PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,
joint with the
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
and the
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

DEPOSITION OF: WILLIAM B. TAYLOR

Tuesday, October 22, 2019
Washington, D.C.

The deposition in the above matter was held in Room HVC-304, Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 9:50 a.m.

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

Also Present: Representatives Clay, Cooper, DeSaulnier, Gomez, Hice, Kelly, Khanna, Krishnamoorthi, Lawrence, Lynch, Maloney, Plaskett, Raskin, Rouda, Sarbanes, Tlaib, Wasserman Schultz, Bass, Bera, Cicilline, Deutch, Espaillat, Keating, Levin, Lieu, Malinowski, Meeks, Omar, Phillips, Titus, Trone, Jordan, Armstrong, Cloud, Gibbs, Grothman, Higgins, Keller, Meadows, Miller, Norman, Roy, McCaul, Buck, Burchett, Curtis, Fitzpatrick, Guest, Mast, Perry, Rooney, Wagner, Watkins, and Zeldin.

Appearances:

For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:

[redacted]

[redacted]

For the COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM:

SUSANNE SACHSMAN GROOMS, CHIEF COUNSEL

[redacted]

For the COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS:

[redacted]

For WILLIAM B. TAYLOR:

JEFFREY H. SMITH

JOHN B. BELLINGER III

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THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Let's come to order.

Good morning, Ambassador Taylor. And welcome to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which along with the Foreign Affairs and Oversight Committees is conducting this investigation as part of the official impeachment inquiry of the House of Representatives. Today's deposition is being conducted as part of the impeachment inquiry.

In light of attempts by the State Department and the administration to direct witnesses not to cooperate with the inquiry, including efforts to limit witness testimony, the committee had no choice but to compel your appearance today. We thank you for complying with the duly authorized congressional subpoena.

Ambassador Taylor has served our country as a distinguished diplomat and Ambassador. Prior to returning to Embassy Kyiv as Charge d'affaires in June 2019, Ambassador Taylor served as executive vice president of the U.S. Institute for Peace.

From 2006 to 2009, he served as U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine and also held important positions across the State Department coordinating U.S. assistance efforts, including to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. He is also a West Point grad, I believe, and a Vietnam veteran. And we're very grateful for your lifetime of service.

Ambassador Taylor, we will ask you to introduce yourself and your career experience more fully at the outset of today's interview for the benefit of the record and all those present.

Finally, to restate what I and others have emphasized in other interviews, Congress will not tolerate any reprisal, threat of reprisal, or attempt to retaliate against any U.S. Government official for testifying before Congress, including you or any of your colleagues.

It is disturbing that the State Department in coordination with the White House has sought to prohibit Department employees from cooperating with the inquiry and have tried to limit what they can say. This is unacceptable. Thankfully, consummate professionals have demonstrated remarkable courage in coming forward to testify and tell the truth.

Before I turn to committee counsel to begin the interview, I invite Ranking Member Nunes to make any opening remarks.

MR. NUNES: I thank the gentleman.

Once again, we're here for what you're calling an impeachment inquiry, but there are no rules governing an impeachment inquiry. There's been no organization of this impeachment inquiry, and so we're essentially operating under a lawless situation.

We sent a letter last week to the majority requesting a number of things, but that is to be notified with documents to at least all three committees under the structure. Only two of the three committees continue to get the documents for some odd reason that's not explainable.

But in addition to that, now typical customs of this committee in review of the transcripts are now being put under lock so that no one has access to the transcripts. And I want to make a request to the court reporters to ensure that no tapes disappear being that we have no access to these transcripts.

And, with that, I'll yield to Mr. Jordan.

MR. JORDAN: I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I would just too echo the notice that we got yesterday that the minority will not be given access to the transcript, and even members of this committee or these three committees can only view the transcript in the presence of someone from the majority. I don't know that I've seen that happen before. And just when I thought this process couldn't get any more unfair, we find out how the transcripts are going to be treated.

Ambassador, I want to thank you for being here. I also want to thank you for your service to our country.

On September 24th, Speaker Pelosi unilaterally announced that the House was beginning a so-called impeachment inquiry.

On October 2nd, Speaker Pelosi promised that the so-called impeachment inquiry would, quote, treat the President with fairness. However, Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Schiff, and the Democrats are not living up to that basic promise. Instead, Democrats are conducting a rushed, closed-door, and unprecedented impeachment inquiry.

Democrats are ignoring 45 years of bipartisan procedures designed to provide elements of fundamental fairness and due process in past impeachment inquiries: The majority and minority had coequal subpoena authority, the right to require a committee vote on all subpoenas. The President's counsel had a right to attend all depositions and hearings, including those held in executive sessions. The President's counsel had the right to cross-examine witnesses and the right to propose witnesses. The President's counsel had the right to present evidence, object to the admission of evidence, and to review all evidence presented, both favorable and unfavorable.

Speaker Pelosi and Chairman Schiff's so-called impeachment inquiry has none of these guarantees of fundamental fairness and due process. Most disappointing, Democrats are conducting this so-called impeachment inquiry behind closed doors, and as the ranking member of the Intelligence Committee just suggested, with no access given to the -- no transcripts given to the minority party.

This seems to be nothing more than hiding this work from the American people. If Democrats intend to undo the will of the American people just a year before the next election, they should at least do so transparently and be willing to be accountable for their actions.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. McCaul.

I would only say, because I don't want to get into extended debate, and we can discuss this without taking up the witness' time, that members of three committees have access to the transcripts when the transcripts are completed and they have had a chance to be finalized.

The one transcript that the minority was able to download and print was leaked to the press promptly. That's a problem, and that is part of the reason we have to maintain the security of the transcripts.

Finally, unlike the past impeachments where there was a special counsel doing these proceedings before the grand jury, there is no special counsel here because the Department of Justice declined to even investigate the matter so we have to do that work ourselves.

I'll now turn to committee counsel.

MR. NUNES: Mr. McCaul had an opening statement.

MR. MCCAUL: I'll just be very brief.

To your point, the Foreign Affairs Committee has

jurisdiction over the majority of these witnesses. We have a SCIF at the Foreign Affairs Committee that can handle classified information and electronically as well. And I would ask that you reconsider this new rule that you've issued to allow us to have those documents in the Foreign Affairs SCIF and to make it more accessible.

I agree with my colleagues, there's no House rule or resolution authorizing this. I talked to Ken Starr last weekend. There's a way to do this right, and I think we should do it the same way we did the Clinton and Nixon administration. I think, in your words, you'll say that --

[Disruption in hearing room.]

MR. MCCAUL: The committee is not in order -- you will say that there's no special counsel. So I guess my question is, are you the special counsel, slash, prosecutor and the grand jury of this inquiry?

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you finished with your opening remarks?

MR. MCCAUL: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Then let's proceed.

Mr. Goldman.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a deposition of a --

THE CHAIRMAN: No further remarks will be entertained at this time. Mr. Goldman.

MR. GOLDMAN: This is a deposition of Ambassador William B. Taylor, Jr., conducted by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence pursuant to the impeachment inquiry announced by the Speaker of the House on September 24th.

Ambassador Taylor --

MR. ROY: There are members of this committee that are unable to participate --

THE CHAIRMAN: If the gentleman will suspend.

MR. ROY: I'm going to have to be in the Subcommittee --

THE CHAIRMAN: The gentleman will --

MR. ROY: -- instead of being in here. And then I've got to schedule access -- to get access as a Member of Congress to transcripts on a committee on which I sit when rules have never been put forward?

THE CHAIRMAN: If the gentleman will suspend.

MR. ROY: What is this?

THE CHAIRMAN: The gentleman is not recognized. You can take your comments outside, sir.

MR. ROY: Take them outside to whom? You're the judge and jury sitting in here deciding who can see this clown show. When can we actually -- when can my colleagues who aren't on this committee see the materials in question?

THE CHAIRMAN: Sir, this witness has come all the way from Ukraine. If you could suspend so we can get to the matter at hand.

MR. ROY: Well, why won't you address the legitimate concerns of this --

VOICES: Out of order.

MR. ROY: This whole hearing is out of order. We've got members of this committee --

MRS. DEMINGS: You really don't want to hear from this witness, do you?

MR. ROY: I would like the entire Congress to hear from this witness.

THE CHAIRMAN: Members will suspend. Members will suspend.

Mr. Goldman, you're recognized.

MR. ROY: What rules are we even operating under?

MR. GOLDMAN: Ambassador Taylor, could you please state your full name and spell your last name for the record?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: William Brochenbrough Taylor, Jr., T-a-y-l-o-r.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you.

Now, along with other proceedings in furtherance of the inquiry, this deposition is part of a joint investigation led by the Intelligence Committee in coordination with the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Oversight and Reform.

In the room today are majority staff and minority staff from both the Foreign Affairs Committee and Oversight Committee, as well as majority and minority staff from the

Intelligence Committee. This is a staff-led deposition, but members, of course, may ask questions during their allotted time, as has been the case for every deposition and interview since the inception of this investigation.

My name is Daniel Goldman. I'm the director of investigations for the HPSCI majority staff, and I want to thank you very much for traveling from Ukraine to appear for this deposition today.

I would like to do some brief introductions. To my right is Daniel Noble, senior investigative counsel for HPSCI. Mr. Noble and I will be conducting most of the interview for the majority.

And I will now let my counterparts from the minority staff introduce themselves who will be conducting the interview for the minority.

MR. CASTOR: Morning, Ambassador. Steve Castor with the Republican staff of the Oversight Committee.

MS. CASULLI: Good morning. Laura Casulli, deputy general counsel, minority on the HPSCI.

MR. KOREN: Michael Koren, House Oversight, Republican committee staff.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you.

This deposition will be conducted entirely at the unclassified level. However, the deposition is being conducted in HPSCI's secure spaces and in the presence of

staff with appropriate security clearances. We also understand that your attorneys have the appropriate security clearances as well. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is correct.

MR. GOLDMAN: Okay. It is the committee's expectation, however, that neither the questions asked of you nor the answers provided by you will require discussion of any information that is currently or at any point could be properly classified under Executive Order 13526.

You are reminded that E.O. 13526 states that, quote, in no case shall information be classified, continue to be maintained as classified, or fail to be declassified, unquote, for the purpose of concealing any violations of law or preventing embarrassment of any person or entity.

If any of our questions can only be answered with classified information, please inform us of that before you answer the question and we will adjust accordingly.

Today's deposition is not being taken in executive session, but because of the sensitive and confidential nature of some of the topics and materials that will be discussed access to the transcript of the deposition will be limited to the three committees in attendance, which we have mentioned before.

Under the House deposition rules, no Member of Congress nor any staff member can discuss the substance of the

testimony you provide today with the public or the media. You and your attorney will have an opportunity to review the transcript if we can figure out an arrangement, given that you are in post in Ukraine.

Before we begin, I'd like to go over some of the ground rules for this deposition. We will be following the House regulations for depositions, which we have previously provided to your counsel.

The deposition will proceed as follows: The majority will be given 1 hour to ask questions, and then the minority will be given 1 hour to ask questions. Thereafter, we will alternate back and forth between majority and minority in 45-minute rounds until questioning is complete.

We will take periodic breaks, but if you need a break at any time, please do let us know.

Under the House deposition rules, counsel for other persons or government agencies may not attend. You are allowed to have an attorney present of your own during this deposition, and I see that you have brought two. Would counsel please now state their appearance for the record?

MR. SMITH: Jeffrey Smith, Arnold & Porter.

MR. BELLINGER: John Bellinger, Arnold & Porter.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you.

There is a stenographer to your left taking down everything that is said in this deposition in order to make a

written record. For that record to be clear, please wait until each question is completed before you begin your answer, and we will wait until you finish your response before asking you the next question.

The stenographer cannot record nonverbal answers, such as a shaking of your head, so it is important that you answer each question with an audible, verbal answer.

We ask that you give complete replies to questions based on your best recollection. If a question is unclear or you are uncertain in your response, please let us know. And if you do not know the answer to a question or cannot remember, simply say so.

You may only refuse to answer a question to preserve a privilege that is recognized by the committee. If you refuse to answer a question on the basis of privilege, staff may either proceed with the deposition or seek a ruling from the chairman on any objection in person or by telephone during the deposition at a time of the majority staff's choosing. If the chair overrules any such objection, you are required to answer the question.

And, finally, you are reminded that it is unlawful to deliberately provide false information to Members of Congress or staff. It is imperative that you not only answer our questions truthfully but that you give full and complete answers to all questions asked of you. Omissions may also be

considered as false statements.

As this deposition is under oath, Ambassador Taylor, would you please stand and raise your right hand to be sworn. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I do.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you. Let the record reflect that the witness has been sworn.

And, with that, Ambassador Taylor, if you have any opening remarks to make, now is the time.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, members, I appreciate the opportunity to appear here today to provide my perspective on the events that are the subject of the committees' inquiry. My sole purpose is to provide the committees with my views about the strategic importance of Ukraine to the United States, as well as additional information about the incidents in question.

I have dedicated my life to serving U.S. interests at home and abroad, in both military and civilian roles. My background and experience are nonpartisan, and I have been honored to serve under every administration, Republican and Democratic, since 1985.

For 50 years, I've served the country starting as a cadet at West Point; then as an infantry officer for 6 years, including with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam; then

at the Department of Energy; then as a member of a Senate staff; then at NATO; then with the State Department here and abroad in Afghanistan, Iraq, Jerusalem, and Ukraine; and, more recently, as executive vice president of the nonpartisan United States Institute of Peace.

While I have served in many places and in different capacities, I have a particular interest in and respect for the importance of our country's relationship with Ukraine. Our national security demands that this relationship remain strong.

However, in August and September of this year, I became increasingly concerned that our relationship with Ukraine was being fundamentally undermined by an irregular, informal channel of U.S. policymaking and by the withholding of vital security assistance for domestic political reasons. I hope my remarks today will help the committees understand why I believed that to be the case.

At the outset, I would like to convey several key points: First, Ukraine is a strategic partner of the United States, important for the security of our country as well as Europe; second, Ukraine is, right at this moment, while we sit in this room, and for the last 5 years, under armed attack from Russia; third, the security assistance we provide is crucial to Ukraine's defense against Russian aggression, and, more importantly, sends a signal to Ukrainians and

Russians that we are Ukraine's reliable strategic partner; and, finally, as the committees are now aware, I said on September 9th, in a message to Ambassador Gordon Sondland, that withholding security assistance in exchange for help with a domestic political campaign in the United States would be crazy. I believed that then, and I still believe that.

Let me now provide the committees a chronology of the events that led to my concern. On May 28th of this year, I met with Secretary Mike Pompeo who asked me to return to Kyiv to lead our Embassy in Ukraine. It was and is a critical time in the U.S.-Ukraine relations.

Volodymyr Zelensky had just been elected President, and Ukraine remained at war with Russia. As the summer approached, a new Ukrainian Government would be seated, parliamentary elections were imminent, and the Ukrainian political trajectory would be set for the next several years.

I had served as Ambassador to Ukraine from 2006 to 2009, having been nominated by George W. Bush. And in the intervening 10 years, I have stayed engaged with Ukraine visiting frequently since 2013 as a board member of a small Ukrainian, nongovernmental organization supporting good governance and reform.

Across the responsibilities I have had in public service, Ukraine is special for me, and Secretary Pompeo's offer to return as chief of mission was compelling. I am

convinced of the profound importance of Ukraine to the security of the United States and Europe for two related reasons: First, if Ukraine succeeds in breaking free of Russian influence, it is possible for Europe to be whole, free, democratic, and at peace. In contrast, if Russia dominates Ukraine, Russia will again become an empire, oppressing its people, and threatening its neighbors and the rest of the world.

Second, with the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the continued aggression in Donbas, Russia violated countless treaties, ignored all commitments, dismissed all the principles that have kept the peace and contributed to prosperity in Europe since World War II. To restore Ukraine's independence, Russia must leave Ukraine. This has been and should continue to be a bipartisan U.S. foreign policy goal.

