation that eventually there would be a call, so there was a call package
23 that was prepared in advance. I just cannot say how much of that call package that had
24 perhaps been prepared since, for example, the inauguration of President Zelensky was
25 then used as the basic material for that call.

1 So I did take part in the preparation of that standard call package, but I did not
2 take part in any preparation for the specific call on July 25th.

3 Ms. Stefanik. And the first time you actually read the transcript of the call was
4 when it was released to the public?

5 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

6 Ms. Stefanik. Mr. Holmes, I wanted to turn to you. Good to see you again.

7 Thank you for mentioning the bipartisan delegation that I led on behalf of the
8 House Armed Services Committee with my friend, Representative Anthony Brown from
9 Maryland. We did have an exceptionally informative visit, where we highlighted the
10 bipartisan congressional support for Ukraine, in particular, the importance of countering
11 Russian aggression. And we discussed in the briefings at the Embassy the importance of
12 defensive lethal aid in the form of Javelins, which, as you both -- I think you stated today,
13 is, quote, "an important strategic deterrent to Russia."

14 And I just want to highlight on the record -- I know this has been asked -- the
15 Javelins were provided by the Trump administration and not the Obama administration,
16 correct?

17 Mr. Holmes. That's correct. And I would just say, I think we discussed the
18 importance of all our security assistance to Ukraine, not just the Javelins.

19 Ms. Stefanik. Absolutely, all of our security assistance, which I strongly support.
20 Again, thank you for being a host on that.

21 Dr. Hill, turning back to you, there's been discussion about the process of
22 scheduling the meeting between President Zelensky and President Trump. And you
23 testified that there was hesitancy to schedule this meeting until after the Ukrainian
24 parliamentary elections. Is that correct?

25 Ms. Hill. That is correct, yes.

1 Ms. Stefanik. And that's because there was speculation in all analytical circles,
2 both in Ukraine and outside the Ukraine, that Zelensky might not be able to get the
3 majority that he needed to form a cabinet, correct?

4 Ms. Hill. That is correct.

5 Ms. Stefanik. And you also testified that another aspect of the NSC's hesitancy
6 to schedule this meeting was based on broader concerns related to Zelensky's ability to
7 implement anticorruption reforms. And this was in specific relation to Ukrainian
8 oligarchs who, basically, were the owner of the TV company that Mr. Zelensky's program
9 had been a part of. Is that correct?

10 Ms. Hill. That is correct.

11 Ms. Stefanik. You know, just distilling this down to the key facts, I wanted to ask
12 both of you three key questions.

13 So the fact of the matter is, Ukraine ultimately did receive the aid, correct, Mr.
14 Holmes?

15 Mr. Holmes. Ultimately.

16 Ms. Stefanik. Yes.

17 And Dr. Hill?

18 Ms. Hill. Correct, ultimately.

19 Ms. Stefanik. And there was no investigation into the Bidens, correct, Mr.
20 Holmes?

21 Mr. Holmes. They did not open a new investigation into the Bidens.

22 Ms. Stefanik. Correct.

23 And Dr. Hill?

24 Ms. Hill. Correct.

25 Ms. Stefanik. And there was, in fact, a meeting between President Trump and

1 President Zelensky ultimately at the U.N. Is that correct?

2 Mr. Holmes. The President invited Zelensky to the Oval Office at a date
3 undetermined. That has not yet happened.

4 Ms. Stefanik. The meeting at the U.N. President Trump and President Zelensky
5 met at the U.N.

6 Mr. Holmes. They did but not in the Oval Office.

7 Ms. Stefanik. But they did have a meeting at the U.N.

8 Mr. Holmes. They did, ma'am.

9 Ms. Stefanik. And Dr. Hill?

10 Ms. Hill. They did.

11 Ms. Stefanik. Okay. Thank you.

12 I yield back.

13 The Chairman. Mr. Swalwell.

14 Mr. Swalwell. Dr. Hill, yesterday, I think a lot of Americans were scratching their
15 heads as Ambassador Sondland testified that, on September 9, he calls the President of
16 the United States and just says broadly, "What do you want from Ukraine?", and the
17 President says, "There's no quid pro quo. There's no quid pro quo."

18 It's like being pulled over for speeding and being asked, "Do you know how fast
19 you were going?" and saying, "I didn't rob the bank. I didn't rob the bank."

20 But your testimony today is that, on July 10 of this year, you told one of the
21 President's lawyers that you had concerns that a White House meeting was linked to
22 investigations. Is that right?

23 Ms. Hill. That's correct, based on what Ambassador Sondland said in the Ward
24 Room.

25 Mr. Swalwell. And so, as early as July 10, the President's lawyers had knowledge

1 that there was at least concern by a Presidential employee about a linkage. Is that
2 right?

3 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

4 Mr. Swalwell. Dr. Hill, just like you, we are trying to account for "all the
5 President's men." You had that same concern when you saw Mr. Sondland's emails and
6 you saw people who were outside the channels that you had been working on.

7 So I want to walk you through something you told us earlier. You said that you
8 have evidence that, as recently as this year, President Trump believed someone named
9 Kash was the Ukraine director. Is that right?

10 Ms. Hill. It's not really evidence. And, look, I want to be very clear about this.
11 I was asked a question about this in my deposition. I did not raise it. And, to be
12 honest, I was surprised that I was asked the question.

13 Mr. Swalwell. But you heard that name, Kash. Is that right?

14 Ms. Hill. I did, but, again, it was in passing, and I explained the circumstances in
15 which it came up. But I was asked a question in the course of my deposition about it.

16 Mr. Swalwell. And the only person at the time who worked at the National
17 Security Council was Kash Patel. Is that right?

18 Ms. Hill. That was the only person I could think of.

19 Mr. Swalwell. And Kash Patel, prior to working for the National Security Council,
20 from 2017 to 2018 worked for Ranking Member Nunes. Is that right?

21 Ms. Hill. I actually only found that out after the fact.

22 Mr. Swalwell. And --

23 Ms. Hill. Because I wondered why I was being asked about him, so I went and
24 looked this up.

25 Mr. Swalwell. And, Dr. Hill, you cautioned us on the dangers of members of this

1 committee perhaps peddling any Ukrainian conspiracy theories that could benefit Russia.

2 And I want to ask you if you have heard the name Lev Parnas of Ukraine, someone
3 in this investigation who was influencing President Trump and Rudy Giuliani about some
4 of the debunked conspiracy theories you referenced earlier.

5 Ms. Hill. I have heard his name, yes.

6 Mr. Swalwell. Are you aware that Mr. Parnas was indicted on October 10 for
7 making foreign contributions to Republicans in U.S. elections?

8 Ms. Hill. I am aware of those reports, yes.

9 Mr. Swalwell. Are you aware of yesterday's Daily Beast story reporting the
10 indicted Ukrainian Lev Parnas has been working with Ranking Member Devin Nunes on
11 Mr. Nunes's overseas investigations?

12 Ms. Hill. I am not aware of that.

13 Mr. Swalwell. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to put into the record the
14 Daily Beast story, "Lev Parnas Helped Rep. Devin Nunes' Investigations," from yesterday,
15 the first two paragraphs reading: "Lev Parnas, an indicted associate of Rudy Giuliani,
16 helped arrange meetings and calls in Europe for Rep. Devin Nunes in 2018, Parnas' lawyer
17 Ed MacMahon told The Daily Beast. Nunes aide Derek Harvey participated in the
18 meetings, the lawyer said, which were arranged to help Nunes' investigative work.
19 MacMahon didn't specify what those investigations entailed."

20 The Chairman. Without objection.

21 [The article follows:]

22

23 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1 Mr. Swalwell. Mr. Chairman, you have been falsely accused throughout these
2 proceedings by the ranking member as being a, quote/unquote, "fact witness." Now, if
3 this story is correct, the ranking member may have actually been projecting and, in fact,
4 he may be the fact witness, if he is working with indicted individuals around our
5 investigation.

6 But I want to go to what this is really all about.

7 First, it's your credibility, Mr. Holmes. And can you tell us and confirm that in
8 2014 you received the William Rivkin Constructive Dissent Award from the Obama
9 administration State Department?

10 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

11 Mr. Swalwell. And that was for dissent that you brought up against an
12 administration policy. Is that right?

13 Mr. Holmes. That's right.

14 Mr. Swalwell. Congratulations. And thank you for speaking up in the way you
15 did.

16 But what we're really here about is what you're working on in Ukraine. And I
17 want you to take a look at the picture. Who do you see in the foreground of that
18 photo?

19 Mr. Holmes. President Zelensky.

20 Mr. Swalwell. That's a photograph in May 2019, where newly elected President
21 Zelensky visited the Luhansk region in eastern Ukraine. It was his first visit to the front
22 lines of Donbas as President.

