

Laura Cooper, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, & Eurasia

- 1. According to DAS Cooper, the failure to fully obligate 100% of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) funds is not uncommon. USAI is a U.S. Department of Defense security assistance program created by Congress in the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act. DAS Cooper testified that ultimately, all the USAI funding will be fully obligated.**

A: No, Sir. My staff and I am aware that there are frequently unobligated funds at the very end of the year. What we were worried about in this case was that, you know, the bulk of the funds or a significant amount of funding would be unobligated. So absolutely we do understand that, you know, sometimes you can't actually obligate everything. And I believe last year USAI did not have 100 percent obligation. [p. 74]

Q: So prior to you getting there, I mean there was about the 90 percent of the appropriated funds were obligated, but the rest were not, but every year there have been unobligated funds. Would you agree with that? I mean you may not have knowledge, but would it surprise you that every year there are unobligated funds based on what is appropriated versus what is obligated.

A: Sir, that would not surprise me. [p. 75]

Q: Okay. So from that point forward until September 12th, everyone involved was hopeful that this would get resolved?

A: Yes. Although I have to say after probably about, I don't know, August 20th or so we were really losing hope because we knew we weren't going to be able to obligate everything by the end of the fiscal year so we were concerned about the actual program impacts.

Q: Okay. And were you ultimately able to obligate everything?

A: So by the end of the fiscal year we ultimately obligated--it was upwards of 80 percent and, you know, thanks obviously to the Congress we got the language in the continuing resolution that thankfully will enable us to obligate all of the funding ultimately. [p. 58]

- 2. Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) Laura Cooper had limited knowledge regarding key facts related to the Democrats' impeachment "inquiry." In fact, DAS Cooper has had zero communications with President Trump and Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney.**

DAS Cooper was not on the July 25th call. She testified that she had never communicated with the President or Mick Mulvaney. DAS Cooper also testified that only up to 25 percent of her portfolio is spent on Ukraine-related matters. In addition, DAS Cooper acknowledged that she does not routinely interact with the Office of Management and

Budget (OMB) and was not an expert in rescission or Department of Defense programming.

Q: Okay. Today we're going to be focusing primarily on Ukraine-related issues. What percentage of your portfolio would you say, or how much time do you spend on Ukraine-related matters?

A: So I would say it fluctuates over time, but up to 25 percent. [p. 10]

Q: Okay. So to the best of your understanding, the National Security Council was trying to set up the phone call between the Presidents?

A: To the best of my knowledge.

Q: That occurred on July 25th?

A: Again, to the best of my knowledge, but I wasn't directly involved in any of that.

Q: Did you get any readouts at any point of what happened on the 7/25 call?

A: I never got a readout. I don't think I know anyone in DOD who got a readout on that call.

Q: Okay. So the first time you learned about the developments on that call was when it became public in September?

A: Yes, that's correct. When it was released to the public, that was the first time I had seen that content. [p. 54]

Q: You've never had any communications with the President about this issue?

A: I've never had any communications with the President, period.

Q: Acting Chief of Staff, Mick Mulvaney?

A: No, sir. [p. 103]

Q: And you testified earlier that you weren't an expert in the rescission or DOD programming, just generally. Is that right?

A: That is correct. [p. 112]

3. DAS Cooper had no firsthand information that the Ukrainian government was aware a delay for U.S. security assistance. No Ukrainian officials raised ever any concerns to DAS Cooper.

Q: During this timeframe, did you have any communications with Ukrainians?

A: I would have to say I'm sure I did, but I don't recall--

Q: About this?

A: But not about this. No, no, I did not speak with them about this. And no Ukrainians raised this issue with me or my team.

Q: Okay. So to the best of --

A: To my knowledge, to my knowledge.

Q: To the best of your knowledge, they didn't know that this funding was possibly being held up until –

A: Oh, that's not what I'm saying.

Q: Okay. What are you saying?

A: So I personally was not -- sorry, I apologize. I did not mean to be interrupting you. So I personally did not have Ukrainian ministry -- I deal with the ministry of defense, none of them raised this issue with me. But I knew from my Kurt Volker conversation and also from sort of the alarm bells that were coming from Ambassador Taylor and his team that there were Ukrainians who knew about this.

Q: Okay.

A: They just weren't talking to me. [p. 65]

Q: Okay. Okay. But you don't have any firsthand knowledge that the Ukrainians knew --

A: I - -

Q: -- that the assistance was on hold, you had just heard that?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. To your knowledge, when do you believe the Ukrainians became aware that the assistance had been subject to a hold? Was it before the Volker meeting on August 20th?

A: I'm not sure precisely, because I can't recall when some of the conversations with our embassy in Kyiv occurred. [p. 66-67]

Q: I guess, I'm trying to - - so let me be a little clearer then. I'm looking for contacts with Ukrainians that have contacts with Ukrainian Government. How often does that happen for you?

A: I mean, it certainly varies depending on the time of year, not a lot in August, but every few weeks at least.

Q: Okay. So in those conversations every few weeks, what you're saying is in your conversations, this issue of the defense appropriations being held up was not something that was raised directly with you. Is that correct?

A: Correct. [p. 76]

Q: Are you aware of anyone within the Department of Defense having conversations with Ukrainians about the hold during July, August, beginning of September period?

A: I'm not aware of specific instances, but I would just recall that we have a team in Embassy Kyiv that are DOD representatives under Ambassador Bill Taylor. So, you know, it would be very hard for me to discern conversations that the embassy side might have had versus the defense attache side. [p. 94]

4. DAS Cooper testified that the U.S. contributes significantly more assistance than “any individual country.”

Q: Again, we'll have more questions about that later. Do other countries also provide economic and security assistance to Ukraine, just like the U.S.?

A: There are a number of other countries that provide both economic and security assistance.

Q: Including the EU?

A: I actually am not familiar with the EU as an institution, but a number of EU member states, I am familiar with their particular contributions. The EU funds tend to be on the economic side; and because I focus on defense and security, I'm less familiar with those.

Q: What about the amounts of assistance provided by the U.S. versus other European countries, for example, are you familiar with those numbers?

A: I couldn't give you the specific numbers, but the U.S. – the U.S. contributions are far more significant than any individual country. Whether the collective contributions outweigh the U.S., I don't have that figure. [p. 14-15]

5. Consistent with other witness testimony, DAS Cooper testified that Ambassador Kurt Volker was a professional with integrity.

Q: Okay. Had you known Ambassador Volker before?

A: Yes, yes. I basically met him for the first time kind of in person when he was appointed -- shortly after he was appointed in this role on Ukraine.

Q: Okay and your dealings with him had already been professional and he's somebody of integrity –

A: Yes.

Q: --to your knowledge?

A: Yes absolutely.

Q: And he's very knowledgeable about the issues in the Ukraine, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: He has a lot of relationships with Ukrainians?

A: Absolutely. [p. 62-63]

6. DAS Cooper was “proud” of the Administration’s decision to arm Ukraine with Javelins.

Q: I would also like to note the defensive lethal assistance that was authorized and implemented in the new administration had bipartisan support, something that possibly Democrats liked about the Trump administration?

A: Well, I have to say that normally, I really enjoy coming up to the Hill to talk about Ukraine, because there is bipartisan support, and, you know, the javelin decision is something that I am personally proud of. [p. 97-98]

7. DAS Cooper testified that Ukraine has a “significant amount” of corruption.

Q: Okay. But the allegation that Ukraine is beset with corruption is not something that is controversial, right?

A: We absolutely understand that there is a significant amount of corruption in Ukraine, and that's why we have programs designed to counter that corruption. [p. 101]