When I was serving outside of government during the Obama administration and after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, I joined two other former Ambassadors to Ukraine in urging Obama administration officials at the State Department, Defense Department, and other agencies to provide lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine in order to deter further Russian aggression. I also supported much stronger sanctions against Russia.

All to say I cared about Ukraine's future and the

important U.S. interests there. So, when Secretary Pompeo asked me to go back to Kyiv, I wanted to say yes. But it was not an easy decision. The former Ambassador, Masha Yovanovitch, had been treated poorly, caught in a web of political machinations, both in Kyiv and in Washington. I feared that those problems were still present. When I talked to her about accepting the offer, however, she urged me to go for both policy reasons and for the morale of the Embassy.

Before answering the Secretary, I consulted both my wife and a respected former senior Republican official who has been a mentor to me. I will tell you, my wife, in no uncertain terms, strongly opposed the idea. The mentor counseled: If your country asks you to do something, you do it -- if you can be effective.

I could be effective only if the U.S. policy of strong support for Ukraine, strong diplomatic support, along with robust security, economic, and technical assistance were to continue, and if I had the backing of the Secretary of State to implement that policy. I worried about what I had heard concerning the role of Rudolph Giuliani, who had made several high-profile statements about Ukraine and U.S. policy toward the country.

So, during my meeting with Secretary Pompeo, on May 28th, I made clear to him and the others present that if U.S. policy toward Ukraine changed, he would not want me

posted there and I could not stay. He assured me that the policy of strong support for Ukraine would continue and that he would support me in defending that policy.

With that understanding, I agreed to go back to Kyiv. Because I was appointed by the Secretary but not reconfirmed by the Senate, my official position was Charge d'affaires ad interim. I returned to Kyiv on June 17th carrying the original copy of a letter President Trump signed the day after I met with the Secretary.

In that letter, President Trump congratulated President Zelensky on his election victory and invited him to a meeting in the Oval Office. I also brought with me a framed copy of the Secretary's declaration that the United States would never recognize the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea.

But once I arrived in Kyiv, I discovered a weird combination of encouraging, confusing, and ultimately alarming circumstances. First, encouraging: President Zelensky was taking over Ukraine in a hurry. He had appointed reformist ministers and supported long-stalled anticorruption legislation. He took quick executive action, including opening Ukraine's High Anti-Corruption Court, which was established under previous Presidential administration but was never allowed to operate.

He called snap parliamentary elections -- his party was so new it had no representation in the Rada -- and later won

an overwhelming mandate controlling 60 percent of the seats. With his new parliamentary majority, President Zelensky changed the Ukrainian constitution to remove absolute immunity from Rada deputies, which had been the source of raw corruption for decades. There was much excitement in Kyiv that this time things could be different. A new Ukraine might finally be breaking from its corrupt, post-Soviet past.

And, yet, I found a confusing and unusual arrangement for making U.S. policy towards Ukraine. There appeared to be two channels of U.S. policymaking and implementation, one regular and one highly irregular.

As the chief of mission, I had authority over the regular, formal diplomatic processes, including the bulk of the U.S. effort to support Ukraine against the Russian invasion and to help it defeat corruption.

This regular channel of U.S. policymaking has consistently had strong bipartisan support, both in Congress and in all administrations since Ukraine's independence from Russia in 1991.

At the same time, however, there was an irregular, informal channel of U.S. policymaking with respect to Ukraine, one which included then-Special Envoy Kurt Volker, Ambassador Sondland, Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, and as I subsequently learned, Mr. Giuliani. I was clearly in the regular channel, but I was also in the irregular one to the

extent that Ambassadors Volker and Sondland included me in certain conversations.

Although this irregular channel was well connected in Washington, it operated mostly outside of official State Department channels. This irregular channel began when Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Sondland, Secretary Perry, and Senator Ron Johnson briefed President Trump on May 23rd upon their return from President Zelensky's inauguration.

The delegation returned to Washington enthusiastic about the new Ukrainian President and urged President Trump to meet with him early on to cement the U.S. Ukraine relationship. But from what I understood, President Trump did not share their enthusiasm for a meeting with Mr. Zelensky.

When I first arrived in Kyiv in June and July, the actions of both the regular and irregular channels of foreign policy served the same goal, a strong U.S.-Ukraine partnership, but it became clear to me by August that the channels had diverged in their objectives. As this occurred, I became increasingly concerned.

In late June, one of the goals of both channels was to facilitate a visit by President Zelensky to the White House for a meeting with President Trump, which President Trump had promised in his congratulatory letter of May 29th. Ukrainians were clearly eager for the meeting to happen.

During a conference call with Ambassador Volker, Acting

Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Phil Reeker, Secretary Perry, Ambassador Sondland, and Counselor of the U.S. Department of State Ulrich Brechbuhl on June 18th, it was clear that a meeting between the two Presidents was an agreed-on -- agreed-upon goal.

But during my subsequent communications with Ambassadors Volker and Sondland, they relayed to me that the President wanted to hear from Zelensky before scheduling the meeting in the Oval Office. It was not clear to me what this meant.

On June 27th, Ambassador Sondland told me during a phone conversation that President Zelensky needed to make clear to President Trump that he, President Zelensky, was not standing in the way of investigations.

I sensed something odd when Ambassador Sondland told me on June 28th that he did not wish to include most of the regular interagency participants in a call planned with President Zelensky later that day.

Ambassador Sondland, Ambassador Volker, Secretary Perry, and I were on this call dialing in from different locations. However, Ambassador Sondland said that he wanted to make sure no one was transcribing or monitoring as they added President Zelensky to the call.

Also, before President Zelensky joined the call, Ambassador Volker separately told the U.S. participants that he, Ambassador Volker, planned to be explicit with President

Zelensky in a one-on-one meeting in Toronto on July 2nd about what President Zelensky should do to get the meeting in the White House.

Again, it was not clear to me on that call what this meant, but Ambassador Volker noted that he would relay that President Trump wanted to see rule of law, transparency, but also, specifically, cooperation on investigations to get to the bottom of things.

Once President Zelensky joined the call, the conversation was focused on energy policy and the Stanystsia-Luhanska bridge in Donbas. President Zelensky also said that he looked forward to the White House visit President Trump had offered in his May 29th letter.

I reported on this call to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent who had responsibility for Ukraine, and I wrote a memo for the record, dated June 30th, that summarized our conversation with President Zelensky.

By mid-July, it was becoming clear to me that the meeting President Zelensky wanted was conditioned on investigations of Burisma and alleged Ukrainian influence in the 2016 elections. It was also clear that this condition was driven by the irregular policy channel I had come to understand was guided by Mr. Giuliani.

On July 10, Ukrainian officials Alexander Danyliuk, the Ukrainian National Security Advisor; Andrey Yermak, an

assistant to President Zelensky; and Secretary Perry; then-National Security Advisor John Bolton; Ambassador Volker; and Ambassador Sondland met at the White House. I did not participate in the meeting and did not receive a readout of it until speaking with the National Security Council's then-senior director for European and Russian affairs, Fiona Hill, and the NSC's director for European affairs, Alex Vindman, on July 19th.

On July 10, in Kyiv, I met with President Zelensky's Chief of Staff, Andrei Bohdan, and then-foreign policy adviser to the President and now Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko, who told me that they had heard from Mr. Giuliani that the phone call between the two Presidents was unlikely to happen and that they were alarmed and disappointed. I relayed their concerns to Counselor Brechbuhl.

In a regular, NSC secure video conference call on July 18th, I heard a staff person from the Office of Management and Budget say that there was a hold on security assistance to Ukraine but could not say why. Toward the end of this otherwise normal meeting, a voice on the call, the person who was off screen, said that she was from OMB and her boss had instructed her not to approve any additional spending of security assistance for Ukraine until further notice.

I and the others on the call sat in astonishment. The

Ukrainians were fighting the Russians and counted on not only the training and weapons but also the assurance of U.S. support. All that the OMB staff person said was that the directive had come from the President to the Chief of Staff to OMB. In an instant, I realized that one of the key pillars of our strong support for Ukraine was threatened.

The irregular policy channel was running contrary to the goals of longstanding U.S. policy. There followed a series of NSC-led interagency meetings starting at the staff level and quickly reaching the level of Cabinet Secretaries. At every meeting, the unanimous conclusion was that the security assistance should be reassumed, the hold lifted.

At one point the Defense Department was asked to perform an analysis of the effectiveness of the assistance. Within a day, the Defense Department came back with the determination that the assistance was effective and should be resumed.

My understanding was that the Secretaries of Defense and State, the CIA Director, and the National Security Advisor, sought a joint meeting with the President to convince him to release the hold, but such meeting was hard to schedule, and the hold lasted well into September.

The next day on the phone, Dr. Hill and Mr. Vindman tried to reassure me that they were not aware of any official change in U.S. policy toward Ukraine, OMB's announcement notwithstanding. They did confirm that the hold on security

assistance for Ukraine came from Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and that the Chief of Staff maintained a skeptical view of Ukraine.

In the same July 19th phone call, they gave me an account of the July 10th meeting with the Ukrainian officials at the White House. Specifically, they told me that Ambassador Sondland had connected investigations with an Oval Office meeting for President Zelensky, which so irritated Ambassador Bolton that he abruptly ended the meeting, telling Dr. Hill and Mr. Vindman that they should have nothing to do with domestic politics.

He also directed Dr. Hill to brief the lawyers. Dr. Hill said that Ambassador Bolton referred to this as a drug deal after the July 10th meeting. Ambassador Bolton opposed a call between President Zelensky and President Trump out of concern that it would be a disaster.

Needless to say, the two Ukrainians in the meetings were confused. Ambassador Bolton, in the regular Ukraine policy decisionmaking channel, wanted to talk about security, energy, and reform. Ambassador Sondland, a participant in the irregular channel, wanted to talk about the connection between a White House meeting and Ukrainian investigations.

Also, during our July 19th call, Dr. Hill informed me that Ambassador Volker had met with Mr. Giuliani to discuss Ukraine. This caught me by surprise. The next day, I asked

Ambassador Volker about that meeting but received no response. I began to sense that the two decisionmaking channels, regular and irregular, were separate and at odds.

Later on July 19th and in the early morning of July 20th, Kyiv time, I received text messages on a three-way WhatsApp text conversation with Ambassadors Volker and Sondland, a record of which I understand has already been provided to the committees by Ambassador Volker.

Ambassador Sondland said that a call between President Trump and President Zelensky would take place soon. Ambassador Volker said that it was most important for Zelensky to say that he will help investigation and address any specific personnel issues, if there are any.

Later on July 20th, I had a phone conversation with Ambassador Sondland while he was on a train from Paris to London. Ambassador Sondland told me that he had recommended to President Zelensky that he use the phrase, "I will leave no stone unturned" with regard to investigations when President Zelensky spoke with President Trump.

Also, on July 20th, I had a phone conversation with Mr. Danyliuk, during which he conveyed to me that President Zelensky did not want to be used as a pawn in a U.S. reelection campaign. The next day, I texted both Ambassadors Volker and Sondland about President Zelensky's concern.

On July 25th, President Trump and President Zelensky had

the long-awaited phone conversation. Strangely, even though I was chief of mission and was scheduled to meet with President Zelensky along with Ambassador Volker the following day, I received no readout of the call from the White House. The Ukrainian Government issued a short, cryptic summary.

During a previously planned July 26th meeting, President Zelensky told Ambassador Volker and me that he was happy with the call, but he did not elaborate. President Zelensky then asked me about the face-to-face meeting in the Oval Office as promised in the May 29th letter from President Trump.

After our meeting with President Zelensky, Ambassador Volker and I traveled to the frontline in northern Donbas to receive a briefing from the commander of the forces on the line of contact. Arriving for the briefing in the military headquarters, the commander thanked us for security assistance, but I was aware that this assistance was on hold, which made me uncomfortable.

Ambassador Volker and I could see the armed and hostile Russian-led forces on the other side of the damaged bridge across the line of contact. Over 13,000 Ukrainians had been killed in the war, one or two a week. To this day, that continues. More Ukrainians would undoubtedly die without U.S. assistance.

Although I spent the morning of July 26th with President Zelensky and other Ukrainian officials, the first summary of

the Trump-Zelensky call that I heard from anybody inside the U.S. Government was during a phone call I had with Tim Morrison, Dr. Hill's recent replacement at the NSC, on July 28th. Mr. Morrison told me that the call could have been better and that President Trump had suggested that President Zelensky or his staff meet with Mr. Giuliani and Attorney General William Barr. I did not see any official readout of the call until it was publicly released on September 25th.

On August 16, I exchanged text messages with Ambassador Volker, in which I learned that Mr. Yermak had asked that the United States submit an official request for an investigation into Burisma's alleged violations of Ukrainian law, if that's what the United States desired.

A formal U.S. request to the Ukrainians to conduct an investigation based on violations of their own law struck me as improper, and I recommended to Ambassador Volker that we stay clear. To find out the legal aspects of the question, however, I gave him the name of a Deputy Assistant Attorney General whom I thought would be the proper point of contact for seeking a U.S. referral for a foreign investigation.

By mid-August, because the security assistance had been held for over a month for no reason that I could discern, I was beginning to fear that the longstanding U.S. policy of strong support for Ukraine was shifting. I called Counselor

Brechbuhl to discuss this on August 21st. He said that he was not aware of a change of U.S. policy but would check on the status of the security assistance.

My concern deepened the next day, on August 22nd, during a phone call with Mr. Morrison. I asked him if there had been a change in policy of strong support for Ukraine, to which he responded: It remains to be seen.

He also told me during this call that the President doesn't want to provide any assistance at all. That was extremely troubling to me. As I had told Secretary Pompeo in May, if the policy of strong support for Ukraine were to change, I would have to resign. Based on my call with Mr. Morrison, I was preparing to do so.

Just days later, on August 27th, Ambassador Bolton arrived in Kyiv and met with President Zelensky. During their meeting, security assistance was not discussed. Amazingly, news of the hold on security assistance did not leak out until August 29th. I, on the other hand, was all too aware of and still troubled by the hold.

Near the end of Ambassador Bolton's visit, I asked to meet him privately, during which I expressed to him my serious concern about the withholding of military assistance to Ukraine while the Ukrainians were defending their country from Russian aggression.

Ambassador Bolton recommended that I send a first-person

cable to Secretary Pompeo directly, relaying my concerns. I wrote and transmitted such a cable on August 29th describing the folly I saw in withholding military aid to Ukraine at a time when hostilities were still active in the east and when Russia was watching closely to gauge the level of American support for the Ukrainian Government.

I told the Secretary that I could not and would not defend such a policy. Although I received no specific response, I heard that, soon thereafter, the Secretary carried the cable with him to a meeting at the White House focused on security assistance for Ukraine.

The same day that I sent my cable to the Secretary, August 29, Mr. Yermak contacted me and was very concerned, asking about the withheld security assistance. The hold that the White House had placed on the assistance had just been made public that day in a political story. At that point, I was embarrassed that I could not give him any explanation for why it was withheld.

It had still not occurred to me that the hold on security assistance could be related to the investigations. That, however, would change.

On September 1st, just 3 days after my cable to Secretary Pompeo, President Zelensky met Vice President Pence at a bilateral meeting in Warsaw. President Trump had planned to travel to Warsaw but at the last minute had

canceled because of Hurricane Dorian.

Just hours before the Pence-Zelensky meeting, I contacted Mr. Danyliuk to let him know that the delay of U.S. security assistance was an all-or-nothing proposition, in the sense that if the White House did not lift the hold prior to the end of the fiscal year, September 30th, the funds would expire and Ukraine would receive nothing.

I was hopeful that, at the bilateral meeting or shortly thereafter, the White House would lift the hold, but this was not to be. Indeed, I received a readout of the Pence-Zelensky meeting over the phone for Mr. Morrison, during which he told me President Zelensky had opened the meeting by asking the Vice President about security cooperation.

The Vice President did not respond substantively but said he would talk to President Trump that night. The Vice President did say that President Trump wanted the Europeans to do more to support Ukraine and that he wanted Ukrainians to do more to fight corruption.