23 Can you just tell taxpaying Americans why it's so important that our hard-earned
24 taxpaying dollars help President Zelensky and the men standing beside him fight against
25 Russia in this hot war?

1 Mr. Holmes. Absolutely, sir.

2 President Zelensky was elected on an overwhelming majority to defend Ukrainian
3 interests. This is at a time when Ukrainians are defending their sovereignty, their
4 territorial integrity, on Ukrainian soil from Russian-backed soldiers who are attacking
5 them. As I said, 14,000 Ukrainian lives lost in this war so far. As I mentioned, a few
6 this week already. And this is a hot war. This is not a frozen conflict. People are
7 shooting at each other and dying, being injured every single week.

8 And, despite the ongoing war, they're still trying to pursue peace. President
9 Zelensky, even right now, is trying to pursue a summit meeting with President Putin in
10 order to try to bring this war to a conclusion so they can move on with all the difficult
11 things they need to do in terms of building the economy and reforming the judiciary and
12 whatnot.

13 And I want to add just one other thing, sir, if I may. Mr. Turner had suggested
14 earlier that I had somehow embarrassed President Zelensky. I have the deepest respect
15 for President Zelensky. This is a guy of Jewish background from a post-Soviet industrial
16 suburb in southern Ukraine who made himself one of the most popular entertainers in
17 the country and somehow got elected President, and he's not going to miss that
18 opportunity. This is a Ukrainian patriot. This is a tough guy. And, frankly, he
19 withstood a lot of pressure for a very long time, and he didn't give that interview.

20 I have the deepest respect for him. The Ukrainian people also have the deepest
21 respect for him. They've chosen him to help deliver the full measure of promise of their
22 Revolution of Dignity. And I think he merits all of our respect.

23 Mr. Swalwell. Thank you.

24 And, Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to enter the May 27 photograph
25 depicted on the screen into the record.

1 The Chairman. Without objection.

2 [The photograph follows:]

3

4 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1

The Chairman. Mr. Hurd?

1 RPTR MERTENS

2 EDTR HUMKE

3 [3:03 p.m.]

4 Mr. Hurd. Thank you, Mr. Holmes, for your years of service to this country, and I
5 appreciate you all being here today.

6 Throughout this process, I have said that I want to learn the facts so we can get to
7 the truth. So why are we here? Because of two things that occurred during the
8 President's July 25th phone call with Ukrainian President Zelensky. The use of the
9 phrase, do us a favor, though, in reference to the 2016 presidential election, and the
10 mention of the word Biden. I believe both statements were inappropriate, misguided
11 foreign policy, and it's certainly not how the executive, current or in the future, should
12 handle such a call.

13 Over the course of these hearings, the American people have learned about a
14 series of events that, in my view, have undermined our national security and undercut
15 Ukraine, a key partner on the front lines against Russian aggression.

16 We've heard of U.S. officials carrying uncoordinated, confusing, and conflicting
17 messages that created doubt and uncertainty in Kyiv at a time when a new reformist
18 administration has just taken office and was ready to fight corruption and work with us to
19 advance other U.S. objectives. I disagree with this sort of bungling foreign policy.

20 But through these hearings, many of my colleagues have unwittingly undermined
21 the Ukrainian Government by suggesting that it is subservient to the United States, and
22 without the United States, they wouldn't be able to function. The Ukrainians, as you
23 stated, Mr. Holmes, is in a hot war with Russia, and they are holding their own. We
24 could benefit from the experience of Ukrainians, not the other way around.

25 While I thought the Intelligence Committee would actually be engaged in

1 oversight of the intelligence and national security communities, unfortunately, we are
2 not. We are here talking about one of the most serious constitutional duties we have as
3 Members of Congress, the impeachment and removal of the President of the United
4 States.

5 Over the past weeks, we've learned a few things. The officials on the July 25th
6 call have many different opinions on whether the call was concerning or not, and just
7 because Vice President Biden is running for President does not mean that corruption
8 related to Burisma, Ukraine's largest natural gas company, and Americans' ties to it are
9 not concerning.

10 There's also a lot we do not know. We have not heard from Rudy Giuliani. We
11 haven't heard from Hunter Biden. I'd like to know more about both of their activities,
12 why they talked to whom and to whom. Despite promises from Chairman Schiff, we
13 have also not heard from the whistleblower, something that can occur in a closed setting
14 without violating his or her anonymity. We need to understand the motivations and
15 level of coordination that happened prior to his or her submission of the complaint.

16 Over the past few weeks and even today, it's been reiterated. In 2017, the
17 Trump administration made the decision to provide lethal defensive aid to Ukraine after
18 the Obama administration refused to do so. Ukraine is receiving all the security
19 assistance as directed by Congress. President Zelensky has undertaken significant
20 anticorruption efforts, including eliminating the parliamentary immunity from
21 prosecution.

22 And, again, Mr. Holmes, you mentioned this today. Under President Zelensky's
23 leadership, we have finally seen some progress this fall towards ending the Russian
24 occupation of eastern Ukraine.

25 So where does this leave us? An impeachable offense should be compelling,

1 overwhelmingly clear, and unambiguous, and it's not something to be rushed or taken
2 lightly. I've not heard evidence proving the President committed bribery or extortion.
3 I also reject the notion that holding this view means supporting all the foreign policy
4 choices we have been hearing about over these last few weeks.

5 To paraphrase Tim Morrison, the testimony this week, every other national
6 conversation on Ukraine is focused on impeachment, not the conflict in the Donbass, not
7 the illegal occupation of Crimea, not the need for reforms in Ukraine's Government and
8 economy. It's a day where we are not focused on our shared national security interests
9 with Kyiv.

10 I hope that we won't let this very partisan process keep us from agreeing on how a
11 free and prosperous Ukraine is important to the security of the Ukrainian people, the
12 United States of America, and the rest of the world.

13 Mr. Chairman, before I yield back my time, I'd like to make a statement for the
14 record that had this committee been given proper notice as required by House rule XI,
15 clause 2(g)(3) of the business meeting was to follow last night's hearing and had
16 Mr. Conaway's point of order been appropriately recognized, I would have voted no on
17 the committee's first motion to table during last night's impromptu meeting.

18 And I yield back the balance of my time.

19 The Chairman. Mr. Castro.

20 Mr. Castro. Thank you, Chairman.

21 Thank you, both of you, for your testimony today. I first want to say because I
22 think it shouldn't go unmentioned that the characterization just a few minutes ago by one
23 of my Republican colleagues of this proceeding I think was vile, irresponsible, and
24 dangerous.

25 And I want to remind us why we're here. Because somebody in government, a

1 whistleblower, felt that it was important enough to get other people in government's
2 attention that the President may have committed a wrong act. We have now heard and
3 seen substantial evidence that the President, in fact, tried to trade a political favor for
4 official government resources.

5 The most damning words come from no one else but the President himself on that
6 phone call with the Ukrainian President where he asks for a favor, he mentions
7 investigations, he mentions the Bidens, and Burisma.

8 However, as Mr. Holmes has testified, Mr. Holmes also overheard the President
9 speaking to his hand-picked ambassador, Ambassador Sondland, about investigations.
10 Mr. Holmes has also said that in the office, everybody knew or many people knew, at
11 least, that there was an -- the President wanted an investigation of the Bidens.

12 In addition, although Mick Mulvaney and Rudy Giuliani have not come before this
13 committee, Mick Mulvaney and Rudy Giuliani have spoken publicly on the issue of
14 investigations. Mick Mulvaney, the President's Chief of Staff, the person who usually
15 works with the President the most, day in and day out, went in front of the White House
16 press corps and basically admitted that an investigation had something to do with holding
17 up the aid and admitted that this process was politicized.

18 Rudy Giuliani, the President's personal lawyer, also essentially admitted that these
19 investigations were at issue. He said that he thinks he did nothing wrong because he
20 was working at the direction of the President.

21 So we have seen substantial evidence and heard substantial evidence of
22 wrongdoing by the President of the United States, and this Congress will have to continue
23 to take up this very important issue to the American people.

24 My concern today is also I feel as though the cancer of wrongdoing may have
25 spread beyond the President and into others in the executive branch, and I want to ask

1 you a few questions about that. Before I do, I'd like the chairman to enter two articles
2 into the record, if I could. One of them is headlined "After Boost from Perry, Backers got
3 Huge Gas Deal in Ukraine". The other one is titled, "Wall Street Journal, Federal
4 Prosecutors Probe Giuliani's Link to Ukranian Energy Projects".

5 The Chairman. Without objection.

6 [The information follows:]

7

8 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1 Mr. Castro. Thank you, Chairman.

2 Mr. Holmes, you indicated that Secretary Perry, when he was in Ukraine, had
3 private meetings with Ukrainians. Before he had those private meetings, in a meeting
4 with others, including yourself, I believe, he had presented a list of American advisors for
5 the Ukraine energy sector. Do you know who was on that list?

6 Mr. Holmes. Sir, I didn't see the names on the list myself.

7 Mr. Castro. Do you know if Alex Cranberg and Michael Blazer were on that list?

8 Mr. Holmes. I have since heard that Michael Blazer is on the list.

9 Mr. Castro. Before Secretary Perry did this, we also heard in testimony before
10 that Ambassador Sondland also had a private meeting with somebody. How unusual
11 was it before these guys showed up for folks, diplomats, so to speak, or U.S. Government
12 officials to have private meetings where they insist that nobody else be in the room?

13 Mr. Holmes. Very rare. Almost never.

14 Mr. Castro. Okay. And I want to ask you also about the precedent that we set,
15 both of you. I know you're here as fact witnesses, but you're also public servants for
16 this country. The precedent that this Congress would set, putting aside Donald Trump
17 for a second. If the Congress allows a President of the United States, now or later, to
18 ask a foreign government, head of state, to investigate a political rival, what precedent
19 does that set for American diplomacy, for the safety of Americans overseas, and for the
20 future of our country?

21 Ms. Hill. That's a very bad precedent.

22 Mr. Holmes. A very bad precedent. And going forward, if that were ever the
23 case, I would raise objections.

24 Mr. Castro. Thank you both. I yield back, Chairman.

25 The Chairman. Mr. Ratcliffe.

1 Mr. Ratcliffe. Thank you, Chair.

2 I want to return the favor and recognize my colleague, yield to my colleague,
3 Congressman Conaway.

4 Mr. Conaway. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Dr. Hill, I don't think there's a lot of questions that one of Putin's primary
6 objectives within the United States is to foment unrest within our Nation, to cause us to
7 have -- lose confidence in our elections and the results of the elections, those kinds of
8 things. There is tension, though, in conducting our businesses the way we should and,
9 you know, playing into Putin's hands.

10 As an example, while I disagree with what we're doing here today, it's under our
11 constitution, and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle believe that they are
12 functioning under that constitution. These hearings, this issue, is very divisive within
13 our country and is continuing to push that way. I think it plays into Putin's hands
14 inadvertently. Maybe nothing we can do about that.

15 But there are certain things we can do as individuals that wouldn't play into his
16 hands, and one of them would be that the loser in the 2016 election has for 3 years
17 continued to argue that because she won the popular vote, that she and her friends won
18 the popular vote, that somehow the election was inappropriate and that we shouldn't
19 trust it, that the electoral college victory which was resounding shouldn't be trusted.

20 Does that help Putin or play into the narrative that he would like for us to believe
21 that our elections are somehow rigged and shouldn't be trusted?

22 Ms. Hill. Yes, it does.

23 Mr. Conaway. So the RT, Putin's -- would you agree me with me that RT is
24 Putin's propaganda machine here in the United States?

25 Ms. Hill. I would agree with you, yes.

1 Mr. Conaway. So is it appropriate for RT to be used to affect public policy in our
2 Nation? As an example, there had been a long series of advertisements or programs on
3 RT going against fracking, saying it's bad and trying to affect public policy in the United
4 States.

5 Is that an appropriate use, or should Americans be paying attention to that?

6 Ms. Hill. In the tense that Americans should be paying attention to RT and other
7 outlets they use to propagate this kind of information, absolutely. I wasn't quite sure
8 what you meant about paying attention.

9 Mr. Conaway. Fracking is a controversial issue within our Nation. If we did
10 away with fracking, the United States would not be in a position today to dominate the oil
11 production within the world and would play into strengthening Putin's hands with respect
12 to the oil --

13 Ms. Hill. That's correct. And actually, I'd like to point out that in 2011, in
14 November of 2011, I actually sat next to Vladimir Putin at a conference in which he made
15 precisely that point.

16 It was the first time that he had actually done so to a group of American
17 journalists and experts who were brought to something called the Valdai Discussion Club.
18 So he started in 2011 making it very clear that he saw American fracking as a great threat
19 to Russian interests. We were all struck by how much he stressed this issue, and it's
20 since 2011 and since that particular juncture that Putin has made a big deal of this.

21 Mr. Conaway. So to the extent that Americans pay attention to RT and are
22 misguided by whatever propaganda he's going, it's not in our nation's best interest.

23 Mr. Holmes, in your role, you're privileged to an awful lot of stuff, official things
24 and things that are best kept between you and the official folks that you deal with. Is
25 there an expectation among the principals that you represent that you will exercise some

1 discretion in what you share with others about what goes on?

2 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

3 Mr. Conaway. In your public -- in your testimony in your deposition, you
4 made -- well, first of all, we had a hard time pinning down the number of people that
5 you've actually had this conversation with about the conversation that you overheard.
6 Now, our ambassador had no expectation of privacy. He's, you know, blustering
7 around, doing what he's done, but we couldn't figure out how many people you actually
8 shared that information with.

9 And I would argue that information is unflattering to the President, unflattering to
10 the Ambassador, and that your discretion is, you know, at odds here. I mean, your
11 testimony in your deposition said that you shared that with folks who you thought would
12 find it interesting. Well, I'd argue that everybody in the back row would find it
13 interesting, but I don't know that that's necessarily a criterion.

14 So on a go forward basis, can you articulate that in the future when you're
15 privileged to certain circumstances that that would be embarrassing to the principal, that
16 if it's official, that you share it with the Ambassador, that's fine, but that folks outside the
17 embassy or folks even within the embassy that don't have a need to know, that you
18 wouldn't regale them with your recounting of those instances?

19 Mr. Holmes. Sir, I think it was Gordon Sondland who showed indiscretion by
20 having that conversation over a phone line in a restaurant. That's the first thing.

21 Mr. Conaway. No, no, no. You -- you're -- well, excuse me, Mr. Holmes. Let
22 me clarify the question.

23 The Chairman. Mr. Holmes was -- excuse me.

24 Mr. Holmes. The second thing is -- I am answering your question, sir --

25 Mr. Conaway. It's my question. You're exactly right, and I get to clarify my

1 question to get the answer. And I'm hopeful I get in a few more seconds because of the
2 interruption from the chairman. His patience is growing thin. I was working hard not
3 to irritate him again, but I failed again.

4 The question is of you, Mr. Holmes, your discretion. Gordon Holmes did not
5 have -- I mean, Gordon Sondland did not expect privacy. I got that. But you're going
6 to be in rooms for -- you've been in rooms 17 years where people trust that when
7 whatever went on in that room and left that you kept it in the official channels, that you
8 didn't share all that information with other folks.

9 I'm just asking you to argue for -- on your own behalf that interesting is not some
10 sort of criterion that you would use when you share information from meetings. A
11 simple, straightforward question.

12 Mr. Holmes. Sir, I shared the information I needed to share with the right people
13 who needed to know it. I did not share any information that people didn't need to
14 know.

15 Mr. Conaway. But you did use the word interesting.

16 The Chairman. Mr. Conaway, your time has expired.

17 Mr. Conaway. I yield back.

18 Mr. Holmes. It certainly was interesting, sir, and I would also hate to think that
19 what I brought before this process, I shouldn't have done that. I've come here because
20 you've subpoenaed me to share what I know, and I've done that.

21 The Chairman. Mr. Holmes, you were cut off when you were talking about
22 Mr. Sondland's indiscretion. Did you want to finish that answer?

23 Mr. Holmes. I think I finished.

24 Mr. Conaway. Mr. Chairman, that's patently unfair as you conduct this entire
25 investigation.

1 The Chairman. Mr. Conaway, it's unfair -- it's unfair, Mr. Conaway, to interrupt
2 the witnesses as you have done repeatedly.

3 Mr. Conaway. Well, but you're certainly willing to interrupt me during my 5
4 minutes. You have -- you're the only person on this dais that has unlimited time. You
5 have absolutely unlimited time. You're the only one that has abused that power, and
6 you're continuing to do that.

7 The Chairman. Mr. Conaway -- the gentleman will cease. We allow the
8 witnesses to answer the question even if those asking the questions don't want to hear
9 the answer.

10 Mr. Heck, you are recognized.

11 Mr. Conaway. Does that apply to you as well?

12 The Chairman. Yes, it does.

13 Mr. Heck. Mr. Holmes, much has been made about the use of both regular and
14 irregular Foreign Service or diplomatic channels. My reading of history is that American
15 Presidents have on occasion used irregular channels. Would you generally agree?

16 Mr. Holmes. Yes, sir.

17 Mr. Heck. And my reading of history is that, generally speaking, however those
18 irregular channels have either been closely coordinated with the regular ones, or at least
19 in furtherance of American foreign policy and our national security interests. Would you
20 agree?

21 Mr. Holmes. That's right, sir.

22 Mr. Heck. And do you believe, sir, that Mr. Giuliani's efforts were closely
23 coordinated with the regular channels such as the Ambassador to the Ukraine?