During this same phone call I had with Mr. Morrison, he went on to describe a conversation Ambassador Sondland had with Mr. Yermak at Warsaw. Ambassador Sondland told Mr. Yermak that the security assistance money would not come until President Zelensky committed to pursue the Burisma investigation.

I was alarmed by what Mr. Morrison told me about the Sondland-Yermak conversation. This was the first time I had heard that security assistance, not just the White House meeting, was conditioned on the investigations.

Very concerned, on that same day, I sent Ambassador Sondland a text message asking if we are now saying that security assistance and a White House meeting are conditioned on investigations. Ambassador Sondland responded asking me to call him, which I did.

During that phone call, Ambassador Sondland told me that President Trump had told him that he wants President Zelensky to state publicly that Ukraine will investigate Burisma and alleged Ukrainian interference in the 2016 U.S. election.

Ambassador Sondland also told me that he now recognized that he had made a mistake by earlier telling Ukrainian officials to whom he spoke that a White House meeting with President Zelensky was dependent on a public announcement of investigations. In fact, Ambassador Sondland said everything was dependent on such an announcement, including security assistance. He said that President Trump wanted President Zelensky in a box by making public statement about ordering such investigations.

In the same September 1st call, I told Ambassador Sondland that President Trump should have more respect for another head of state and that what he described was not in

the interest of either President Trump or President Zelensky. At that point, I asked Ambassador Sondland to push back on President Trump's demand. Ambassador Sondland pledged to try.

We also discussed the possibility that Ukrainian prosecutor general, rather than President Zelensky, would make a statement about investigations, potentially in coordination with Attorney General Barr's probe into the investigation of interference in the 2016 elections.

The next day, September 2nd, Mr. Morrison called to inform me that Mr. Danyliuk had asked him to come to his hotel room in Warsaw where Mr. Danyliuk expressed concern about the possible loss of U.S. support for Ukraine.

In particular, Mr. Morrison relayed to me that the inability of any U.S. officials to respond to Ukraine's explicit questions about security assistance was troubling them. I was experiencing the same tension in my dealings with the Ukrainians, including a meeting that I had had with Defense Minister Andriy Zagordnyuk that day.

During my call with Mr. Morrison on September 2nd, I also briefed Mr. Morrison on what Ambassador Sondland had told me during our call the day prior.

On September 5th, I hosted Senators Johnson and Murphy for a visit to Kyiv. During their visit, we met with President Zelensky. His first question to the Senators was

about the withheld security assistance. My recollection of the meeting is that both Senators stressed that bipartisan support for Ukraine in Washington was Ukraine's most important strategic asset and that President Zelensky should not jeopardize that bipartisan support by getting drawn into U.S. domestic politics.

I had been making, and continue to make, this point to all of my Ukrainian official contacts. But the push to make President Zelensky publicly commit to investigations of Burisma and alleged interference in the 2016 elections showed how the official foreign policy of the United States was undercut by the irregular efforts led by Mr. Giuliani.

Two days later, on September 7th, I had a conversation with Mr. Morrison in which he described a phone conversation earlier that day between Ambassadors Sondland and President Trump. Mr. Morrison said that he had a sinking feeling after learning about this conversation from Ambassador Sondland.

According to Mr. Morrison, President Trump told Ambassador Sondland that he was not asking for a quid pro quo. But President Trump did insist that President Zelensky go to a microphone and say he is opening investigations of Biden and 2016 election interference, and that President Zelensky should want to do this himself. Mr. Morrison said that he told Ambassador Bolton and the NSC lawyers of this phone call between President Trump and Ambassador Sondland.

The following day, on September 8th, Ambassador Sondland and I spoke on the phone. He said he had talked to President Trump, as I had suggested a week earlier, but that President Trump was adamant that President Zelensky himself had to clear things up and do it in public. President Trump said it was not a quid pro quo.

Ambassador Sondland said that he had talked to President Zelensky and Mr. Yermak and told them that, although this was not a quid pro quo, if President Zelensky did not clear things up in public, we would be at a stalemate. I understood a stalemate to mean that Ukraine would not receive the much-needed military assistance. Ambassador Sondland said that this conversation concluded with President Zelensky agreeing to make a public statement in an interview with CNN.

After the call with Ambassador Sondland on September 8th, I expressed my strong reservations in a text message to Ambassador Sondland stating: My nightmare is that the Ukrainians give the interview and don't get the security assistance. The Russians love it. And I quit.

I was serious.

The next day I said to Ambassadors Sondland and Volker that the message to the Ukrainians and Russians we send with the decision on security assistance is key. With the hold, we have already shaken their faith in us. I also said, I think it's crazy to withhold security assistance for help

with a political campaign.

Ambassador Sondland responded about 5 hours later that I was incorrect about President Trump's intentions. The President has been crystal clear: No quid pro quos of any kind.

Before these text messages, during our call on September 8th, Ambassador Sondland tried to explain to me that President Trump is a businessman. When a businessman is about to sign a check to someone who owes him something, he said, the businessman asks that person to pay up before signing the check.

Ambassador Volker used the same terms several days later when we were together at the Yalta European Strategy Conference in Kyiv. I argued to both that the explanation made no sense. The Ukrainians did not owe President Trump anything, and holding up security assistance for domestic political gain was crazy, as I had said in my text message to Ambassador Sondland and Volker on September 9th.

Finally, I learned on September 11th that the hold had been lifted and security assistance would be provided. After I learned that the security assistance was released on September 11th, I personally conveyed the news to President Zelensky and Foreign Minister Prystaiko. And I again reminded Mr. Yermak of the high strategic value of bipartisan support for Ukraine and the importance of not getting

involved in other countries' elections.

My fear at the time was that, since Ambassador Sondland had told me President Zelensky had already agreed to do a CNN interview, President Zelensky would make a statement regarding investigations that would have played into domestic U.S. politics. I sought to confirm through Mr. Danyliuk that President Zelensky was not planning to give such an interview to the media.

While Mr. Danyliuk initially confirmed that on September 12th, I noticed during a meeting on the morning of September 13th, at President Zelensky's office, that Mr. Yermak looked uncomfortable in response to the question. Again, I asked Mr. Danyliuk to confirm that there would be no CNN interview, which he did.

On September 25th, at the U.N. General Assembly session in New York City, President Trump met President Zelensky face-to-face. He also released a transcript of the July 25th call. The United States gave the Ukrainians virtually no notice of the release, and they were livid.

Although this was the first time I had seen the details of President Trump's July 25th call with President Zelensky in which he mentioned Vice President Biden, I had come to understand well before then that "investigations" was a term Ambassadors Volker and Sondland used to mean matters related to the 2016 elections and to investigations of Burisma and

the Bidens.

Mr. Chairman, I recognize this is a rather lengthy recitation of the events of the past few months, told from my vantage point in Kyiv. But I also recognize the importance of the matters your committees are investigating, and I hope that this chronology will provide some framework for your questions.

I wish to conclude by returning to the points I made at the outset: Ukraine is important to the security of the United States. It has been attacked by Russia, which continues its aggression against Ukraine. If we believe in the principle of sovereignty of nations on which our security and the security of our friends and allies depends, we must support Ukraine in its fight against its bullying neighbor. Russian aggression cannot stand.

There are two Ukraine stories today, Mr. Chairman. The first is the one we are discussing this morning and that you have been hearing for the past 2 weeks. It's a rancorous story about whistleblowers, Mr. Giuliani, side channels, quid pro quos, corruption, interference in elections. In this story Ukraine is an object.

But there's another Ukraine story, a positive, bipartisan one. In this second story, Ukraine is the subject. This one is about young people in a young nation struggling to break free of its past, hopeful their new

government will finally usher in a new Ukraine, proud of its independence from Russia, eager to join Western institutions and enjoy a more secure and prosperous life.

This story describes a Nation developing an inclusive, democratic nationalism, not unlike what we in America, in our best moments, feel about our diverse country -- less concerned about what language we speak; what religion, if any, we practice; where our parents and grandparents came from -- more concerned about building a new country.

Because of the strategic importance of Ukraine and our effort to create a whole, free Europe, we, through Republican and Democratic administrations over three decades, have supported Ukraine. Congress has been very generous over the years with assistance funding, both civilian and military, and political support.

With overwhelming bipartisan majorities, Congress has supported Ukraine with harsh sanctions on Russia for invading and occupying Ukraine. We can be proud of that support and that we have stood up to a dictator's aggression against a democratic neighbor.

This second story, Mr. Chairman, is the one I would like to leave you with today. And I'm glad to answer your questions.

[The information follows:]

******** INSERT 1-1 ********

THE CHAIRMAN: Ambassador, thank you. We're just trying to process what you said. Thank you for your detailed opening statement.

I recognize Mr. Goldman now for an hour of questions by the majority to be followed by an hour of questions from the minority.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Thank you, Ambassador Taylor. Thank you for the detailed opening statement. We obviously just received it, and we'll do our best not to be too repetitive.

It is incredibly detailed, and I note that you mention that you wrote a memo to file on June 30th and that you sent a cable to Secretary Pompeo on August 27. Can you tell us whether there were any other documents that you relied upon in putting together this opening statement today?

A Yes. Three sources, I guess. One you are familiar with are the texts of WhatsApp messages that Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Sondland, and I exchanged. There were other WhatsApp messages that I exchanged with Ukrainian officials and other American officials, all of which, like Ambassador Volker's package, I have provided to the State Department. That's number one.

Number two, I've always kept careful notes, and I keep a little notebook where I take notes on conversations, in particular when I'm not in the office. So, in meetings with

Ukrainian officials or when I'm out and I get a phone call and I can -- I keep notes.

The third documents are handwritten notes that I take on a small, little spiral notebook in my office of phone calls that take place in my office. So those, I think, are the three sources of information that you see here. You will see some quotes and those are quotes from either the WhatsApp texts or from my notes.

Q And have you provided all of those documents to the State Department?

A I have.

Q At their request. Is that right?

A At their request. I think in response to your subpoena to the State Department, they did a document search which came, of course, to Embassy Kyiv, applied to the State Department. We did a search of all of our documents, including the ones I just mentioned, and sent them into the State Department.

Q Okay. And I assume that you are aware that, other than the WhatsApp messages that Ambassador Volker provided to the committees, the committees have not received any of these documents from the State Department?

A I assumed that, but I didn't know that until you confirmed it.

Q Okay. But you remain in possession of your

personal documents?

A I do.

Q Okay. Prior to your testimony here today, did you have any discussions with anyone at the State Department about your testimony?

A No.

Q Did you receive any instructions from the State Department about your testimony?

A Yes. Let me be clear, I had no substantive conversations with anyone about testimony. I have been in touch. As soon as I got your invitation, I, as instructed, talked to our congressional liaison and in turn our legal office, which John Bellinger knows something about. And they gave me instructions on how I was to proceed. So I've had those conversations with them, with what we call H and L. People in the room are probably familiar with both.

Q Right. But you did not show this opening statement to anyone at the State Department?

A That's correct.

Q And you did not receive any guidance about what you could testify about here today?

A The guidance I got was to be sure not to talk about classified material or anything having to do with privilege, and I think I've abided by those. I'm not sure exactly what the privilege constraint is. I don't think I have violated

that, and I've certainly not violated anything else.

[Discussion off the record.]

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Ah, good point. I was also instructed not to appear. That's an important instruction.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Okay.

A And in that message, that letter, it said not to appear under current circumstances. My interpretation of that is, when I got a subpoena, that those were different circumstances.

Q Right. A subpoena compels your testimony, correct, and that's why you're here today?

A Yes, sir.

Q You indicated that you struggled a little bit over the decision whether or not to take the offer to be the Charge to the mission in Kyiv. Can you describe in a little bit more detail why you struggled with that decision?

A Yes. A couple of reasons. So I was approached with the idea of going back out to Kyiv by Ambassador Volker and then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent about the time, this would have been like April, May, when it was possible that Ambassador Yovanovitch would be coming back before the regular end of her term.

I, of course, was following events in Ukraine, not as closely then as I do now, but was certainly -- as I mentioned

in my statement, I cared a lot about the place. I had seen press reports of the intent of Mr. Giuliani to travel to Ukraine, to pursue these investigations that I've mentioned a couple times in my opening statement, with the intent of using that information in political campaigns.

I knew of the -- I knew the people that Giuliani had been talking to in Ukraine. I knew the prosecutor general, Mr. Lutsenko. I knew that Mr. Lutsenko had given interviews to American media which were pretty negative about both United States and about the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, in particular the Ambassador and the deputy chief of mission.

So I knew that they were -- I put it -- I knew there were problems in Kyiv, and I knew there were problems in Washington. I knew that Secretary Pompeo had received a letter from a Member of Congress or maybe a former Member of Congress -- he's certainly a former Member of Congress now -- saying that Masha Yovanovitch, Ambassador Yovanovitch, should be removed. All to say that I was concerned that there was -- I think I put it -- a snake pit in Kyiv and a snake pit here, and I was not sure that I could usefully serve in that context.

[10:53 a.m.]

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q That letter you referenced is from former Representative Pete Sessions? Is that what you're talking about?

A Correct.

Q In May of 2018?

A Correct.

Q How did you know about that?

A I suppose I had heard that from the State Department -- from Mr. Kent. I don't know that.

Q What did you know about the circumstances surrounding Ambassador Yovanovitch's removal?

A So I met Ambassador Yovanovitch in Kyiv on several occasions that spring, last spring. From my position at the United States Institute of Peace, I was an election observer, an international election observer, for the two rounds of the Presidential election. And on both those visits to Kyiv, those were separated by 3 weeks. So both of those visits I would check in of course with the embassy and sat down with Masha Yovanovitch, with Ambassador Yovanovitch.

We talked in Kyiv about what was going on there and this was disturbing to her. When I came back from those trips, I didn't think much more about that until I got a phone call from George Kent, Deputy Assistant Secretary George Kent,

asking hypothetically, he said, would I be willing to go back out to Ukraine, which was odd because we have an Ambassador out there and this gave me some sense that something was going on here. Shortly thereafter, he called up and said, it's not hypothetical anymore. Will you go back out? And that prompted me to do some checking and this kind of business.

When Ambassador Yovanovitch came back in what, late May, I think that's right, I talked to her about this and she described the circumstances under which she came back.

Q Did you have any understanding as to whether the allegations that were levied against her had any basis in fact?

A No, because I don't think there were allegations -- well, as she's testified, she was told by the deputy secretary of State that she had done nothing wrong. So there were no allegations of -- as far as any official channel that she had done anything wrong.

Q Were you aware of allegations in the media against her?

A The allegations in the media were that she was tough on corruption. Now, that doesn't sound so bad, that's what an Ambassador out there has do. She was very frank, she was very direct. She made points very clearly, and she was indeed tough on corruption, and she named names and that

sometimes is controversial out there, but she's a strong person and made those charges.

Q When you say name names, did she generally name names of people or entities to prosecute or not to prosecute?

A No, neither. She named Ukrainians who were standing in the way of reform of the judiciary in particular.

Q I want to show you a -- what's been marked as Exhibit 1, which is a May 9th, New York Times article.

[Taylor Exhibit No. 1
Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q You just testified a second ago that you were aware of efforts by Mr. Giuliani to go to Ukraine to push for investigations. Do you recognize this article?

A I do.

Q Okay. Was this what you were referring to?

A It was.

Q All right. And if you could just read for us the highlighted paragraph, the second paragraph?

A Mr. Giuliani said he plans to travel to Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, in the coming days and wants to meet with the nation's President-elect to urge him to pursue inquiries that allies of the White House contend could yield new information about two matters of intense interest to Mr. Trump.

Q Continue, please.

A One is the origin of the Special Counsel's investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 election. The other is the involvement of former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.'s son and a gas company owned by a Ukrainian oligarch.

Q And then if you could read the quotation from Mr. Giuliani, two paragraphs down?

A We're not meddling in an election, we're meddling in an investigation, which we have a right to do, Mr. Giuliani said.