24 Mr. Holmes. No, they weren't.

25 Mr. Heck. And were they in furtherance of American foreign policy, as you

1 understood it?

2 Mr. Holmes. No, sir.

3 Mr. Heck. Mr. Holmes, if left unchecked, do you think that Russia would either
4 by means of force or other maligned means subjugate Ukraine, attempt to render it a
5 client state, if not occupy it?

6 Mr. Holmes. Absolutely, sir. It's been said that without Ukraine, Russia is just a
7 country, but with it, it's an empire.

8 Mr. Heck. You know, I feel like I've been treated to a Gatling gun fire of myth
9 propagation over the last couple of weeks, and it reminds me of that old expression
10 about the big lie. If you tell it often enough and keep repeating it that people will come
11 to believe it. I think we've been subjected to some of that.

12 Here is a sample. The President didn't solicit campaign assistance from Ukraine
13 in a clear violation of Federal law. Yes, he did. The President didn't withhold vital
14 military assistance in furtherance of his objective to obtain that campaign assistance.
15 Yes, he did. Rudy Giuliani was acting just on his own, kind of as a rogue. No, he
16 wasn't. That all this is business as usual. This happens all the time and stems from a
17 principled interest. No, it isn't, and, no, it wasn't. And that it's okay to attack patriotic
18 diplomats in public service if they stand in your way and have the courage to speak up.
19 No, it isn't.

20 Those are just some of the big lies, but here's the big truth. The President did it.
21 He did it. We all just came from the Floor, and it's a majestic chamber. And in the
22 front of the chamber, there are only two portraits. On the left looking forward is my
23 favorite President, George Washington, and on the right is the Marquis de Lafayette who
24 came to this country to help us stand up our fledgling democracy.

25 So here is another big truth. Without his help, we probably never would have

1 gotten off the ground, and that assistance from many other countries who were helping
2 us to create something that had never been created before. It was an audacious idea,
3 this notion of a democracy, of self-governance, of freedoms such as speech and press and
4 religion and expression and assembly.

5 And most of all, that it would be rooted in the premise of the rule of law, not
6 monarchs, not military strongmen, but the rule of law. Others helped us get here, and
7 we wouldn't be here without them, and I frankly feel like we're almost in a little bit of a
8 pay it forward moment.

9 So when the President did it, he put at risk the security of Ukraine, a strategic ally,
10 and a nascent democracy with their masses yearning to breathe free, who 6 years ago
11 this day, when their government said we're not going to sign that Memorandum of
12 Agreement with European Union, rose up and took to the streets because they wanted,
13 frankly, what we have. And when the President did it, he put our own national security
14 at risk.

15 But what he did, most importantly, was put at risk that idea that makes us
16 exceptional because I do believe America is truly exceptional. We are a country rooted
17 in something that nobody has ever tried before, rule of law. He put that at risk when he
18 did what he did. The President did it, and the only question that remains is what will we
19 do.

20 I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

21 The Chairman. Mr. Jordan.

22 Mr. Jordan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Dr. Hill, during your deposition, I asked you was Christopher Steele's dossier a
24 rabbit hole. Do you remember the answer you gave to the question?

25 Ms. Hill. Yes, I thought it was a rabbit hole.

1 Mr. Jordan. Yeah. And you also said a couple pages later in the deposition of
2 the transcript that I have here of your deposition that you thought he got played. Is that
3 fair?

4 Ms. Hill. That is fair, yes.

5 Mr. Jordan. I was struck by a number of things you said in your statement. A
6 number of things I thought were right on the target. One was on page 7. You said this:
7 President Putin and the Russian security services weaponize our own political opposition
8 research. And that is exactly what happened in 2016, exactly what happened. You
9 called it. You knew it. You saw it.

10 The DNC hired Perkins Coie who hired Fusion GPS who hired Christopher Steele
11 who talked to Russians who gave him a bunch of dirt, a bunch of National Enquirer
12 garbage that he compiled in a dossier, and our FBI used it. They used it as part of their
13 investigation that they opened in July of 2016 where they spied on two American citizens
14 associated with the presidential campaign.

15 My guess is that's probably never happened in American history, and exactly what
16 Dr. Hill talked about is what happened in 2016. Exactly what she talked about. And for
17 10 months, Jim Comey and his team did an investigation, and after 10 months, they had
18 nothing. Because we deposed Mr. Comey, and he told us after 10 months, we didn't
19 have a thing.

20 But that didn't matter. That didn't matter. We got the Mueller investigation,
21 \$32 million, 19 lawyers, 40 FBI agents, 500 search warrants, 2,800 subpoenas, and they
22 came back this spring, and what did they tell us? No collusion, no conspiracy, no
23 coordination. But the guys on the other side don't care. They don't care. They're
24 doing what -- Dr. Hill said a number of important things in her opening statement.
25 They're doing exactly what Dr. Hill talked about.

1 The impact of a successful 2016 Russian campaign remains evident today. Our
2 Nation is being torn apart. Torn apart. I've never seen it this divided, and it is not
3 healthy. It is not healthy for our culture, our country, not healthy for our Nation, but
4 that's what these guys are doing. No conspiracy, no coordination, no -- no collusion, but
5 they don't care.

6 Now this. This whole impeachment thing. As the witness said yesterday, the
7 witness said yesterday, without an announcement from Zelensky about an investigation,
8 they weren't going to get a call with the President, they weren't going to get a meeting
9 with the President, and they weren't going to get aid from the United States. But guess
10 what? Ukraine, they got the call, they got the meeting, and they got the money, and
11 there was never an announcement of any type of investigation.

12 This is -- but they don't care. They're going to move forward. There's going to
13 be some kind of report. They're going to send, I assume, something to the Judiciary
14 Committee, and the process is going to go forward, and there will be a trial in the Senate
15 all based on some anonymous whistleblower who came forward with no firsthand
16 knowledge who is biased against the President who worked with Joe Biden. Now all
17 this. Now all of this. This is -- Dr. Hill is right. She said -- she said it. We've got to
18 stop this, but they're not going to. And they're doing it all 11 and a half months before
19 the next election.

20 And I think maybe the most telling thing is what the Speaker of the House said
21 Sunday. The Speaker of the House said Sunday -- this is scary. The Speaker of the
22 House said Sunday, national Sunday morning TV show. She said the President is an
23 imposter. The guy that 63 million people voted for who won the electoral college
24 landslide, the Speaker of the House of Representatives called the President of the United
25 States an imposter. It's sad. It is sad what the country is going through. I wish it

1 would stop, but unfortunately, I don't think it is.

2 Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

3 The Chairman. Mr. Welch.

4 Mr. Welch. I want to use my time to speak directly to my colleagues and to the
5 American people. Today's witnesses and the ones we've been privileged to have before
6 the committee over the last 2 weeks have provided an invaluable service to our country,
7 not just in all your careers, but in having the courage and the patriotism to share your
8 facts with the American people. And you do so at considerable risk to yourselves, but
9 you've clearly stepped forward for the simple fact you believe it's your duty.

10 And all your testimony reaffirms a very central fact. President Trump
11 conditioned our foreign policy and national security on getting a valuable political benefit
12 from Ukraine. He wanted Ukraine's new President to create ethical questions about Joe
13 Biden by publicly announcing investigations, and to pressure President Zelensky to take
14 that action that would benefit his personal political interests, he withheld vital military aid
15 to Ukraine and refused to meet with President Zelensky in the Oval Office.

16 And as we heard from Mr. Holmes and Dr. Hill today, that meeting was
17 extraordinarily important to Ukraine and extraordinarily important in sending a message
18 to Russia about our unyielding support.

19 The witnesses have made it absolutely clear what the President did, and it's
20 equally clear that President Trump has launched a coverup and disinformation campaign
21 to hide this abuse of power from the American people. That's why the administration
22 refuses to provide documents to this committee.

23 And it's why the White House has taken the unprecedented position that senior
24 officials could ignore congressional subpoenas and refuse to testify. That's why Acting
25 Chief of Staff Mulvaney, Secretary of State Pompeo, and others have not testified. Now

1 the President and even some members of this committee are pretending this is normal.
2 It is not. It must never be. No other President has betrayed his office like this by
3 putting his own small political interest above our national interests and our national
4 security.

5 Now, I asked some of our witnesses what would happen in any American city or
6 town if the mayor stopped funding the police department until the chief of police
7 launched an investigation into the mayor's political rival or a governor or a Member of
8 Congress did that, and the answer was clear. It would be wrong, it would be illegal, and
9 it wouldn't be tolerated. It would violate the most basic trust we have in public officials.

10 If it happened with a military commander, a court martial would follow. If it
11 happened with a corporation, a CEO would be fired. We all know this kind of conduct is
12 wrong, but the President continues to say it isn't. He says it's perfect, and he'd do it
13 again tomorrow.

14 The same rules apply to mayors, governors, Members of Congress, CEOs, and
15 everyone else in America. They apply to the President too. Whether you're a
16 Republican or a Democrat, you like MSNBC or Fox, I think every American believes in one
17 of our Nation's founding principles. No person is above the law, not even the President.

18 On July 24th, Director Mueller testified about Russian state-sponsored systematic
19 interference in our 2016 election. He expressed apprehension this could become the
20 new normal. The day after, on July 25th, President Trump spoke to President Zelensky
21 and asked a favor. That favor was that Ukraine interfere in our 2020 election. If we
22 allow this to stand, to become the new normal, it will be the standard for all future
23 Presidents.

24 In good conscience, none of us can do that. This conduct corrupts our
25 democracy. It corrupts how our country conducts foreign policy. It threatens our

1 national security and the security of all Americans. And it is, in my view, a clear betrayal
2 of the President's oath of office.

3 I yield back.

4 The Chairman. Mr. Maloney.

5 Mr. Maloney. Mr. Chair man, two quick housekeeping matters. I ask
6 unanimous consent to enter into the record an ABC News story, this one is for my friend,
7 Mr. Stewart, entitled 70 Percent of Americans say Trump's Actions Tied to Ukraine Were
8 Wrong, dated November 18th, 2019.

9 The Chairman. Without objection.

10 [The information follows:]

11

12 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1 Mr. Maloney. I also ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a New
2 Yorker story entitled The Invention of the Conspiracy Theory on Biden and Ukraine, How a
3 Conservative Dark Money Group that Targeted Hillary Clinton in 2016 Spread the
4 Discredited Story that may lead to Donald Trump's Impeachment, Jane Mayer, October 4,
5 2019.

6 The Chairman. Without objection.

7 [The information follows:]

8

9 ***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

1 Mr. Maloney. Good afternoon. Thank you for being here.

2 Dr. Hill, first of all, I thought that was some epic mansplaining that you were
3 forced to endure by my colleague, Mr. Turner, and I want you to know, some of us think it
4 was inappropriate. But I appreciate -- I appreciate your forbearance.

5 Let me ask you something. I'm fascinated by this meeting, two meetings, really,
6 on July 10th. You had the meeting in Mr. Bolton's office. Someone says this thing
7 about investigations. Bolton ends the meeting. A photo. There's a follow on
8 meeting in the Ward Room, and you get there a little late, and Vindman is talking to
9 Sondland, and they're already going at it about Sondland's desire to assert that the
10 meeting is going to happen if there's these investigations. Is that the sum and
11 substance of what's going on?

12 Ms. Hill. Absolutely right, yes.

13 Mr. Maloney. And what I want to understand is this isn't a policy disagreement,
14 right?

15 Ms. Hill. No. That's not. That's correct. It's not a policy disagreement.

16 Mr. Maloney. The source of your concern is not a policy disagreement, and it's
17 not purely a procedural disagreement, either, right, about how --

18 Ms. Hill. It's not.

19 Mr. Maloney. Excuse me.

20 Ms. Hill. I'm sorry. Yes, it's not. Correct.

21 Mr. Maloney. It's neither policy, nor is it procedure that's bothering you, or for
22 that matter, the National Security Advisor, Mr. Bolton, right?

23 Ms. Hill. Correct.

24 Mr. Maloney. I mean, that's not why he sends you down there to see how the
25 meeting's going?

1 Ms. Hill. Correct.

2 Mr. Maloney. And, in fact, he instructs you to go to the lawyer. Have you ever
3 been instructed to go to report something to the NSC lawyer before?

4 Ms. Hill. That was the first time. I've self-instructed a couple of times, but that
5 was the first time I had been instructed to go.

6 Mr. Maloney. And why did he send you to report this to the lawyer?

7 Ms. Hill. Well, he clearly wanted to have himself on the record as not being part
8 of what was basically an agreement to have a meeting in return for investigations. And
9 he wanted to make sure that I and Colonel Vindman were also not part of this as well
10 because remember, there's a corollary to this about not getting involved in domestic
11 politics.

12 Mr. Maloney. Yes, I understand. And you, of course, did you concur with this
13 concern Mr. Bolton had?

14 Ms. Hill. I did because July 10th is really the first time that it crystallized for me
15 that there was basically a different channel going on here --

16 Mr. Maloney. And I think you --

17 Ms. Hill. -- a foreign policy channel and a domestic policy channel, and we're not
18 in that other channel.

19 Mr. Maloney. Right. I think you described it as a political errand, and you were
20 doing national security policy is how you distinguished those two channels --

21 Ms. Hill. Correct.

22 Mr. Maloney. -- is that fair? Right. And so is it fair to say that you felt it was
23 improper, what was occurring by Mr. Sondland in the Ward Room?

24 Ms. Hill. It was improper, and it was inappropriate, and we said that in the time,
25 in real-time.

1 Mr. Maloney. And here is my point. If it was improper, and you went so far as
2 to report this to the lawyers, what was the nature of your disagreement with
3 Mr. Sondland who has come here and said he had no idea that Burisma meant Bidens
4 until much, much later than July 10th.

5 And of course, we know that he and Ambassador Volker had a blizzard of
6 interactions with Mr. Giuliani. They were amending statements, proposed statements,
7 for the Ukrainian President. This went on all summer. And yet, how is it that you had
8 this disagreement in front of the Ukrainians, sent them out into the hallway? At some
9 point, did he ask, you know, I'm just talking about an investigation of corruption
10 generally, what are you getting so worried about?

11 Ms. Hill. He didn't put it in that -- in that way, and I think, you know, from
12 listening to him in his depositions and in, you know, what I've read and what he deposed,
13 he made it very clear that he was surprised that we had some kind of objection. You
14 may remember that in his deposition and when he was here, he actually didn't remember
15 the meeting in the same way because he --

16 Mr. Maloney. But I thought you said it was pretty obvious to you -- excuse me.

17 Ms. Hill. It was obvious to me, correct.

18 Mr. Maloney. I thought it was obvious to you that Burisma meant Bidens.

19 Ms. Hill. Yes, it was.

20 Mr. Maloney. And you actually treated that as a pretty easy thing to understand.
21 In fact, Mr. Morrison figured it out with a single Google search. But is it credible to you
22 that Mr. Sondland was completely in the dark about this all summer? I mean, you had
23 an argument about it. Didn't he say what are you so worried about?

24 Ms. Hill. It's not credible to me at all that he was oblivious.

25 Mr. Maloney. I'm sorry. I couldn't hear your answer.

1 Ms. Hill. It is not credible to me that he was oblivious. He did not say Bidens,
2 however. He just said Burisma. He said 2016, and I took it to mean the elections as
3 well as Burisma.

4 Mr. Maloney. I want to thank you both for your appearance here today.
5 I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

6 The Chairman. Ms. Demings.

7 Ms. Demings. Thank you so much, Dr. Hill, and Mr. Holmes, for your service. I
8 have no doubt after today that we're a better Nation because of it.

9 We all know by now that in July of this year, President Trump sent an order to the
10 Office of Management and Budget that congressionally approved military aid to Ukraine
11 be put on hold. Both of you have expressed that Ukraine is the front -- the first line of
12 defense against Russian aggression and expansion into Europe, that Russia's priority is to
13 undermine the United States. Is that right, Dr. Hill?

14 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

15 Ms. Demings. Would you agree with that, Mr. Holmes?

16 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

17 Ms. Demings. Dr. Hill, in your professional opinion, is it in the national security
18 interest of the United States to support Ukraine with the much talked about military aid?

19 Ms. Hill. Yes.

20 Ms. Demings. Mr. Holmes?

21 Mr. Holmes. Yes.

22 Ms. Demings. We've already said it several times today, and you've already
23 testified that Ukraine is in war right now with Russia. Isn't it true, Mr. Holmes, that even
24 though the security assistance was eventually delivered to Ukraine, the fact that it was
25 delayed to a country that is actively in war signaled to Russia that perhaps the bond

1 between Ukraine and the United States was weakening?

2 Mr. Holmes. Absolutely. Absolutely.

3 Ms. Demings. And even the appearance that the U.S.-Ukraine bond is shaky
4 could embolden Russia to act in an even more aggressive way?

5 Mr. Holmes. That's correct.

6 Ms. Demings. You also testified that it was, and I quote, the unanimous view of
7 the Ukraine policy community that the aid should be released because supporting
8 Ukraine is in our national security interests.

9 Dr. Hill, why do you believe that the entire Ukraine policy community were
10 unanimously in agreement?

11 Ms. Hill. Well, we've had this experience before, and I just want you to indulge
12 me for a moment. In 2008, Russia also attacked the country of Georgia. I was the
13 national intelligence officer at that particular juncture, and we had warned in multiple
14 documents to the highest levels of government that we believed that there was a real risk
15 of a conflict between Ukraine -- sorry, Georgia and Russia, and in fact, we also believed at
16 that point that Russia might attack Ukraine. This was in 2008 when both Georgia and
17 Ukraine sought a membership action plan in NATO, and Russia threatened them openly
18 that if they proceeded with their request for NATO membership that there would be
19 consequences.