Q All right. And then if you go to the next page and just read the two lines that are highlighted?

A He said that his efforts in Ukraine have the full support of Mr. Trump. He declined to say specifically whether he had briefed him on the planned meeting with Mr. Zelensky but added he basically knows what I'm doing, sure, as his lawyer.

Q And then if you could go to the last page and the last line and just read that.

A My only client is the President of the United States, he said. He's the one I have an obligation to report to, tell him what happened.

Q So this article is dated May 9th, which as I understand it was during the period that you were considering

whether or not to return to Kyiv?

A That's correct.

Q Okay. And what was your reaction to seeing this article?

A This was one of the several concerns I had when -- considering whether to accept the offer to go back out to Kyiv. This was part of the -- one of the two snake pits, this is the Washington snake pit that I was concerned I would be stepping into if I were to accept the offer. So this made me less interested, this made me concerned, it troubled me that this is what was affecting U.S. policy towards Ukraine.

Q Did you have any conversations with anyone, any executives or senior officials at the State Department about your multifaceted concerns?

A I did. I had a conversation with the Counselor Ulrich Brechbuhl and then a conversation with Secretary Pompeo. And they were -- they were similar in both -- in both meetings I let them know up front going into the meeting that I had not decided whether to accept the offer to go back out to Kyiv because I was troubled by what I was hearing, not just this Giuliani article, but I was troubled by other things as well and I made this clear to both, both Mr. Brechbuhl and Secretary Pompeo.

And the concern was that the strong support, the policy of strong support for Ukraine, that as I said in my

statement, bipartisan, House, Senate, Republicans, Democrats administrations Republicans, Democrats all the way through, that strong support I was worried could change. And if it did change, I told them both, I couldn't serve. The counsel, I mentioned that I'd consulted with a mentor, and he said, Bill, if your country asks you to do something you could do it, if you can be effective. And the if you can be effective clause is really important.

And I could not be effective if our strong support for Ukraine policy were to change and if we were -- if for some reason, I couldn't imagine this would happen, but I was worried that there could be some dramatic change where we would agree with the Russians, that well maybe Crimea is Russian after all, you know, or something like that. And if that were to happen, and I made this clear to the Secretary and others in the room, I would have to come back, I would have to resign, I would have to leave post.

Q And what did Secretary Pompeo say in response to your expression of these concerns?

A He said that he supported the strong U.S. policy and that he would continue to support that strong U.S. policy, and that he would make this case to President Trump.

Q What, if anything, did he say about the snake pit in Washington that you described?

A He said that I should, as the Ambassador, as the

Charge out there, that I should follow the guidance and pursue the foreign policy of the U.S. -- of the administration, of the government, well established. And he said, and that policy is strong support, economic support, military support, political support, Democratic support and -- and that he would do his best to keep that strong support.

Q Did he in any way mention Mr. Giuliani?

A He didn't.

Q What did Counselor Brechbuhl say to you in response to these concerns?

A Same thing. Well, he said you need to -- I saw him about 3 days, the Thursday before the Monday meeting with Secretary Pompeo, he said, you'll have an opportunity to ask the Secretary about that.

Q What was Mr. Brechbuhl's view, personally?

A He agreed, he's is not directly in the Ukraine policymaking channel. He was more in the executive personnel, which is why I was having my -- an interview with him, a meeting with him before seeing the Secretary.

Q Did you specifically mention Mr. Giuliani to either Counselor Brechbuhl or Secretary Pompeo?

A Mr. Goldman, I don't remember if I did, I don't remember if I did or not.

Q Okay.

A Not that I remember.

Q What ultimately led you to take the job?

A The Secretary's assurance that he would continue that strong support and that he would continue to push that strong support within the government. And frankly one of my concerns had been that there had not been a letter to President Zelensky congratulating him on his victory. And Secretary Pompeo looked over at Counselor Brechbuhl and said, what, no letter? And within 48 hours there was a letter. Now -- and it was a good letter -- it's the letter I mentioned in my statement that congratulated President Zelensky and invited him to a meeting in Washington.

Q Okay. That was the May 29th letter that you referenced?

A Correct, correct. That's right, because I saw Secretary Pompeo on the 28th.

Q By the time you had seen Secretary Pompeo, were you aware that there was a meeting related to Ukraine with the President in the Oval Office on May 23rd?

A Yes. I think I had heard that. I know I've heard about that -- I have -- I've gotten reports of that meeting. This was the --this is the meeting of the delegation that went -- the U.S. delegation that went to the inauguration in Kyiv and they came back to brief President Trump, that's the one you're talking about.

Q Yes.

A Yeah. So your question is whether or not I knew of that meeting when I saw the Secretary on the 28th. I don't know when I heard -- I can't remember. I heard several reports of, descriptions of that May 23rd meeting, but they might -- may have come after my meeting with Secretary Pompeo.

Q Who did you get reports of that meeting from?

THE CHAIRMAN: If I could just interrupt. And I don't know all the Members so I apologize. Only members of three committees and their staff and committee staff are authorized to be present. If there is any Member here who is not a member of the three committees, they need to absent themselves.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: So who did I hear from --

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q -- Yeah.

A -- about the May 23rd meeting, yes?

Q Right.

A I'm sure Kurt Volker -- I imagine -- we had several conversations about this, this is an important meeting. And okay -- and Ambassador Sondland, because it was at that meeting that Ambassador Sondland, Volker and Secretary of Energy Perry, Rick Perry were given some responsibilities by the President to work on Ukraine policy.

So I'm sure in answer your question, Mr. Goldman, I'm sure I heard it from Kurt and Gordon, Kurt Volker and Gordon Sondland.

Q And in addition to the fact that the President had asked the three of them to work on Ukraine policy, did you learn anything else about the conversation at that meeting --

A I --

Q -- from either Ambassador Volker or Ambassador Sondland?

A I did. So they described how enthusiastic they were coming back from Kyiv, from the inauguration, how enthusiastic they were about the new President, President Zelensky. And they described their attempts or their attempts to pass on this enthusiasm to President Trump.

President Trump, I think I mentioned in my statement, was sceptical of Ukraine in general, but -- of the new Ukrainian administration. And when Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, and Ambassador Sondland suggested that it would be a good idea for the two Presidents, President Trump and President Zelensky to get together in a meeting. This now is before the letter was signed. Right, but so the idea to get together for a meeting was a good idea so that President Trump could see himself, what they had seen when they were in Kyiv, and what they had seen in their meetings with President Zelensky.

President Trump didn't agree, but what he did say was work with Rudy Giuliani, he told the three of them to work with Rudy Giuliani.

Q Did he say what he wanted them to work with Rudy Giuliani about from your readouts?

A No, not that I recall.

Q By this point you understood that in part based on that article, but you indicate in your opening statement other press statements, did you understand what Rudy Giuliani was pushing for in Ukraine?

A This article that we just talked about was probably the best description and it -- it may have been the only direct description of what Mr. Giuliani was interested in.

Q And were you familiar with Burisma or the Ukrainian role at all in the 2016 --

A I became familiar, but I -- I think at that time I was not. In the past several months since seeing this and hearing how it piped up I became more familiar with it so now I'm pretty familiar. At the time, it is hard to say, exactly what you knew at a particular time. I don't think so. I -- I don't think I understood other than you know, that Giuliani was out doing some things along these lines that this was what he was after.

Q And what was your reaction to hearing that the President had directed the Ambassador to the European Union,

the Special Envoy to the Ukraine conflict, and the Secretary of Energy to take a role in Ukraine policy and to speak to his personal lawyer?

A Actually, I wasn't disturbed by that. It's not unusual to ask people outside the government to play a role. In some sense Kurt Volker was kind of outside the government and he was playing a very important role. He kind of came into the government, a very important role in the negotiations. There have been examples, we've heard about them recently of other civilians doing work for the State Department. And as long as the people pulled in from the outside, consulted from the outside, giving advice or ideas on policy, that's -- we see that all the time. We all have seen that, and that's okay, as long as it's consistent with and supports the main thrust of U.S. foreign policy.

And so at the time I didn't think that that was a problem.

Q Over time, did your view of that change?

A It did.

Q And we'll get into that a little bit later. Did you come to understand whether any of those three individuals spoke to Mr. Giuliani after the President directed them to do so on May 23rd?

A I know Kurt, Ambassador Volker, spoke to him on the phone a couple of times, I think had a breakfast with him

during the summer. And as we know, put Rudy Giuliani in touch with Andrey Yermak, the assistant to President Zelensky.

So I know that Ambassador Volker had some -- did follow up. And I'm pretty sure that Ambassador Sondland had some contact with Rudy Giuliani as well.

Q And what about Secretary Perry?

A I don't know. I've had almost no dealings -- let me see if it's even -- no dealings with Secretary Perry.

Q You testified that you returned to Kyiv on June 17th?

A Yes.

Q And you described in your opening remarks a phone conversation that you had 10 days later on June 27th with Ambassador Sondland about Ukraine matters. Do you recall anything more about that phone conversation with Ambassador Sondland?

A This phone call, Mr. Goldman, was in preparation for a larger phone call the following day on June 28th. And I can -- I'd be happy to check my notes on anything else. When preparing this statement, I did check my notes and, as I said in my statement, Ambassador Sondland told me during a phone conversations President Zelensky, needed to make clear to President Trump that he, President Zelensky, was not standing in the way of investigations, there could have been

other parts of the conversation. That was the one piece that stuck out -- sticks out to me that I included here.

Q And did you know at that time what investigations Ambassador Sondland was referring to?

A I did not. I didn't, you know, I knew that these were -- that Mr. Giuliani was pursuing some investigations and I hadn't -- again, this was 10 days after arriving there I hadn't put this together. So no I wasn't sure what he was talking about, nor was I sure the next day, in this larger phone call, what people were referring to when they talked about investigations.

Q And I believe you testified in your opening statement that the call the next day there was a reference to investigations to, quote, "Get to the bottom of things." unquote.

A That's correct. And that was -- Ambassador Volker intended to say to President Zelensky when Ambassador Volker sat down with President Zelensky in Toronto at an assistance conference, at a reform conference that was coming up the following week. And yes, it was -- and again, from my notes in preparing this -- from my notes preparing this, this actually was in the little spiral notebook by my desk in the office where I had that meeting -- had that phone call is where I have that quote.

Q Was the reference to investigations by Ambassador

Sondland on June 27th the earliest date or time that you can recall any discussion of investigations?

A And again, before I came out there, we'd had some conversations -- I'm sure that I had conversation with Deputy Assistant Secretary Kent about the Giuliani role, which made me concerned and the role was an investigation so I wanted to be careful about how I answer your question.

When I got out there in the first 10 days -- let me see, I did have a meeting -- I had a phone call the day after I got there, which was on -- I got there on the 17th. And on the 18th we had a phone call -- yeah, but it was about -- it was about the meeting, it was about the meeting that the Ukrainians wanted with -- that President Zelensky wanted with President Trump. And I don't recall any discussion on that day, on the 18th, which is again the day after I arrived of investigations and I show nothing else in my notes about that. So I think that's the answer.

Q Okay. And you do reference specifically in your opening remarks that President Zelensky needed to make it clear to President Trump that he was not standing in the way of investigations. And that was a preview to the call that you had with President Zelensky the day after?

A Right. On June 27th, correct.

Q And do you recall whether or not that message was conveyed to President Zelensky on the call on the 28th?

A It was not. And -- and Ambassador Volker intended to pass that message in Toronto several days later.

Q Okay. And did you speak to Ambassador Volker after he went to Toronto in early July?

A Many times. But about that?

Q Specifically about a conversation that he had with President Zelensky?

A Yes.

Q And what did he tell you about that conversation?

A He said that he had been in a broader conversation, a larger conversation with many officials on both sides. And then he had an opportunity to have a smaller conversation with President Zelensky and President Zelensky's Chief of Staff, Andriy Bohdan, where Kurt said that he had -- Kurt told me that he had discussed how President Zelensky could prepare for the phone call with President Trump. And without going into -- without providing me any details about the specific words, did talk about investigations in that conversation with -- in Toronto with Zelensky and Bohdan.

Q In what context did he tell you that he spoke about investigations?

A So when did he tell me --

Q No, in what context did the issue or topic of investigations come up? Was it in connection with an interaction between President Zelensky and President Trump?

A Yes, it was specifically in preparation for the phone call and Kurt suggested to President Zelensky that President Trump would like to hear about the investigations.

Q Okay. And at that point did you know what investigations he was talking about?

A No.

Q It was -- it was just described as investigations?

A Correct.

Q Understood. You just --

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there anything more you could tell us about that conversation when he -- when Ambassador Volker said that he discussed investigations with Zelensky's Chief of Staff. Did you ask him what about that, what are you talking about, you were aware at that time of what Giuliani had said, did it come up in that conversation?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, the conversation I had with Ambassador Volker about that -- about the Toronto conversation took place probably -- let's see, so it was -- July 2nd was the Toronto conversation. Kurt arrived, he and I talked a lot, and he also visited a couple of times in this timeframe. And it was during those conversations and visits that we had this conversation. So nothing specific came out of those conversations describing this.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q On July 10th you testified that you had a meeting in Kyiv with President Zelensky's Chief of Staff Andriy Bohdan who had indicated to you that he had heard from Mr. Giuliani that the phone call between the two Presidents was unlikely to happen and that they I think you said were alarmed and disappointed. Oh, and the meeting also was the Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko?

A Yeah.

Q Did they indicate to you who had heard from Mr. Giuliani and how that message had been relayed?

A You know, I was going over my notes last night. Yes, it was relayed through the then prosecutor general, this fellow I mentioned earlier, Lutsenko and it was -- and as we know, Giuliani and Lutsenko talked a lot. And so Prystaiko and Bohdan had heard from Giuliani through Lutsenko.

Q What do you know about Mr. Lutsenko?

A When I was in Kyiv 2006 to 2009, Yuriy Lutsenko was the Minister of Interior so he headed up all the police. And frankly he did a pretty good job at the time. He was a controversial choice for President Poroshenko as the Prosecutor General because he -- he had law enforcement with police but had no legal training. So he was an unusual choice.

Mr. Lutsenko was loyal to President Poroshenko and so kept his job there. But was a very kind of a person who

listened carefully to what was going on in Washington, what was going on in Kyiv, the politics. He wanted to stay in the job and of course this is 2016 when he is the Prosecutor General and no one knows about the outcome of the election. So I mean a lot of Ukrainians, probably a lot of internationals around the world were trying to figure out American politics at the time, but Lutsenko was also tuned into those.

Q But clearly the senior officials for President Zelensky were interested in anything that Mr. Giuliani had to say. Is that accurate?

A That's accurate, because they understood, as did Kurt and -- Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Sondland, that at President Trump's direction, Rudy Giuliani was influential, was influential with that team. And they were sure, and I think Lutsenko had the same view that in order to have this meeting, get this meeting between the two Presidents that Mr. Giuliani was going to be an important player.

Q Did they understand why Mr. Giuliani had indicated that there would -- the phone call was unlikely to happen?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. And you said that you relayed these concerns to Counselor Brechbuhl?

A I did.

Q And what did he say to you?

A He -- first he'd heard -- I was hoping I could find out something from Washington that indicated whether or not this phone call was going to happen and he didn't know.

Q Did he get back to you?

A No.

Q You describe a phone conversation that you had with Fiona Hill and Alex Vindman on July 19th at some length in your opening statement.

A Yes.

Q And you refer back to a meeting that occurred on July 10th, while you were in Kyiv, so you were not there. Is that right?

A That's correct.

Q And based on the phone -- well, let me ask this, did you hear about that meeting from anyone other than Dr. Hill and Mr. Vindman on the 19th?

A Yes. Let's see, so at that meeting -- that meeting included Mr. Danyliuk, as well as Mr. Yermak. And I think Ambassador Sondland, and it might have been Secretary Perry, and of course Ambassador Bolton were in that meeting. I will find that there -- yeah. Yes.