20 In the wake of the attack on Georgia, President Putin made it clear to the
21 President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili at the time, and this was related to me at the
22 highest levels of the Georgian Government that Putin had said directly to Saakashvili your
23 western allies, your western partners promised a great deal. They didn't deliver. I
24 threatened. I delivered. We had made all kinds of promises to Georgia and Ukraine in
25 that frame, and we didn't come through.

1 So Putin is always looking out to see if there is any hint that we will not follow
2 through on promises that we have made because he will always follow through on a
3 threat as, indeed, he ultimately did. He threatened Ukraine in 2008, and it wasn't until
4 2014 when Ukraine tried to conclude an association agreement with the European Union
5 that he struck, but he had been threatening this for the whole period since 2008.

6 Ms. Demings. Thank you so much, Dr. Hill.

7 And Mr. Holmes, what kind of message does it potentially send to other allies of
8 the United States when military holds for assistance are imposed with absolutely no
9 explanation? What kind of message does it send to our allies in terms of the good faith
10 and good relationship with the U.S.?

11 Mr. Holmes. It calls into question the extent to which they can count on us.

12 Ms. Demings. Policies change, but U.S. interests don't. At least not for those
13 true public servants who are committed and dedicated to protecting our Nation. Thank
14 you both for being two of them.

15 The Chairman. Mr. Krishnamoorthi.

16 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Good afternoon, and thank you so much for coming in, and
17 thank you for your service.

18 Dr. Hill, you stated in your deposition you've been accused of being a mole for
19 George Soros in the White House, correct?

20 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

21 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. You said in your deposition specifically a conspiracy was
22 launched against you by a convicted felon, Roger Stone, on the show Info Wars, led by
23 Alex Jones, right?

24 Ms. Hill. I don't think he was a convicted felon at the time that he launched this,
25 so I didn't use those exact words.

1 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Good point.

2 Ms. Hill. But it was, indeed, Roger Stone and Alex Jones on Info Wars in 2017.
3 In fact, just more recently before Mr. Stone was -- endured his trial, they were at it again,
4 repeating the same Info Wars video and adding embellishments.

5 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And they said -- I'll quote what they said about you. We
6 here at Info Wars, this is Roger Stone speaking, first identified Fiona Hill, the globalist,
7 leftist, George Soros insider who had infiltrated McMaster's staff. He said that on May
8 31st, 2017. I presume you're not a globalist, leftist, Soros insider, correct?

9 Ms. Hill. I think my coal mining family would be very surprised to hear all of
10 these things about me.

11 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. I agree.

12 Ms. Hill. Actually leftist, perhaps not so much, but anyway, the left in Europe is a
13 bit different from the left here. Let's put it that way.

14 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. I agree. Interestingly, you stated in your deposition that a
15 similar conspiracy theory had actually been launched against Marie Yovanovitch.

16 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

17 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And you said specifically, when I saw this happening to
18 Ambassador Yovanovitch, again, I was furious because this is again just this whipping up
19 of what is frankly an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory about George Soros to basically target
20 nonpartisan career officials. Isn't that what you said?

21 Ms. Hill. I did say that, yes.

22 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And I'm sure you've been watching with concern what's
23 happened to other nonpartisan career officials. We had Alex -- Lieutenant Colonel
24 Alex Vindman, an American immigrant, questioned for his criticism of the President in a
25 very unfair way, you know, basically questioning his loyalty to the country. I believe that

1 he's also of Ukranian Jewish descent.

2 Would you say that these different theories, these conspiracy theories that have
3 been targeting you spun in part by folks like Mr. Stone as well as fueled by Rudy Giuliani
4 and others basically have a tinge of anti-Semitism to them, at least?

5 Ms. Hill. Well, certainly when they involve George Soros, they do. I would just
6 like to point out that in the early 1900s, the Tsar Secret Police produced something called
7 the Protocols of the Elders of Zion which actually you can still obtain on the internet, and
8 you can buy it actually sometimes in book shops in Russia and elsewhere.

9 This is the longest running anti-Semitic trope that we have in history. And the
10 trope against Mr. Soros, George Soros, was also created for political purposes, and this is
11 the New Protocols of the Elders of Zion. I actually intended to write something about
12 this before I was actually invited to come into the administration because it's an absolute
13 outrage.

14 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. I'm sorry -- I'm sorry you've been kind of wrapped up in
15 these crackpot conspiracy theories.

16 Let me turn to Rudy Giuliani. You became increasingly concerned about Rudy
17 Giuliani's, you know, increasing role in Ukraine between January and March of 2019,
18 correct?

19 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

20 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And I know you served in the Bush and Obama
21 administrations. I assume that George Bush's personal lawyer and President Obama's
22 personal lawyers were never, you know, directing or heavily influencing Ukraine policy?

23 Ms. Hill. I'm not even sure I know who they were, so the answer is no.

24 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And the concern for having someone like Rudy Giuliani
25 having such a strong influence on American foreign policy is that, you know, basically that

1 policy may be operating not in the best interests of America but perhaps in the best
2 interests of Rudy Giuliani or his clients or business associates, right?

3 Ms. Hill. I think that's correct, and that was as I said in my deposition on October
4 14th that frankly, that's what I thought it was at the very beginning when I first heard
5 Mr. Giuliani making these statements.

6 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And some of those associates included indicted folks Igor
7 Fruman and Lev Parnas. Isn't that right?

8 Ms. Hill. That's correct.

9 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. We have an interesting character in Chicago who's now
10 been indicted. His name is Mr. Firtash, and Mr. Firtash has been indicted for Federal
11 bribery charges, another associate of Giuliani, right?

12 Ms. Hill. I do know Mr. Firtash, that's correct. I know of him from my work,
13 that's correct.

14 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And the question that we're all asking is whether American
15 foreign policy in Ukraine is potentially being run in their interests and not our own.

16 Ms. Hill. It certainly appears that it is being used as a subversion of American
17 foreign policy to push these people's personal interests.

18 Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Thank you so much.

19 The Chairman. That concludes the member questioning, and we'll go now to
20 closing statements.

21 Mr. Nunes, do you have any closing remarks?

22 Mr. Nunes. Thank you.

23 I have stressed in these hearings that the whistleblower complaint was merely a
24 pretext for Donald Trump's political opponents to do what they've been trying to do since
25 he was elected, oust the President from office. A brief timeline will illustrate the wide

1 range of extraordinary attacks his administration has faced.

2 I'm going to start in June of 2016 when Donald Trump was just a candidate. On
3 behalf of the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary Clinton campaign, Fusion
4 GPS hires Christopher Steele to write the Steele dossiers, a collection of false allegations
5 attributed to Russian sources claiming that Donald Trump is a Russian agent.

6 Fast forward to January 6th of 2017. FBI Director James Comey briefs
7 President-Elect Trump on the Steele dossier. The briefing is leaked to CNN, and soon
8 afterwards, BuzzFeed publishes the dossiers.

9 January 20th. On President Trump's inauguration day, the Washington Post runs
10 a story headlined, quote, The Campaign to Impeach Donald Trump has begun. January
11 30th. 10 days later, the whistleblower's current lawyer tweets #coup has started, first
12 of many steps, #rebellion, #impeachment will follow immediately.

13 March 22nd. Democrats on this committee falsely declare on national TV that
14 they have more than circumstantial evidence that the Trump campaign colluded with
15 Russia. July 12th. An Article of Impeachment is filed against President Trump in the
16 House of Representatives. November 15th. Democrats file additional Articles of
17 Impeachment against President Trump.

18 As you see, this was just in President Trump's first year in office. He was
19 subjected to a coordinated smear operation designed to falsely portray him as a Russian
20 agent as well as attempts to impeach him. This all occurred before this now infamous
21 call with President Zelensky.

22 In 2018, the attacks continued, often from executive branch officials charged with
23 implementing these policies. On February 2nd, 2018, Intelligence Committee
24 Republicans release a memo revealing that the FBI used fabrications of the Steele dossier
25 to get a warrant to spy on a Trump campaign associate.

1 September 5th. The New York Times prints a column by an anonymous Trump
2 administration official who explains that he and other senior officials are, quote, working
3 diligently from within to frustrate parts of Trump's agenda, unquote. December 7th.
4 James Comey admits to Congress the Steele dossier was unverified before and after the
5 FBI used it to get a warrant to spy on a Trump campaign associate.

6 The Russia hoax continued to be the main focus of attacks going into 2019, but
7 when that entire operation collapsed, a new impeachment pretext had to be found.
8 May 4th, 2019. On national television, a Democratic Congressman proclaims, quote, I'm
9 concerned that if we don't impeach this President, he will get reelected, unquote. July
10 24th of this year. Special Counsel Robert Mueller testifies to Congress about his report
11 which debunked the conspiracy theory that Trump campaign associates conspired with
12 Russia to hack the 2016 elections.

13 July 25th. Just the very next day, a new anti-Trump operation begins as
14 someone listens to the President's phone call with the Ukraine President Zelensky and
15 leaks the contents to the so-called whistleblower. September 13th. Democrats on this
16 committee take the extraordinary step of issuing a press release related to the
17 whistleblower's complaint. October 2nd. It's revealed that Democratic staff on this
18 committee had contact with the whistleblower before he submitted his complaint to the
19 Inspector General, contradicting Democrat denials that such contact had occurred.
20 October 31st, Halloween, probably the most appropriate day. Democrats in the House
21 of Representatives vote to open an official impeachment inquiry against President Trump.

22 What you've seen in this room over the past 2 weeks is a show trial, the planned
23 result of 3 years of political operations and dirty tricks, campaigns waged against this
24 President. And like any good show trial, the verdict was decided before the trial ever
25 began. After all, after denouncing the President for years as a Russian agent and a

1 threat to democracy, how could the Democrats not impeach him? If they don't have
2 to -- if they don't move to overthrow him, it would indicate that they don't really believe
3 their own dire warnings about the threat he poses. The Democrats only needed a
4 pretext. When their Russian dossiers and investigations failed to do the job, they moved
5 to plan B, the Ukraine hoax. The spectacle with its secret depositions and mid hearing
6 press conferences is not meant to discover the facts. It was designed to produce a
7 specific story line to be pushed forward by the Democrats and their supporters in the
8 media.

9 Ladies and gentlemen, as we approach Thanksgiving, Speaker Pelosi has just made
10 clear, just today, USMCA, the free trade deal with Canada and Mexico that will boost our
11 economy won't be signed this year. So I hope Mr. Schiff will clarify how much longer we
12 will waste on this effort and what other vital legislation he's willing to sacrifice for this
13 impeachment crusade. Will there be even more secret depositions accompanied by the
14 usual flood of Democratic leaks? Will we have more public hearings with Democrat
15 witnesses but not ours? The minority are in the dark about what this committee will be
16 doing when we return, and so is America.

17 James Madison warned us about the danger posed by the tyranny of the majority.
18 To avoid that threat, our Founders created a constitutional republic. But is there a
19 better example of the tyranny of majority than the way this impeachment process has
20 been run in the House of Representatives? A process that is grossly unfair can only stem
21 from a cynical majority that is willing to break long established precedents, trample on
22 legitimate minority concerns, and impose their absolute will on this body through sheer
23 force of numbers.

24 Exploiting the Intelligence Committee as an venue for impeachment has been one
25 of the grossest abuses in the process filled with cynical manipulations, large and small,

1 but this farce will soon move to the Judiciary Committee where impeachment rightfully
2 belongs. I wish my Republican colleagues well in fighting this travesty and defending the
3 idea which, at one time, received bipartisan support not long ago. The American
4 people's vote actually means something. I yield back.

5 The Chairman. I thank the gentleman.

6 First of all, I want to thank you both for your testimony. I want to thank you for
7 your long years of service to the country. You're not Democratic witnesses or
8 Republican witnesses. You're nonpartisan witnesses, and you have stuck to the facts,
9 and that is as it should be.

10 First, I want to make a couple observations about the hearing today. And,
11 Dr. Hill, you were criticized several times by my colleagues for your opening statement,
12 and I'm glad you didn't back down from it. You're much more diplomatic than I am, I
13 have to say.

14 Anyone watching these proceedings, anyone reading the deposition transcripts
15 would have the same impression that you evidently had from hearing my colleagues talk
16 about the Russia hoax, that the whole idea that Russia had gotten involved with the 2016
17 election was a hoax put out by the Democrats. And, of course, they're not alone in
18 pushing out this idea. It is trumpeted by no one other the President of the United States
19 who almost on a daily basis at times would comment and tweet and propagate the idea
20 that Russia's interference in our election was a hoax.

21 And of course, we all remember that debacle in Helsinki when the President stood
22 next to Vladimir Putin and questioned his own intelligence agencies. I wish I had heard
23 just some of the righteous indignation we heard in the committee today when the
24 President questioned that fundamental conclusion of our intelligence agencies, but of
25 course, they were silent when the President said that. They'll show indignation today,

1 but they will cower when they hear the President questioning the very conclusions that
2 our intelligence community has reached.

3 But we saw something interesting also today. My colleagues sought to use you,
4 Dr. Hill, to besmirch the character of Colonel Vindman, and I thought this was very
5 interesting. It certainly wasn't unexpected, but it was very interesting for this reason:
6 They didn't really question anything Colonel Vindman said. After all, what Colonel
7 Vindman said is what you said. He was in that July 10th meeting. He heard the same
8 quid quo pro, the same comments by Sondland. If you want this meeting, Ukrainians,
9 and we have an agreement about this, you've got to announce you're going to do these
10 investigations. He heard the same quid quo pro that you did. So why are they
11 smearing him?

12 Mr. Holmes, you testified just as Vindman said, Colonel Vindman said, that he
13 warned Zelensky about getting involved in U.S. politics. You don't question that. They
14 didn't take issue with that. So why smear this Purple Heart recipient just like the smear
15 of Ambassador Yovanovitch. It's just gratuitous. They don't question the facts. It's
16 just gratuitous.

17 The attacking of you, Mr. Holmes, that you were indiscreet in mentioning this
18 conversation to others. Well, I think you're quite right. The indiscretion is when an
19 ambassador to the EU calls the President on an insecure line in a country known for
20 Russian telecommunications and eavesdropping. That's more than indiscretion. That's
21 a security risk.

22 But why attack you, Mr. Holmes? They didn't question anything you said. They
23 didn't question what conversation you overheard. Ambassador Sondland, indeed, didn't
24 question what you said. He acknowledged that the one thing the President wanted to
25 know the day after that conversation with Zelensky was is he going to do the

1 investigations. And Sondland said yes, he'll do anything you ask. They don't question
2 that.

3 So why attack you? They didn't question your testimony when you said -- and I
4 think you asked Ambassador Sondland does Donald Trump give a blank, and I would like
5 to use the word here, about Ukraine, and he said he doesn't give a blank about Ukraine.
6 He only cares about the big stuff. And you said, well, there's some big stuff here.
7 Ukraine is at war with Russia. That's kind of big stuff. And his answer was no, no, no,
8 no, no. He cares about the big stuff that matters to him, his personal interests like the
9 Biden investigation that Giuliani wants.

1 RPTR MOLNAR

2 EDTR CRYSTAL

3 [4:03 p.m.]

4 The Chairman. I mean, one question posed by your testimony, Mr. Holmes, is,
5 what do we care about? Do we care about the big stuff like the Constitution, like an
6 oath of office, or do we only care now about party? What do we care about?

7 But let's go beyond your testimony today. Let's look at the bigger picture.
8 What do we know now after these depositions, these secret depositions?

9 Now, people watching at home might not know that in these secret depositions,
10 which apparently no one else is allowed to hear, no Members are allowed to participate,
11 it's just secret apparently, sounds like it's just me and the witness, only over a hundred
12 Members of Congress are able to participate in those secret depositions.

13 And the minority was just so unable to participate? They got the same time they
14 got in these open hearings. It was the same format. That was the secret star chamber
15 that you've been hearing so much about.

16 So what have we learned through these depositions and through the testimony?
17 Because so much of this is really undisputed.

18 We learned that a dedicated public servant named Marie Yovanovitch, known for
19 fighting corruption, widely respected throughout the diplomatic corps, was ruthlessly
20 smeared by Rudy Giuliani, by the President's own son, by their friends on FOX Primetime,
21 and a whole host of other characters. Her reputation was sullied so they could get her
22 out of the way, which they did.

23 And you're right, it was gratuitous. The President could have gotten rid of her
24 any time he wanted. But that's not enough for this President. No, he has to smear and
25 destroy those that get in his way, and someone fighting corruption in Ukraine was getting

1 in his way. So she's gone. She's gone.

2 And this makes way, almost immediately thereafter, she leaves, the Three Amigos
3 come in. The Three Amigos, two of whom never made the connection that Burisma
4 means Biden. It took Tim Morrison all of 30 seconds on Google to figure that out. But
5 we're to believe, I guess, that in all the companies in all the world, that Rudy Giuliani just
6 happens to be interested in this one? That's absurd.

7 The interest, of course, was in an investigation of Donald Trump's rival, the one
8 that he apparently feared the most. And they were willing to do whatever was
9 necessary to get Ukraine to do that dirty work, to do that political investigation.