So, Oleksandr Danyliuk is the National Security Advisor so he is Ambassador Bolton's counterpart. And they had a good meeting there. So your question was had -- did I hear

from other people? The answer is certainly yes, again with -- back and forth with Kurt Volker so at least those three recounting of that meeting.

Q Did you have any discussions with any Ukrainian officials about that meeting?

A Yes. When are -- when Oleksandr Danyliuk got back I'm sure we had conversations about it. I had also had set him up again as the National Security Advisor for Ukraine. I also set him up to see in Washington Steve Hadley who had of course had that job earlier, and they had a good meeting as well.

So I did have a conversation with Danyliuk when he got back about with meetings with Hadley and -- but not in great detail about the meeting with Ambassador Bolton and team.

Q Okay. So you outlined in some detail what Dr. Hill and Mr. Vindman describe to you about that meeting. Is there anything else that you recall that they said about that meeting that comes to mind?

A No.

Q What was your reaction when you heard their description of how Ambassador Sondland had connected investigations with the Oval Office meeting and that Ambassador Bolton had directed Dr. Hill to brief the lawyers and Ambassador Bolton's reference to a drug deal? What was your reaction?

A My reaction was that the opportunity for Oleksandr Danyliuk and John Bolton to have a good conversation was important for Danyliuk. For him to understand how NSCs work, number one. And two, what the substantive policy issues in particular the war in the East, and energy security, probably economic reform, the substance -- and they apparently were having a good conversation Bolton and Danyliuk were having a good conversation along these lines.

Maybe toward the end, but certainly after they'd had part of that -- a good amount of that conversation, programmatic conversation, substantive conversation, what I call the regular channel conversation, Fiona Hill and Alex Vindman describe how Ambassador Sondland in that meeting with John Bolton mentioned investigations.

And John Bolton understood what the reference was and walked out of the meeting, ended the meeting abruptly. Not wanting to have that kind of -- he understood, more than I, I guess at the time, that this was -- this could lead to interference in U.S.- political life and he wanted nothing of it.

Q And that was the description that you had received from Dr. Hill and Lieutenant Colonel Vindman?

A That's correct.

Q So at this point thin then did you have a better understanding as to what these investigations were that

President Trump and Rudy Giuliani wanted in connection with an Oval Office meeting?

A So this is getting into July -- this is, yeah, July 10th -- yes, I'm beginning to understand that there -- that the investigations, again I'm not sure if there's a crystal time, a specific time, but I'm beginning to understand that these investigations of Burisma and the 2016 elections are what the term investigations refer to.

Q And what did you know about the Burisma investigation?

A So Burisma, a London based company that -- energy company that invests a lot and has dealings in Ukraine, in I think mainly -- it's in energy, I'm not sure if it's got gas -- had Hunter Biden on its board at an earlier time, maybe back in 2016. I am not an expert on this but this is you asked what I know, this is what I know.

This of course is the time that Vice President Biden was pushing the Ukrainians very hard on corruption and the allegation -- you know the allegation. The allegation is that the Vice President wanted to get a Prosecutor General fired in order, the allegation was, to stop the investigation of the Burisma -- the Burisma was a bit of a shady organization I'm told. Again, I'm not an expert on this. But it had been accused of money laundering and those kinds of things so there were some investigations of it. I think

they may have been closed, the investigation may have been closed under one or the other of the Prosecutors General in the previous time.

Q Did you understand whether the investigation desired by Mr. Giuliani related to Burisma was connected to the Bidens role in Ukraine and that company in particular?

A It became clear to me with press reports or other discussions, but that emerged, yes.

Q Okay. I want to give you what we've marked as Exhibit 2, which is a stack of the WhatsApp messages that Mr. Volker had provided to us.

[Taylor Exhibit No. 2
Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q And I would ask you to go to 37, page 37, if you could. And if you go to 7/21 at 1:45 a.m., which is Eastern time.

A 7/21.

Q 1:45:54 a.m., right sort of in the middle page. Do you see it?

A Yes, yes.

Q And if you could read. This is a text from you on a chain with Gordon Sondland and Kurt Volker and you're writing here can you read it?

A And I'm writing, right -- Gordon, one thing Kurt and I talked about yesterday was Sasha Danyliuk's point that President Zelensky is sensitive about Ukraine being taken seriously, not merely as an instrument in Washington domestic reelection politics.

Q Okay. And when you had that conversation with Mr. Danyliuk, what did you understand him to be referring to, when you say Washington domestic reelection politics?

A I'm sure that was a reference to the investigations that Mr. Giuliani wanted to pursue.

Q What was your view of the potential telephone call between President Zelensky and President Trump?

A Initially, as I said in late like June when I first arrived, this sounded like a good idea. A good idea to have the two Presidents talk. In particular if President Trump were skeptical about Ukraine in general and President Zelensky in particular, I thought that would be a good idea.

President Zelensky is a smart man, a good politician. I would even say charming and he could have a good conversation with President Trump so I thought it was a good idea to have that.

As the month of July went on and some of these suggest this, I was less convinced. I became less convinced that that meeting was worth what Giuliani was asking. Yes, it would be fine to have the two Presidents talk, but if

President Zelensky, in order to get that meeting were going to have to intervene in U.S. domestic policy or politics by investigated -- by announcing an investigation that would benefit someone in the United States, then it's not -- it wasn't clear to me that that would be worth it. That the meeting would be worth it.

Q Ambassador Sondland then responds to your text 3 hours later. Can you read what he reads?

A Yes, he writes, absolutely. But we need to get the conversation started and the relationship built irrespective of the pretext. I am worried about the alternative.

Q What did you understand him to mean by the pretext?

A I thought about -- I'm not sure I understood, but my -- my guess looking back on it is the pretext for the phone call, that is Gordon wanted -- he thought that the phone call would be a good idea and wanted it to happen. And if the discussion of the investigations was what it took, then it's -- this suggests that that's what he had in mind.

Q And when he says, I'm worried about the alternative. What did you understand --

A I guess -- again, I'm not sure what is in Gordon's mind, but I guess he was worried that if they didn't have the meeting it would not be good for the relationship between the two countries.

Q And is this in reference to the meeting or the

phone call?

A Phone call. I'm sorry, phone call.

Q And that was what was at stake at this point?

A It was at stake at this point. And the idea was that the phone call would be a step toward the meeting.

Q All right. Now this is 2 months after -- almost 2 months after the letter inviting President Zelensky to the White House. Is that right?

A That's correct. The letter from -- it was May 29th and this is July 21st.

Q And as the Charge de mission, you're meeting with a number of Ukrainian officials, did you get the sense of whether or not they were getting a little worried or nervous or what was their reaction to the delay in time?

A Yes, they were eager for this meeting. They wanted the meeting. They wanted the invitation to the White House. And when it was suggested that a phone call would be a good step toward that, they were willing to do that. But in answer to your question, they were very eager to have this meeting. That was high on their list.

Q Why were they so eager?

A A meeting -- people in this room will know as well as I, a meeting with the head of state with a U.S. President in the Oval Office suggests a relationship. It suggests a relationship between the two countries that the Ukrainians

wanted. The Ukrainians value, valued and they value a relationship with the United States as their main strategic partner, as their mainstream partner.

So a meeting with President Trump or any President for that matter, but President Trump in the Oval Office doesn't happen regularly -- doesn't happen to very many heads of state. And if you get that, you can be sure or you can think or people might be able to believe that you've got a good relationship between the two countries and I think that's what they were looking for.

Q If I could direct your attention to page 42 now. On July 22nd, near the top at 4:27. This is a text exchange between Kurt Volker and Gordon Sondland. You are not on this. Volker writes to Sondland, orchestrated a great phone call with Rudy and Yermak. They are going to get together when Rudy goes to Madrid in a couple of weeks. In the meantime Rudy is now advocating for a phone call. And Volker explains how he's also advocating for the phone call and then Gordon Sondland responds I talked to Tim Morrison, Fiona's replacement he is pushing, but feel free as well.

Volker had said, but I can tell Bolton and you can tell Mick that Rudy agrees on a call, if that happens. I assume that means Mick Mulvaney. Right?

A Yes.

Q Were you aware that Ambassador Volker had connected

Mr. Giuliani and Mr. Yermak?

A Not at that point. I was made aware later.

Q Do you recall when you were made aware?

A No.

Q Did you learn that they had a meeting in Madrid?

A Later.

Q After their meeting?

A Well after.

Q Well after their meeting?

A Yeah.

Q Okay. And then if we go to page 19 on 7/25 at 8:36 in the morning. This is a text exchange between Volker and Yermak. Volker writes to Yermak, good lunch, thanks. Heard from White House. Assuming President Z convinces Trump he will investigate/ quote, "get to the bottom of what happened" unquote, in 2016, we will nail down date for visit to Washington. Good luck see you tomorrow. Kurt.

Have you seen this text before?

A Yes. I think I've seen it in the paper.

Q As part of this investigation?

A Right, right. I wasn't on it.

Q So you were not on this one?

A Correct.

Q But were you aware that this message, that Volker texted to Yermak, were you aware that that message was

relayed to the senior Ukrainian officials in advance of the phone call?

A Yes. This is the basic message that Kurt -- that Ambassador Volker provided to President Zelensky and Bohdan in Toronto on the 2nd of July, it's very consistent.

Q And is it your view that by this point the White House meeting between President Zelensky and President Trump was conditioned on the initiation of these investigations by Ukraine?

A I am sure that happened based on all the things I said. So Mr. Goldman, you asked me did I know it at that point or on 7/25?

Q Right.

A The answer must be yes, yeah. I knew it in July it became clearer and clearer.

Q Okay. And you did not -- you said it was I think somewhat strange that you did not get a readout of the July 25th call. Is that right?

A That's correct. It's a little strange, it's not a lot strange. We didn't get very many readouts, but --

Q And I believe you were in Kyiv and so was Ambassador Volker and Sondland?

A Correct.

Q At this time?

A That's correct.

Q Did any Ukrainian official whether it was Zelensky or any of their senior officials say anything to you during their visit, perhaps at a dinner that you had with Mr. Danyliuk about these investigations, was that on their mind at that point?

A We did have dinner with Gordon Sondland, and Danyliuk, and Kurt the night before the discussion -- so yeah, that -- the night before the discussion, so on the 25th, yes. But the brief conversation that we had with Danyliuk about that was that they seemed to think that the call went fine, the call went well. He wasn't disturbed by anything. He wasn't disturbed that he told us about the phone call.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ambassador, our time has expired. It's my intention after the minority has their 1 hour to take a brief lunch break. Would you like a rest room break now before we begin?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm fine, I'm fine. I appreciate the offer.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you. 1 hour to the minority, sir.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Thank you, Ambassador. Thank you for your service 50 years of faithful service to the United States. We truly appreciate that. To the extent any of our questions here

today you belie that, let me just state at the outset we appreciate your service.

A Thank you, Mr. Castor.

Q I also want to express condolences to Mr. Cummings' staff, they rejoined us today, Susanne Grooms, Peter Kenny. Mr. Cummings treated his staff like family and his staff treated him like family as well. So they are hurting and we are glad they are back today.

You're here today under subpoena. Is that correct?

A Yes, sir.

Q Would we be able to have a copy of the subpoena? We've never seen it. A lot of these subpoenas -- some of them we have seen, others we have not.

MR. GOLDMAN: The HPSCI minority saw the subpoena before it was --

MR. CASTOR: Could we make it like an exhibit? Usually when a witness is appearing per subpoena, you make it an exhibit. Can we do that?

MR. GOLDMAN: We'll consider that and get back to you.

MR. CASTOR: So the answer is no?

MR. GOLDMAN: No, I said we'll consider that and get back to you.

MR. CASTOR: So -- okay.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q When did you first learn the subpoena was coming?

A This morning.

Q Okay. What time?

A 8:30? 8:30.

Q Was it your understanding all along that a subpoena was likely to --

A I'd seen the pattern of other witnesses who were under the same instruction I was and presumably we were under the same constraint and that when they received the subpoena right before they appeared, so I was anticipating the same thing.

Q And a handful of State Department officials have come in so far, Ambassador Yovanovitch, Deputy Assistant Secretary Kent, Ambassador McKinley. Although I don't think --

A Ambassador Sondland.

Q Ambassador Sondland. And they all had subpoenas, correct?

A Correct, that's my understand.

Q Not Ambassador McKinley. So the State Department is well aware of this pattern?

A Very well aware.

Q Okay. You mentioned the circumstances. If the circumstances changed, you believe you would be allowed to testify pursuant to the subpoena. They weren't ordering you not to appear over the subpoena, were they?

A No.

Q Okay. Did anyone at the State Department reach out to you either in H or L when it became a foregone conclusion that these subpoenas are coming? Did anybody reach out to you to communicate that should a subpoena be issued, you should not testify?

A Can I ask counsel to answer that, because they had interaction with the State Department lawyers.

MR. CASTOR: Okay.

MR. BELLINGER: After his initial conversations with H, then all further conversations were from the L lawyer to me. They sent us the directive that said that he should not appear under I think the quote is under the present circumstances. We told the majority that we could not appear; he'd been instructed not to. We saw the pattern.

The L said to us, if you get a subpoena, we're not prohibiting you from appearing, but if you do appear, ultimately under a subpoena then you have to protect classified information and other information. So that was the back and forth with the lawyers at the State Department.

MR. CASTOR: Okay, thank you.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q I apologize for asking you some of these details a lot of those, on the Republican side of things, we're in the dark about many of these blow by blow when the subpoena, is

the subpoena going to go. And that leads to mistrust. Some of the other machinations about you can't -- we can't have copies of the transcript, we're only allowed two staffers in the room from the Oversight Committee, leads to questions of this sort. So that's why I ask. So I appreciate that.

You mentioned that the company Burisma was a bit of a shady organization?

A Mr. Castor, I don't want to say more than I know. And again, as I mentioned to Mr. Goldman, I learned about Burisma -- I don't think I knew about Burisma before spring, before this past spring when I was thinking about coming back out to Kyiv. So what I know about Burisma is recent and you and I have probably read the same thing.

Q Okay. So you're aware that after you left your first tour as Ambassador, I think it's in 2014 this former ecology minister Zlochevsky, it's alleged that he improperly obtained certain licenses.

A I've heard that.

Q Okay. And there are a number of allegations surrounding the company since 2014 relating Zlochevsky, you're familiar with those?

A Not in any detail.

Q Do you have any reason to dispute that these things occurred?

A I have no reason.

Q When you arrived at the embassy did your staff brief you about about some of the oligarchs and the environment of corruption?

A In general certainly. I don't recall a specific briefing on Burisma.

Q Okay. Was the name everybody mentioned in any of those briefings?

A It has certainly been mentioned since, you know, and over the past couple of months when it has shown up in the papers.

[11:53 a.m.]

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q And what you can you tell us about other oligarchs that might allegedly be involved with corruption in Ukraine?

A A general question, okay.

Q Is it an issue?

A It's a big issue. It's a big issue. And it's particularly a big issue today with this new administration. The one problem, the one concern, the one issue that we have, the U.S. Government and the international community more broadly, with this administration, with the Zelensky administration, is the influence of oligarchs.

Now, the influence of one particular oligarch over Mr. Zelensky is of particular concern, and that's this fellow Kolomoisky, so -- and Kolomoisky has growing influence. And this is one of the concerns that I have expressed to President Zelensky and his team on several occasions very explicitly, saying that, you know, Mr. President, Kolomoisky was not elected. You were elected and he, Mr. Kolomoisky, is increasing his influence in your government, which could cause you to fail. So I've had that conversation with him a couple of times.

Q And you're aware from -- at various points in time some these oligarchs, some of these companies have been under investigation?

A Yes.

Q For various reasons?

A Yes.

Q We understand Burisma, from additional witness testimony, has been -- either Burisma or Zlochevsky has been under investigation for money laundering, for tax evasion, among other things. And you're familiar with that generally?

A I am familiar with that generally.

Q What can you say about the integrity of the criminal justice system in Ukraine?

A Flawed.

Q So is it fair to say that if some of these companies, some of these oligarchs had been under investigation at some point in time that the investigation may have been closed for improper purposes?

A Yes. It could have been closed for payments, yes.

Q So, inherently, the interest of somebody in the United States of wanting to -- wanting Ukraine to get to the bottom of corruption is not a problem, right?

A We have long made it, over -- certainly while I was there in 2006-2009 and subsequently, have long made it clear to the Ukrainian Governments over time that their ability to integrate into Europe and succeed in that goal was challenged by, was threatened by, a lack of credible rule of law, which included courts, investigations.

So yes, that's been a constant theme of U.S. policy towards Ukraine.

Q Okay. So, to the extent somebody in the United States, whether it be at the State Department or the National Security Council or even the White House, has questions about whether investigations were properly closed and ought to be reopened is something that is a product of the environment, correct?

A We look very carefully at the operation and the implementation of the justice system in Ukraine, again, because of its importance for investment, because of its importance for trust in the government, because of the importance of having confidence that an objective rule of law system, a judiciary system, was so important for it.

So that, in general -- now, you know -- yeah, that, in general, has been our policy.

Q But if Zlochevsky or Burisma is under investigation for money laundering, tax evasion, and those cases are closed, as you suggest, because they were paid off, the prosecutors were paid off, then certainly it's okay to want those cases to be reopened?

A The policy that I've been aware of has been a general policy of the importance of honest judges, of the selection process for judges, the selection process for prosecutors, the institutions. It has been less a focus on

individual cases. Individual cases, in my view, is not what U.S. -- what U.S. foreign policy. What we need to press on is strengthening the institutions in Ukraine, but in other countries as well, so that the population, the society has confidence in it. So it's more the institution than the specific case.

Q Are you aware of the effort of Burisma in 2014 to, you know, assemble a high-profile board of directors?

A So 2014, I was not paying great attention to that aspect. So what I know, probably what we all know is that they put some very high-profile people on their board. Again, I've only come to know that over the past couple of months because of all the attention. So I know this -- I didn't know it in 2014 because I was at the Institute of Peace trying to do Iraq or Afghanistan, whatever.

Q And one of the folks they put on the board was Hunter Biden, right?

A That's my understanding.

Q Do you know if he has any experience in corporate governance?

A I don't know. I don't know Hunter Biden. I don't know what he --

Q Do you think it's possible that he was tapped for the board because his dad was the Vice President?

A So, Mr. Castor, I'm here as a fact witness. I

don't have any facts on that. I don't have an opinion on that, and you don't want me -- my --

Q But a reasonable person could say there are perceived conflicts of interest there, right?

A Sure.

Q In your time as Ambassador, the first stint '06 to '09 and then again, have any -- has anyone asked the Embassy whether you had an issue about putting certain officials on their board?

A Recently, there have been questions about -- well, recently there have been questions about boards of Naftogaz. So the answer is yes, in that case.

Another set of issues are the corporate boards of the state-owned banks. And decisions about who is appointed to the state-owned bank boards has been an issue for the -- for the independence of the National Bank of Ukraine, the NBU, in conflict with the administration.

So the short answer is yes, the board membership has been an issue that we've paid some attention to.

Q Okay. And what's the Embassy's ordinary posture when it comes to that?

A The --

Q Do you --

A The selection process -- so what -- again, the examples I just gave you, the Naftogaz and the state-owned

banks, our policy on those, being -- both being state-owned, all of those being state-owned banks and Naftogaz, the selection process, open, competitive, transparent.

I don't know that that -- I don't remember seeing any specific of privately owned companies that -- or the boards on privately owned companies. So the interest in board membership is of -- that I'm familiar with is state-owned companies, the ones I've mentioned.

[Discussion off the record.]

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, it's actually -- the open competition is for contracts as well as an open competitive selection process for board members.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q You mentioned in your opener that you're on the board of a small Ukrainian --

A I was. I'm not on, but I was, yeah. It's called the East Europe Foundation. Yeah.

Q Okay. Any other board memberships for you?

A I was, again, on the board of the American Councils, both nongovernmental organizations here in Washington.

Q Okay. Any of these boards pay you $50,000 a month for your service?

A No. They pay nothing.

MR. CASTOR: I want to mark as exhibit 3 a Politico

article from January.

[Minority Exhibit No. 3
was marked for identification.]

MR. CASTOR: Anybody need copies of this? We try to bring enough copies for at least four or five people, and so to the extent you guys could reciprocate, we'd appreciate that. You've been handing us one copy, and I have to share it with our members, and it gets tricky.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q This is a Politico article dated January 2017. Can you identify the article -- or the author for the record?

A Mr. Castor, I don't know the two authors.

Q Yes, could you just say their name?

A Oh, sorry. Kenneth Vogel and David Stern.

Q Going back to exhibit 1, the New York Times story.

A Yes.

Q Who wrote that one?

A Kenneth Vogel.

Q Would you mind reading the highlighted paragraph?

A "Ukrainian Government officials tried to help Hillary Clinton and undermine Trump by publicly questioning his fitness for office. They also disseminated documents implicating a top Trump aide in corruption and suggested that they were investigating the matter, only to back away after the election, and they helped Clinton's allies research

damaging information on Trump and his advisers, a Politico investigation found."

Q Now, you weren't in the Ukraine in 2017. Had you been aware of any of these issues --

A No.

Q -- from your post at --

A At the Institute, no.

Q Are you aware of the allegation that a DNC-connected consultant was communicating with the Ukrainian Embassy here in D.C.?

A I have recently heard that.

Q And have you ever heard the name [redacted]?

A Again, I think in that same connection where I've recently heard that issue that you -- the connection that you just described, I think that's the name. That's about the limit of my knowledge on that.

Q Fair enough. When you arrived at post, did anybody give you briefings about --

A They didn't.

Q -- [redacted] or --

A They didn't.

Q -- efforts of the DNC to influence Ukrainians in the U.S.?

A They didn't.

Q Okay. So your sum total of knowledge of that comes from news accounts?

A I think that's right. It's -- I think that's right. It's -- I could have also had a conversation with somebody about that, but that was also based on news accounts.

Q Were you aware that the Ukrainian Ambassador to the U.S., Chaly, had entered the fray, the political fray, and wrote an op-ed in opposition to then-candidate Trump?

A I was not aware.

Q Is that ordinary or --

A It's not. Ambassadors do not -- are not supposed to and should not interfere in or participate in domestic elections, the host country elections.

Q Did anyone at the Embassy ever call to your attention the issue with Ambassador Chaly?

A In this context, no. In other contexts, in particular the Zelensky administration, the new administration was looking to replace him as soon as they could once they came into office. This, of course, was this past summer.

Q Okay. And is that common? Had Chaly served for a couple Presidents or was he linked to Poroshenko?

A He -- I think he only served under Poroshenko. He was a professional Foreign Service officer, so he undoubtedly

had earlier in his career in other things, but in terms of that Ambassadorship.

Q On page 11 of this story, there's a reference to a Ukrainian investigative journalist and, at the time, a Parliamentarian named Serhiy Leschenko. What do you know about Mr. Leschenko?

A So Mr. Leschenko is a known reformer journalist who, in 2014, when the so-called Revolution of Dignity, decided to join the government -- well, run for office and was elected to the Rada, to the Parliament, where he continued to be associated with a group of reformers.

Q And is he still in the Parliament?

A Is he in the Parliament? I think he's not.

Q Do you know if he's ever been investigated or prosecuted?

A He has been. He has been investigated. Again, this is not my -- this is before I arrived.

Q If you know.

A Yeah. He has been investigated, and a court -- I don't remember which court -- dismissed the charge.

Q Okay. Are you aware of the allegations relating to Leschenko and the Manafort ledgers?

A Yes.

Q And what do you know about that?

A As I understand it, he was the one who -- Serhiy

Leschenko was the one who either found or identified the ledger, and either he or someone in law enforcement turned that ledger over to the Anticorruption Bureau. That's what I remember.

Q On page 11, there's a paragraph that begins, "The scrutiny around the ledgers" --

A Yes.

Q -- "combined with that from other stories about his Ukraine work -- proved too much, and he stepped down from the Trump campaign less than a week after the Times story."

And that's relating to Manafort.

A Yes.

Q "At the time, Leschenko suggested that his motivation was partly to undermine Trump."

Was it well-known that Leschenko was, indeed, trying to undermine candidate Trump at the time?

A So this would have been what year? Not to me. Yeah, it was a 2017 article, but I don't know when they were talking about here.

Q These things were occurring during the 2016 election.

A 2016 election, right. Not known to me.

Q Okay. When you arrived at post, did your political adviser there or anybody give you a briefing on some of the issues relating to Leschenko?

A One of the questions was -- so I mentioned he was a reformer. One of the -- and he had supported Zelensky, President Zelensky, and had given him, had given Zelensky some credibility as a reformer. The other reformer, by the way, we've already talked about is a man named Alexander Danyliuk. And so those two people joined Zelensky's team early as reformers.

What I was told, in answer to your question, Mr. Counselor, was that Leschenko took himself off of the Zelensky team because of these -- this controversy.

Q Okay. At the bottom of page 11, the report, the Politico report notes that Leschenko told the Financial Times, you know, about 2 weeks after the news conference that he was trying to undermine candidate Trump.

The newspaper goes on to note, the Financial Times, that Trump's candidacy had spurred Kyiv's wider political leadership to do something they would never have attempted before, intervene, however indirectly, in a U.S. election.

What do you know about attempts of the Ukrainian Government or Ukrainians to intervene in the 2016 election?

A Mr. Castor, I don't know about those attempts.

Q Okay. And has that been part of any briefings that you received once you arrived at post?

A No.

Q Okay. And so that's not a concern that's been

communicated to you as you've settled in?

A Correct.

Q Flipping over to page 14, the paragraph begins "Ukraine's Minister of Internal Affairs, Arsen Avakov." You with me?

A Fourteen. Yes. Yep.

Q Okay -- piled on, trashing Trump on Twitter as a clown and asserting that Trump is an even bigger danger to the U.S. than terrorism.

The Politico story goes on to report that Avakov also disparaged the President in Facebook posts.

What do you know about Avakov?

A So he is the Minister of Internal Affairs and was the Minister of Internal Affairs under President Poroshenko as one of only two carryovers from the Poroshenko Cabinet to the Zelensky Cabinet. He, as I think I mentioned earlier when we were talking about Lutsenko, the Minister of Interior, which Avakov is now, controls the police, which gives him significant influence in the government.

Q Avakov, he's a relatively influential Minister. Is that right?

A That is correct.

Q Does it concern you that at one time he was being highly critical of candidate Trump?

A It does.

Q And did you ever have any awareness of that before I called your attention to this?

A I haven't. This is surprising. Disappointing, but --

Q Flipping to page 15, the paragraph that begins with "Andriy Artemenko."

A At the top, yeah.

Q Ukrainian Parliamentarian associated with conservative opposition, you know, met with Trump's team during the campaign. And he was quoted saying: It was clear they were supporting Hillary Clinton's candidacy. They did everything from organizing meetings with the Clinton team to publicly supporting her to criticizing Trump. I think they simply didn't meet because they thought Hillary would win.

This is yet another Ukrainian Parliamentarian, you know, going on the record in a news account asserting that the Ukrainian Government establishment was, in fact, supporting Hillary Clinton.

Is this a new fact for you?

A This is a new fact for me. I've not read this article. So this was a 2017 article. So I didn't know that -- I don't know Artemenko, so I haven't had a chance to deal with him. And the answer is yes, new fact.

Q Does it concern you?

A Yes. Same thing, for the same reason.

Q Now, is it reasonable for someone in the Trump administration to conclude that if Artemenko -- and I apologize if --

A No, you're doing fine.

Q -- any of my pronunciations are --

A You're doing fine.

Q If Artemenko, Chaly, Avakov, Leschenko were engaged -- these are all legitimate people in the Ukraine, right?

A I don't know how legitimate Artemenko is, but --

Q He's an elected member of the Parliament?

A He's an elected member of the Parliament, which means -- which may mean that he could -- you can buy your way into the Parliament.

Q Okay. But certainly a government official?

A Certainly a -- a deputy, a Rada deputy, yeah.

Q Avakov is a legitimate power player in Ukraine?

A At least a power player, that's right. That's right.

Q And Chaly is the Ambassador to the U.S.?

A Chaly is the Ambassador.

Q Okay. And Leschenko was a man of some significance, right?

A Leschenko was a well-known reformer and a well -- and a good journalist beforehand, so yes, well-recognized.

Q So isn't it possible that Trump administration officials might have a good-founded belief, whether true or untrue, that there were forces in the Ukraine that were operating against them?

A Mr. Castor, based on this Politico article, which, again, surprises me, disappoints me because I think it's a mistake for any diplomat or any government official in one country to interfere in the political life of another country. That's disappointing.

Q So the question is, isn't it fair to say that, if you're aligned with the Trump administration, isn't it legitimate to have a good-faith belief that Ukrainians were operating against you in the 2016 election?

A That's certainly the thrust of this article.

Q And this isn't an opinion piece. I mean, this is not an opinion piece. This is a journalist --

A This is a journalist. And, as you pointed out, it's Kenneth Vogel, who also writes for The New York Times.

Q So it's not a fringe, you know, journalist. I mean, this is a mainstream journalist for Politico and now the New York Times, not an opinion piece. And to the extent he's reporting and documenting these facts, I mean, isn't it fair to say that if you're aligned with the Trump administration, you might have a good-faith belief that the Ukrainians were supporting Hillary Clinton and trying to

undermine him?

A You could have that opinion, that some were. If this reporting is correct, you could certainly have the opinion that some Ukrainians were.

Q Okay. And do you have any -- since you've arrived at post, has anyone briefed you to try to debunk any of these allegations?

A No.

Q Okay. So nobody at the Embassy has sat you down in briefings and said, "Ambassador, there are allegations out there that the Ukrainians were working for Clinton and against Trump, but I want to tell you that didn't happen"; nobody came and briefed you on that?

A Correct.

Q Since your time considering the post, which I think you I think you mentioned was the end of May, and then you arrived relatively quickly, to your credit, in June, did you get any background on some of the concerns that the folks aligned with the President had about the Ukrainians interfering with the election, or allegedly?

A No. Mr. Giuliani and his -- who is influential with the President, and his efforts were known. I wouldn't say -- I wouldn't say "briefed." What the Embassy tries to do, as a general rule, is stay out of either our domestic or Ukraine internal politics. So we have not -- we have tried

to avoid dealing certainly with Mr. Giuliani and the kind of efforts that he was interested in. So that's, again, for -- we don't get involved in election campaigns on either side.

Q But you describe a difficult environment leading up to Ambassador Yovanovitch's recall, and you testified about some of the concerns you had before accepting the post.

Did anyone give you any additional background about what the issues are that concerned the President or was motivating Mr. Giuliani?

A No.

Q Okay. Did you have a general understanding of what Giuliani's concerns were?

A Again, our focus has -- we've attempted to keep the focus on our bilateral relations and away from domestic politics or Ukrainian internal politics, to the degree we can. So --

Q Just forgive me. If there was a concern about the 2016 election and concern about investigations, did you ever try to do some due diligence and find out exactly what the concerns were before you arrived at post?

A No.

Q Did you have any conversations with Yovanovitch about this?

A About --

Q The environment, the snake pit I think you called

it.

A Certainly, we had -- I had a conversation with her in Kyiv and then again in Washington about the -- about that environment, about how the domestic, our domestic politics had gotten into the -- into affecting her career.

Q Okay. But did you ever have a discussion about what, you know, when you're -- did you ever try to get into the -- what was the genuine concern from Giuliani, other than --

A No.

Q Okay. You met with Yovanovitch a couple times, you said --

A Yes.

Q -- when you were over there as an election observer.

A Yes.

Q And then you met with her again after she came home --

A Correct.

Q -- before you went out?

A Correct.

Q So is that roughly three conversations?

A Three conversations, at least, yeah.

Q And what do you recall her telling you?