10 And so it began, we're not going to set up a phone call until you make certain
11 commitments. That was Ambassador Sondland's testimony. The first quid pro quo
12 was actually just getting on the phone with President Trump. And then there was the
13 quid pro quo involving the White House meeting. And witness after witness -- and none
14 of my colleagues contested this -- talked about just how important that meeting was to
15 the President of Ukraine.

16 And why? They're at war with Russia, and their most important ally is the United
17 States, and the most important person in the United States for that relationship is the
18 President of the United States. And if President Zelensky can show that he has a good
19 relationship with the President of the United States, it means to his people that this new
20 President has the support of their most important patron, and it means to the Russians
21 that we have their back.

22 This President, this new President, who is negotiating with a far superior power
23 that has invaded his country, is going into a negotiation with Putin over how to resolve
24 this conflict, whether he has good leverage or lousy leverage depends on whether the
25 Russians think he has a relationship with the President.

1 And the President wouldn't give him that, not without getting something in
2 return, wouldn't give him that official act, that White House meeting, without getting
3 something in return, and that return was investigations of his rival that would help his
4 reelection, an official act for something of clear value, and something very important, the
5 big stuff, as Sondland explained to you, Mr. Holmes, to help his campaign.

6 Now, we also heard abundant testimony about the other quid pro quo, the
7 withholding of security assistance, which no one can explain. There's no debate among
8 my colleagues. Everyone in the NSC, in the State Department, the Defense Department,
9 everyone supported this, everyone. All the reviews that needed to be done to make
10 sure that Ukraine was meeting its anti-corruption standards had been done, and they had
11 found to meet the criteria.

12 The aid should have been released, but it was withheld, and no one could
13 understand or get a clear explanation for why, until it became clear, to everyone, it's all
14 about the investigations, it's all about the leverage.

15 And if there was any doubt about it, the man closest to the President, who meets
16 with him every day, Mick Mulvaney, erased all doubt. You're darned right, yes, we
17 talked about the 2016 election investigation. And, yes, this was in the context of
18 holding up the military aid. And, you know, just get used to it, or just get over it, or
19 whatever it was he said, because that's how we roll.

20 Those are my words, not his. But that's the import. Yeah, there's going to be
21 politics and just get over it.

22 Well, if we care about the big stuff, we can't just get over it.

23 Now, my colleagues have had a lot of defenses to all of this evidence, which has
24 piled up day after day after day. And it's amazing, they hear you testify, Mr. Holmes,
25 that it was clear that the security assistance was being withheld, it was clear to all of the

1 Americans, it was clear to the Ukrainians. You testified the Ukrainians felt pressure.
2 They still feel pressure to this day.

3 And what do my colleagues say in the same hearing? I mean, I guess they're not
4 listening. The Ukrainians felt no pressure, there's no evidence they felt pressure.

5 Which gets into their next defense, which is it's all hearsay, it's all hearsay.

6 Now, most of my colleagues, I guess, are not lawyers. Lawyers out there
7 understand just how wrong they are about what hearsay is, but let's just discuss this in
8 terms that all people can understand.

9 The impression they would have you take from "it's all hearsay" is because we in
10 this committee were not in that Ward Room with you, Dr. Hill, we were not in that
11 meeting earlier with Dr. Bolton, that because we're not in the room, it's all hearsay.

12 After all, you're relating what you heard and you're saying it, so it must be
13 hearsay, and therefore we don't really have to think about it, do we? We don't have to
14 consider that you have direct evidence that this meeting in the White House was being
15 withheld because the President wanted these meetings -- these investigations. We
16 can't accept that.

17 Well, if that were true, you could never present any evidence in court, unless the
18 jury was also in the Ward Room. That's absurd.

19 They don't accept the documentary evidence, all the text messages about quid pro
20 quos and are we really saying, and that's crazy, and my worst nightmare is the Russians
21 will get and I'll quit.

22 They don't accept the documents, the few documents that we have from the State
23 Department -- that weren't produced, by the way, by the State Department -- where
24 Sondland communicates directly with the Secretary of State about this investigative
25 interest of the President. And they don't accept the documents either. I guess the

1 documents are also hearsay.

2 Now, it might be a little more convincing if they were joining us in demanding that
3 the documents be produced, but of course they're not. And we know why not.
4 Because the documents are like that one we saw on the screen, they implicate others,
5 including Secretary Pompeo. So of course Donald Trump and Secretary Pompeo don't
6 want us to see those documents.

7 But apparently it's all hearsay. Even when you actually hear the President, Mr.
8 Holmes, that's hearsay. We can't rely on people saying what the President said.
9 Apparently, we can only rely on what the President says, and there, we shouldn't even
10 rely on that either.

11 We shouldn't really rely on what the President said in the call record. We should
12 imagine he said something else. We should imagine he said something about actually
13 fighting corruption, instead of what he actually said, which was, I want you to do us a
14 favor, though. I want you to look into this 2016 CrowdStrike conspiracy theory, and I
15 want you to look into the Bidens. I guess we're not even supposed to rely on that
16 because that's hearsay.

17 Well, that's absurd. That would be like saying, you can't rely on the testimony of
18 the burglars during Watergate because it's only hearsay, or you can't consider the fact
19 that they tried to break in because they got caught. They actually didn't get what they
20 came for, so, you know, kind of no harm, no foul. That's absurd. That's absurd.

21 But the other -- the other defense besides it failed, the scheme failed, they got
22 caught, the other defense is the President denies it.

23 Well, I guess that's case closed, right? The President says, really quite
24 spontaneously, it's not as if he was asked in this way, no quid pro quo. What do you
25 want from Ukraine? No quid pro quo.

1 This is the "I'm not a crook" defense. You say it, and I guess that's the end of it.

2 Well, the only thing we can say is that it's not so much that the situation is
3 different in terms of Nixon's conduct and Trump's conduct. What we've seen here is far
4 more serious than a third-rate burglary of the Democratic headquarters. What we're
5 talking about here is the withholding of recognition in that White House meeting, the
6 withholding of military aid to an ally at war. That is beyond anything Nixon did.

7 The difference between then and now is not the difference between Nixon and
8 Trump. It's the difference between that Congress and this one.

9 And so we are asking, where is Howard Baker? Where is Howard Baker?
10 Where are the people who are willing to go beyond their party, to look to their duty?

11 I was struck by Colonel Vindman's testimony because he said that he acted out of
12 duty. What is our duty here? That's what we need to be asking, not using metaphors
13 about balls and strikes or our team and your team. I've heard my colleagues use those
14 metaphors. This should be about duty. What is our duty?

15 We are -- and this gets to Mr. Heck's point -- we are the indispensable Nation, we
16 still are. People look to us from all over the world. Journalists from their jail cells in
17 Turkey. The victims of mass extrajudicial killing in the Philippines. People who
18 gathered in Tahrir Square wanting a representative government. People in China who
19 are Uighurs. People in Ukraine who want a better future.

20 They look to us. They're not going to look to the Russians. They're not going to
21 the look to the Chinese. They can't look to Europe with all its problems.

22 They still look to us, and increasingly they don't recognize what they see, because
23 what they see is Americans saying, don't engage in political prosecutions. And what
24 they say back is, oh, you mean like the Bidens and the Clintons that you want us to
25 investigate?

1 What they see, they don't recognize. And that is a terrible tragedy for us, but it's
2 a greater tragedy for the rest of the world.

3 Now, I happen to think that when the Founders provided a mechanism in the
4 Constitution for impeachment they were worried about what might happen if someone
5 unethical took the highest office in the land and used it for their personal gain and not
6 because of deep care about the big things that should matter, like our national security
7 and our defense and our allies and what the country stands for. I happen to think that's
8 why they put that remedy in the Constitution.

9 And I think we need to consult our conscience and our constituents and decide
10 whether that remedy is appropriate here, whether that remedy is necessary here.

11 And as you know, notwithstanding what my colleague said, I resisted going down
12 this path for a long time. But I will tell you why I could resist no more. And it came
13 down to this. It came down to -- actually, it came down to timing.

14 It came down to the fact that the day after Bob Mueller testified, the day after
15 Bob Mueller testified that Donald Trump invited Russian interference -- Hey, Russia, if
16 you're listening, come get Hillary's emails, and later that day, they tried to hack her
17 server -- the day after he testified that not only did Trump invite that interference, but
18 that he welcomed the help in the campaign, they made full use of it, they lied about it,
19 they obstructed the investigation into it, and all this is in his testimony and his report, the
20 day after that, Donald Trump is back on the phone asking another nation to involve itself
21 in another U.S. election.

22 That says to me, this President believes he is above the law, beyond
23 accountability. And in my view, there is nothing more dangerous than an unethical
24 President who believes they are above the law.

25 And I would just say to people watching here at home and around the world, in

1 the words of my great colleague, we are better than that.

2 Adjourned.

3 [Whereupon, at 4:19 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]