A I recall in particular the last conversation, which

was in my office at the Institute of Peace. She was very emotional about having been pulled out early. As she has indicated, she didn't think she had made mistakes or done something wrong. She felt like someone had -- she felt that someone or some people may have had other motives for wanting her not to be there.

And I think she's indicated that maybe in her testimony or the papers or something that has described her testimony. She made that same point to me in May.

Q Did she say who?

A I don't recall her mentioning any specific names. I'm not even sure she knew the people. She had a sense that there were people who wanted to invest in Ukraine or wanted to sell things to Ukraine that thought that her anticorruption stance was getting in their way. I don't remember -- if she mentioned any names, I don't remember them.

Q Okay. Did you have any discussions -- how many discussions did you have with Brechbuhl before taking the post?

A Two.

Q And during those two discussions, did you have any dialogue with him about what was going on over there?

A Again, he -- with Counselor Brechbuhl, it was more -- the two conversations were on like the 23rd of May

and the 28th of May, and the second with the Secretary. And they were focused more on my interest, my qualifications, rather than anything about Ukraine policy.

Q Did they ever tell you they'd have your back?

A Secretary Pompeo did say that he'd support me on this strong Ukraine policy. That was my condition for going out, and he said he would.

Q And did you have a relatively open communication with both Counselor Brechbuhl and the Secretary?

A Yes.

Q So, if you needed them, they would engage with you, right?

A They would. And I didn't -- and the Secretary said any time. I didn't abuse that and I only -- but I did call the counselor a couple of times, you know, and -- from Kyiv. So I met with him twice while I was -- before I left, called him a couple times to check in when I started to get concerned about the security assistance, for example. But yes, he was available and responsive.

Q Okay. Did you ever have any discussions with the Secretary or the counselor about the circumstances of Ambassador Yovanovitch being recalled?

A That was a concern I had before I agreed with them to take the job. So it may -- it could have been part of that conversation, Mr. Castor. I don't recall specifically

talking to them about Ambassador Yovanovitch.

Q Did they ever give you any assurances that this won't happen again and --

A No, no. I didn't ask for and didn't receive any.

Q Okay. The issues that motivated her recall, did they give you any indication that they were still viable issues that made the environment tricky?

A They didn't.

Q But you expected it would be?

A I expected it would be.

Q Did you ever have any communications with Mr. Giuliani --

A None.

Q -- directly?

A No. He visited Kyiv in 2008 or '07, while I was there. 2008, I think. And I remember shaking his hand. He was America's mayor. But otherwise, not.

Q But for times relevant, May 28th on, you've never spoken to Mr. Giuliani?

A No, no.

Q Has anyone ever asked you to speak to Mr. Giuliani?

A No.

Q And if I may, have you spoken to the President of the United States?

A I have not.

Q Okay. You had no communications with the President of the United States?

A Correct.

Q Have you had any communications with Acting Chief of Staff Mulvaney?

A None.

Q The White House officials you have had discussions with, have you identified them for the most part in your statement?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So it's Ambassador Bolton, Fiona Hill, Dr. Hill, Mr. Vindman, Lieutenant Colonel Vindman?

A Vindman, right.

Q Any others that were --

A Tim Morrison took --

Q Tim Morrison.

A -- Fiona's place.

Q Okay.

A Yeah, I think those are the ones.

Q And once you arrived at post, did you have any occasion to engage the Secretary on any of these issues, ask the Secretary for his assistance in pushing back on the irregular part of the policy?

A So I went to the Secretary at the end of August in a -- in a cable expressing my concern about -- August 29th,

my concern about the hold on security assistance.

Q Okay. Was that the first time you engaged the Secretary on this?

A Yes.

Q Okay. In your statement, you walk us through what was a regular, formal, diplomatic process that you were the point person for, and then there was an irregular, informal channel, and that was concerning to you. Is that fair?

A Not at the beginning.

Q Okay.

A At the beginning, as I said, I felt the goals were aligned. I thought the goals of having -- the overall goal of having strong U.S.-Ukraine relations was supported by -- certainly by -- I knew by Ambassadors Sondland and Volker.

I didn't -- I never, as I said, haven't had much dealings with Secretary Perry, but everything leads me to believe that he also supported that. And so that irregular is not necessarily bad.

Q Okay.

A And it wasn't -- I didn't think it was bad. I didn't think it was a problem in the beginning. And, actually, it could have been helpful, because Ambassador Sondland is able -- is able to call the President, and that's a valuable thing if you want to try to move our U.S.-Ukraine relations along. So, at the beginning, it was not a problem.

Q How long have you known Ambassador Volker for?
A So probably 20 years. A long time.
Q And is he a man of integrity?
A He is a man of integrity.
Q And he is somebody that's always, to the best of your knowledge, acted in the best interests of the United States?
A He -- when he got involved with Mr. Giuliani, I think that that pulled him away from or it diverted him from being focused on what I thought needed to be focused on, that is -- yeah. So, in general, yes, but the Giuliani factor I think affected Ambassador Volker.
Q But as a man of integrity, if he genuinely believed it was in the best interests of the United States to engage with Giuliani, do you agree that that's -- he was acting in the best interests of the United States when he did that?
A I think he thought he was.
Q There's this May 23rd briefing in the Oval Office --
A Yes.
Q -- where the delegation that went to the inaugural --
A Yes.
Q -- communicated with the President.
A Yes.

Q We've had some accounts of that meeting.

A I'm sure.

Q And Ambassador Volker was there. Obviously, we've talked to him at some length. Ambassador Sondland. And characterizations of that meeting have differed sometimes between the actual participants and those reporting on what they think had occurred.

For example, it's been -- you know, the President has been characterized or has been quoted as saying, "Work with Rudy." Is that something you heard?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And then it's also been related to us that the President said, "Talk to Rudy," and it's in a dismissive sort of way. You know, the President had his concerns about corruption in Ukraine and, you know, a laundry list of reasons, including the fact that the President believed that there were Ukrainians trying to work against him in the election, right?

A As we established, some Ukrainians, a couple of Ukrainians. And the important point here is none of those, with the exception of Avakov, who is still -- none of those were in or are in the Zelensky administration.

So that's what -- as I understand it, that's what Ambassador Volker, Sondland, Perry were coming back to tell President Trump, that, you know, we just met President

Zelensky, and he supports what you support. I've heard several people said -- made -- tried to make that point.

Q And the participants of the meeting have told us that they briefed the President, and the President wasn't having it.

A Right.

Q He said negative things about the country of Ukraine.

A I've heard that.

Q And he didn't, you know, get into specifics. He simply said: It's been related to us, talk to Rudy. If you think Ukraine is doing such -- you know, they've turned the corner and Zelensky is the reformer he says he's going to be, you know, talk to Rudy.

Is that fair?

THE CHAIRMAN: If I could just interject, and I have to make this advisory periodically. What counsel represents prior witnesses may have said or not said, we cannot vouch for the accuracy.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Unless you are a percipient witness, you should not assume facts that are not in evidence before you.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q You know, there's nuances that we aren't aware of,

you know, that occur in these meetings. There's ambiguities, and in the, you know, ambiguity a lot of times people jump to conclusions. And so the question is, is there a difference between talk to Rudy and work with Rudy?

A I don't know.

Q Okay.

A I don't know.

Q And was that related to you by Ambassador Sondland or Volker?

A The difference between those two?

Q Yes.

A No.

Q Or what had to be effectuated with Mr. Giuliani?

A Here's what I understood from Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Sondland. In order to get President Zelensky and President Trump in a meeting in the Oval Office, they took from that May 23rd meeting that they needed to work with Rudy Giuliani, so -- and so they did.

Q What did Volker relate to you about next steps then? You said you talk with Volker a lot, right?

A I do.

Q And what did he -- do you remember some of the blow by blow, the play by --

A Well, no, actually, he didn't tell me anything about him reaching out to Giuliani. And about the same time

he had his breakfast with Giuliani, he mentioned that I think in a text to me and Gordon. And about that same time, Fiona Hill, Dr. Hill mentioned that same thing, that she had heard that Kurt had been in touch with or met with Rudy Giuliani. That was -- I think that was the first time I was aware that Kurt had been in touch with Giuliani along these lines.

Q Did Ambassador Volker give you any readout of his conversations or what he was doing?

A He didn't.

Q Okay. So he didn't tell you that he told Mr. Giuliani that there was no good-faith basis to investigate the Bidens?

A He didn't tell me anything about his conversation with Giuliani.

Q Did you ever come to learn from Sondland or other players that that was the case?

A No. That was the case between Volker and Giuliani?

Q Correct.

A No.

Q Would that surprise you if Volker had communicated that to Giuliani?

A Communicated what?

Q That there is no good faith basis to investigate the Bidens.

A No knowledge. I can't answer.

MR. CASTOR: I have about 8 or 9 minutes left and I promised our members we would pivot to them at the end of the -- at the end of our round, so I would like to do that.

MR. NUNES: Thank you, Mr. Castor.

Ambassador, welcome. You're aware that this committee had an investigation into the 2016 elections, the House Intelligence Committee?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Am I aware that there is one? Yes.

MR. NUNES: Yes, that there was one that completed, and now those investigations have even continued.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't know much about it, Mr. Chairman, but -- Mr. Nunes, but --

MR. NUNES: You're also aware that -- you're aware of the Bob Mueller special counsel investigation --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I am aware.

MR. NUNES: -- of the 2016 elections.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I am.

MR. NUNES: You may not be aware, but at least the Republicans on this committee were very concerned by Ukraine's actions during the 2016 election, and they have long been a target of our investigation and have continued today to try to get to the bottom of what they were up to in the 2016 election between the Ambassador's comments here and between other incidents that are out there.

Most notably, are you familiar with -- well, I know

you're familiar because you talked about Leschenko earlier -- former journalist turned politician --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Leschenko, yes.

MR. NUNES: Do you have any current involvement with Leschenko? Do you run into him now or you're just familiar with him?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm familiar with him. I think I met him in my -- in the 2006-2009 time period, or maybe it was an earlier visit in like 2014. But he's not in the government now, and he's not in the Parliament now, I'm pretty sure.

MR. NUNES: Okay. So he's of particular interest to at least the Republicans in Congress. Are you aware that he was a source for the Democrats and the Clinton campaign's dirt that they dug up on the President and fed to the FBI?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I am not aware.

MR. NUNES: Okay. So I didn't think you were aware of that, but I wanted to make sure you knew that he is -- by witnesses who have testified before this committee, he's the source of that dirt that was then used -- you're familiar with -- you've heard of the Steele dossier, I assume?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I have.

MR. NUNES: Okay. So that is our real concern in Ukraine over the 2016 election. So I understand that you, as an Ambassador, you don't like to get involved in politics,

but the fact of the matter is the Ukrainians decided to get involved in politics and be, in almost all cases, supportive of the Democrats and helped to deliver dirt that was then used by the --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Mr. Nunes, the only comment I would make on that is that, again, according to this Politico document, which is similar to what you're describing, there were a couple of Ukrainians who did what you said.

When you say "Ukrainians," that paints a broad brush. And President -- the reason I raise this is that President Zelensky wants to make it very clear to us and to President Trump that it wasn't him and it wasn't his people.

MR. NUNES: Right. But at the time of the -- at the time when Mr. Giuliani and Republicans in Congress are raising these concerns about what was happening in Ukraine, you know, that's when the Mueller investigation is still ongoing, our probe is still ongoing, looking into getting to the bottom of FISA abuse and other matters.

So I know you don't want to get involved in politics, but those are still just ongoing concerns of the Congress. Thank you for your attendance today.

I'll yield to Mr. Jordan.

MR. JORDAN: Real quick if I could, Ambassador, on that last point. President Zelensky does want to clean up corruption. You know, he's been viewed as a reformer, but I

think you said earlier to Mr. Castor's questions that Mr. Avakov is still in the government. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is correct.

MR. JORDAN: And he has a pretty important position?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: He does.

MR. JORDAN: And he's the guy who said that President Trump, during the 2016 campaign, was -- I think he referred to him in social media postings as a clown and as worse than a terrorist. Is that accurate?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Is that what -- is that the quote out of this Politico document?

MR. JORDAN: It is.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: And he's currently in the government, Minister of Interior, in charge of the police in Ukraine. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: He is. He is. I suspect he would not say the same thing today that he said then.

MR. JORDAN: No, I understand that, but I just want to be clear.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: But 2016.

MR. JORDAN: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Ratcliffe has a couple.

MR. RATCLIFFE: Ambassador Taylor, my name is John Ratcliffe.

I want to read from -- direct you to your opening statement this morning, page 9, the bottom paragraph, and it reads: "Just days later, on August 27, Ambassador Bolton arrived in Kyiv and met with President Zelensky. During their meeting" --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, can I get you to hold on? I'm looking at a different one. Yeah, thank you.

MR. RATCLIFFE: Last paragraph, page 9.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, got it. Okay, met with. Yes.

MR. RATCLIFFE: "During their meeting, security assistance was not discussed -- amazingly, news of the hold did not leak out until August 29. I, on the other hand, was all too aware of and still troubled by the hold."

Have I read that correctly?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

MR. RATCLIFFE: Okay. It sounds like, from your statement today, that you were aware of the hold and troubled by it but that President Zelensky was not aware of it at that point in time.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is correct.

MR. RATCLIFFE: Okay. So, based on your knowledge, nobody in the Ukrainian Government became aware of a hold on military aid until 2 days later, on August 29th.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's my understanding.

MR. RATCLIFFE: That's your understanding. And that

would have been well over a month after the July 25th call between President Trump and President Zelensky.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. RATCLIFFE: So you're not a lawyer, are you, Ambassador Taylor?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I am not.

MR. RATCLIFFE: Okay. So the idea of a quid pro quo is it's a concept where there is a demand for action or an attempt to influence action in exchange for something else. And in this case, when people are talking about a quid pro quo, that something else is military aid.

So, if nobody in the Ukrainian Government is aware of a military hold at the time of the Trump-Zelensky call, then, as a matter of law and as a matter of fact, there can be no quid pro quo, based on military aid. I just want to be real clear that, again, as of July 25th, you have no knowledge of a quid pro quo involving military aid.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: July 25th is a week after the hold was put on the security assistance. And July 25th, they had a conversation between the two Presidents, where it was not discussed.

MR. RATCLIFFE: And to your knowledge, nobody in the Ukrainian Government was aware of the hold?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is correct.

MR. RATCLIFFE: Great. Thank you for clarifying.

I yield back.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The time of the minority has expired.

Let's break for lunch until 1:30. I want to remind members they are not to discuss the substance of the Ambassador's testimony. And we will resume at 1:30.

[Recess.]

[1:56 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: We're back on the record.

Ambassador, I wanted to just ask you a few followup questions to the questions you received from the minority, and then I want to go through some of your opening statement. Then I'll hand it over to Mr. Noble, who will go much more methodically than I will through your testimony and the timeline.

You were asked by my colleagues in the minority doesn't the U.S. have a legitimate interest in fighting corruption, and I think you would agree that we do. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is correct, Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: And in fact, Ambassador Yovanovitch was doing exactly that. She was urging the Ukrainians at every opportunity to fight corruption that had plagued Ukraine.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: And it came to your attention that part of the reason why people in Ukraine and maybe some in the hornets' nest or vipers' nest in the United States wanted her out was that her efforts to fight corruption were getting in the way of some potentially corrupt business deals they wanted to make happen. Is that a fair summary?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That could be the case. I don't know the direct links there, but there were people who were concerned that she was so tough on -- it would be hard for

them to do the kinds of deals that they wanted to do.

THE CHAIRMAN: Because she was fighting corruption in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, yes, and supporting reformers or other people in the government who were fighting corruption in Ukraine.

THE CHAIRMAN: And you can distinguish, can't you, between a legitimate interest in getting a country to fight corruption and an illegitimate interest in getting a foreign government to interfere in U.S. Presidential elections?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: There is a difference.

THE CHAIRMAN: And wouldn't you say that trying to get a foreign country to intervene in a U.S. Presidential election is not fighting corruption, it is in itself corruption?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, you're taking me beyond my area of expertise. Just the facts are what I can attest to, but the -- what I said earlier about institutions I think is -- the way to fight corruption is to fix the courts and fix the judges.

So it's an institutional rather than, as you point out, rather than individual cases, which may or may not get us to a reformed, less corrupt system.

THE CHAIRMAN: And one of the concerns you had, though, was that there were efforts being made through this irregular channel to get Ukraine to interfere in U.S. politics and the

next election, is that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The irregular channel seemed to focus on specific issues, specific cases, rather than the regular channel's focus on institution building. So the irregular channel, I think under the influence of Mr. Giuliani, wanted to focus on one or two specific cases, irrespective of whether it helped solve the corruption problem, fight the corruption problem.

THE CHAIRMAN: And those two cases you mentioned, the Burisma and the Bidens and the 2016 election, those were both individual investigations that were sought by Mr. Giuliani because he believed it would help his client, the President of the United States, right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's my understanding.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let me go through -- I want to ask you about the Politico article which minority counsel spent about a third of their time asking you about this article. Prior to today, had you ever read this article?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I had not.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you able to confirm in any way any of the allegations in the article?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned to Mr. Castor, I was surprised and disappointed to read what these Ukrainians were reported to have said and done.

THE CHAIRMAN: But you're not in a position to confirm

or deny whether the article is right, not right, half right, or anything of the sort?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: And this article didn't affect your decision-making at any time, because you were unaware of it?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I was unaware of it. It was 2 years ago.

THE CHAIRMAN: There are at least a couple issues that have been raised by your testimony. The first involves conditionality surrounding the desperately sought meeting between the two Presidents, desperately sought by the Ukrainians, that is.

And the second involves conditionality around military aid. So let me go through your testimony, if I could, and ask you about a few of those -- both of those issues.

On page 5 of your testimony, in the third paragraph, you say: "But during my subsequent communications with Ambassador Volker and Sondland, they relayed to me that the President, quote, "wanted to hear from Zelensky," unquote, before scheduling the meeting in the Oval Office. It was not clear to me what this meant.

Now, I take it, Ambassador, you used that word "before" deliberately, that is, they wanted to hear from Zelensky before they would schedule this meeting. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, at the time I think you said it wasn't clear to you what this meant.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is also correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: And in the two paragraphs below, you say: "I sensed something odd when Ambassador Sondland told me on June 28 that he did not wish to include most of the regular interagency participants in the call planned with President Zelensky later that day."

Why did you sense something odd about that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: He and I were on the phone talking about the timing of this call. This call had been set up. Obviously, when you're trying to get the head of state on a call, get President Zelensky on a call, you had to work through the timing. Was it convenient? Could he -- there may have had to be interpreters present. He had to be at the right phone. So we were working on when the meeting would happen.

On the phone, Ambassador Sondland told me that the timing was going to change, that the time of the phone call was going to change. And I asked him something like, shouldn't we let everybody else know who's supposed to be on this call? And the answer was, don't worry about it. Even his staff, I think, were not aware that the time had changed.

[2:02 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: And what was odd to you about that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: This suggested to me that there were the two channels. This suggested to me that the normal channel, where you would have staff on the phone call, was being cut out, and the other channel, of people who were working, again, toward a goal which I supported, which was having a meeting to further U.S.-Ukrainian relations, I supported, but that irregular channel didn't have a respect for or an interest in having the normal staff participate in this call with the head of state.

THE CHAIRMAN: So was this an early indication to you that these two channels were diverging?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It was.

THE CHAIRMAN: And the interests of the irregular channel, represented by Mr. Giuliani, may not be the same interests as the State Department and what was in the best interest of the United States?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That second part I came to believe. I'm not sure it was at this point. This is within a week, a week and a half, of me -- 10 days of me arriving there. And so I was still, maybe naively, but I was still of the view that I was on -- I was part of a team that might have several parts but we were moving in the same direction.

So it was not -- I think, Mr. Chairman, it was not yet.

That would come.

THE CHAIRMAN: But Ambassador Sondland made it clear not only that he didn't wish to include most of the regular interagency participants but also that no one was transcribing or monitoring the call as they added President Zelensky. What struck you as odd about that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Same concern. That is, in the normal, regular channel, the State Department operations center that was putting the call together would stay on the line, in particular when you were having a conversation with the head of state, they would stay on the line, transcribe, take notes so that there could be a record of the discussion with this head of state. It is an official discussion.

When he wanted to be sure that there was not, the State Department operations center agreed. And they told us, they said -- in response to his request, they said, we won't monitor and will not -- and we certainly won't transcribe because we're going to sign off.

THE CHAIRMAN: On the following page of your testimony, page 6, second paragraph, you testified: "By mid-July it was becoming clear to me that the meeting President Zelensky wanted was conditioned on the investigations of Burisma and alleged Ukrainian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections. It was also clear that this condition was driven by the irregular policy channel I had come to understand was guided

by Mr. Giuliani."

How had that become clear to you by mid-July?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: In the subsequent paragraphs, Mr. Chairman, I tried to walk through that conclusion, how I came to that conclusion.

THE CHAIRMAN: And when you -- I'll go through that with you. But when you say "conditioned on the investigations," I take it by that you mean, unless President Zelensky would agree to do these investigations of Burisma, meaning the Bidens, and Ukrainian interference in 2016, he wasn't going to get the White House meeting. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is correct. Mr. Yermak, President Zelensky's assistant, came back at one point -- I think I talk about it in here -- and asked to nail down a date first and then he would make the statement -- he would make the statement of the investigations.

You know, Kurt and Ambassador Sondland did not -- weren't able to make that offer, weren't able to nail down the date. But the point is, that was -- they saw that that was the condition.

THE CHAIRMAN: And, in fact, later on, they would insist that President Zelensky speak first. That is, until you say publicly you're going to do these two investigations we want for the President, you're not going to get that meeting. That was essentially the position that this irregular channel

took.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, my colleague in the minority asked you about "quid pro quo." And are you a lawyer?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I am not. I am not, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Because he asked you about the legal definition of "quid pro quo." So you're not in a position to talk about legal definitions?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I am definitely not in the position.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't speak Latin.

THE CHAIRMAN: And, of course, whether it meets a legal definition of "quid pro quo" or it doesn't is really irrelevant to what we're focused on here.

But it is your testimony that, hey, you don't make these public statements about these two political investigations we want, you're not getting this meeting -- you make these statements, you'll get the meeting; you don't make these statements, you won't. Was that your understanding of the state of affairs in July of 2019?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Further down on page 6 of your testimony, second-to-last paragraph, at the end of that paragraph, you state: "All that the OMB staff person" -- now we're talking about the military assistance.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Right.

THE CHAIRMAN: "All that the OMB staff person said was that the directive had come from the President to the Chief of Staff to OMB."

That is the directive not to provide the military assistance, or to hold it up. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: "In an instant, I realized that one of the key pillars of our strong support for Ukraine was threatened. The irregular policy channel was running contrary to the goals of longstanding U.S. policy."

What did you mean by that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Longstanding goal of U.S. policy would be to support Ukraine in its attempt to defend itself against the Russians. Part of that was security assistance. Security assistance had been very effective. It was weapons, it was training, it was the communications equipment, it was sustainables. It allowed Ukrainian soldiers to actually defend themselves.

That was longstanding U.S. policy. Even in the previous administration, the previous administration did not provide lethal weapons, but they did provide all this other -- so that was longstanding policy. To stop it, to hold it, for no apparent reason that I could see, was undercutting the longstanding U.S. policy.

THE CHAIRMAN: In the last paragraph on page 6, you say: "There followed a series of NSC-led interagency meetings, starting at the staff level and quickly reaching the level of Cabinet secretaries. At every meeting, the unanimous conclusion was that the security assistance should be resumed, the hold lifted."

I take it by that there was no dissent, no disagreement with that. Everyone thought that, from the point of view of U.S. national security and our ally fighting the Russians, that security assistance should be resumed without delay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Unanimous opinion of every level of interagency discussion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Was that it should resume without delay?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Without delay.

THE CHAIRMAN: And you go on in that paragraph to say: "My understanding was that the Secretaries of Defense and State, the CIA Director, and the National Security Advisor sought a joint meeting with the President to convince him to release the hold, but such a meeting was hard to schedule."

What do you deduce from that, that our ally is fighting with the Russians, but all of these agencies that support this can't get a meeting with the President to discuss it?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It turns out, Mr. Chairman, that those principals, as we call them, were on different trips at different times. I think this was also about the time of the

Greenland question, about purchasing Greenland, which took up a lot of energy in the NSC.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's disturbing for a whole different reason.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Different story. Different story.

But, no, the general point was, it was a scheduling issue, because they really wanted Secretary Esper to be there, for obvious reasons. Most of this assistance came through the Defense Department, and they wanted him to be there. He was traveling. There may have been an Afghanistan trip. I can't remember whether -- but the problem was getting the right people in the room at the same time.

There actually was a meeting on Afghanistan where all of the principals hoped to raise the Ukraine issue at the end of the Afghanistan meeting. Didn't happen.

All to say that there was a strong interest in having this meeting with the President to try to change the position.

THE CHAIRMAN: You go on to say, a couple paragraphs later, "In the same July 19 phone call, they gave me an account of the July 10 meeting with the Ukrainian officials at the White House. Specifically, they told me" -- and you're referring to Dr. Hill and Mr. Vindman, I believe --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: -- "that Ambassador Sondland had

connected 'investigations' with an Oval Office meeting for President Zelensky, which so irritated Ambassador Bolton that he abruptly ended the meeting, telling Dr. Hill and Mr. Vindman that they should have nothing to do with domestic politics."

Again, is this going to the conditionality of Ukraine having to do these investigations if they wanted the Oval Office meeting?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That was the implication of that connection, of the connection between the meeting and investigations.

THE CHAIRMAN: You go on to say, in the second-to-last paragraph, "Also during our July 19 call, Dr. Hill informed me that Ambassador Volker had met with Mr. Giuliani to discuss Ukraine. This caught me by surprise. The next day I asked Ambassador Volker about that meeting, but received no response."

How did you ask him about the meeting?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: By text message.

THE CHAIRMAN: And had he been pretty good about replying to you in the past?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Pretty good, but, again, he's also on the road a lot. And sometimes he's in an airplane. Sometimes I'll get a message back. Most times I get a message back, but not all the time.

THE CHAIRMAN: In this case, you got no reply at all, no matter when he got off an airplane or whatever took place thereafter?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't remember getting a response.

I think, at the same time, that was when I heard from Dr. Hill that Ambassador Volker had had a meeting with Mr. Giuliani, so that I got both bits of information the same time on, I think, the same meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN: Turning to page 8 of your testimony: "Also on July 20, I had a phone conversation with Mr. Danyliuk, during which he conveyed to me that President Zelensky did not want to be used as a pawn in a U.S. re-election campaign."

Do you remember what Mr. Danyliuk said and why he was concerned he was being used as a pawn or why President Zelensky was concerned he was being used as a pawn in a U.S. reelection campaign?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes. I think it was becoming clear to the Ukrainians that, in order to get this meeting that they wanted, they would have to commit to pursuing these investigations. And Mr. Danyliuk, at least, understood -- and I'm sure that he briefed President Zelensky, I'm sure they had this conversation -- believed that opening those investigations, in particular on Burisma, would have involved Ukraine in the 2020 election campaign. He did not want to do

that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Turning to page 9 of your testimony, second paragraph, about midway through: "A formal U.S. request to the Ukrainians to conduct an investigation based on violations of their own law struck me as improper, and I recommended to Ambassador Volker that we 'stay clear.'"

What struck you as improper about it?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It struck me as improper that the United States would be asking -- if the United States were to ask Ukraine to investigate an apparent violation of Ukrainian law, that would be improper.

If, on the other hand -- what is proper and what happens frequently is the United States goes to Ukraine and asks for their help to pursue an investigation of violations of American law, of U.S. law. That's what we have a mutual legal assistance treaty, an MLAT, for.

But this is different. This would be -- what Kurt was asking for was examples or precedent for asking the Ukrainians to investigate a violation of their own law.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, there were two things that were improper about this, weren't there? There was the one you're mentioning now, which is that it wasn't appropriate to ask Ukraine to investigate a violation of Ukrainian law, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: But it was also improper because the goal

of those investigations was to influence the U.S. election. Isn't that also the case?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: If you could turn to page 10 of your written testimony.

One of my colleagues in the minority asked you about, well, how could it be a quid pro quo if the Ukrainians didn't know that security assistance was withheld. But Ukraine found out it was being withheld, did they not?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: They did.

THE CHAIRMAN: And once they found out it was being withheld -- in the second paragraph of page 10 of your testimony, you state: "The same day that I sent my cable to the Secretary, August 29, Mr. Yermak contacted me and was very concerned, asking about the withheld security assistance. The hold that the White House had placed on the assistance had just been made public that day in a Politico story. At that point, I was embarrassed that I could give him no explanation for why it was withheld."

Why were you embarrassed by that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I was embarrassed because the United States, as the principal ally, the principal supporter for Ukraine, in general, but in particular in its fight with the Russians, was seen to be -- they found out that we had put a hold on the assistance that would help them fight the

Russians. And, at that point, I had nothing to tell them.

I mean, the obvious question was, "Why?" So Mr. Yermak and others were trying to figure out why this was, and they thought maybe, if they were to travel, if Mr. Yermak were to go to Washington to talk to someone here or -- the Defense Minister also contacted me later on. He wanted the same thing.

They thought that there must be some rational reason for this being held up, and they just didn't -- and maybe in Washington they didn't understand how important this assistance was to their fight and to their armed forces. And so maybe they could figure -- so they were just desperate. And I couldn't tell them. I didn't know and I didn't tell them, because we hadn't -- we hadn't -- there'd been no guidance that I could give them.

THE CHAIRMAN: And was it your suspicion at this point already that the assistance was being withheld potentially because of this help they wanted to get from the Ukrainians first?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: You know, Mr. Chairman, same kind of question about how it dawns on you. My next paragraph said it had not occurred to me that the hold on security assistance could be related to the investigations. As of that time, it hadn't. I hadn't put those dots together. I hadn't connected those dots.

The next couple -- the next week, from the discussion on September 1st through about September 7th, it became clearer.

THE CHAIRMAN: So when you're asked about this by Mr. Yermak on August 29th, you're embarrassed because you hadn't been able to get an answer as to why the aid was withheld and you felt it desperately ought to be provided.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm a representative of the United States Government out there, and he asked me a perfectly legitimate question, why are you holding up this assistance, and I couldn't tell him.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, at this point, when you couldn't tell them, they were aware of other asks the President had made in that call, right? You know that now, although you didn't at the time.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: On -- correct, on the meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN: And even though the Ukrainians learned on August 29th that there had been a hold placed, they certainly knew up through this whole period of June, July, August that they hadn't yet received the aid, right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The aid -- so, right. The aid had, by and large, not been put out to contract.

It's 1-year money, by the way. If we can make it 2-year money, that would be great. This is a little plug here for 2-year money.

But it was 1-year money. It expired on the 30th of

September. And it was late in coming in the fiscal year, and so it had not been obligated. It hadn't been put into contracts yet. So, right, they -- I don't think they suspected anything during that time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. But you said, in the middle of page 10, "It had still not occurred to me that the hold on security assistance could be related to the 'investigations.' That, however, would soon change."

So let me ask you about when that began to change.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: In the middle of the following paragraph, you testify, "Indeed, I received a readout of the Pence-Zelensky meeting" -- that would be the meeting in Poland.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: On the 1st of September.

THE CHAIRMAN: On the 1st of September. You received a readout "over the phone from Mr. Morrison, during which he told me President Zelensky had opened the meeting by asking the Vice President about security cooperation."

So this was -- if he opened the meeting with this, this was foremost on President Zelensky's mind?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, the final paragraph on page 10: "During this same phone call I had with Mr. Morrison, he went on to describe a conversation Ambassador Sondland had with

Mr. Yermak at Warsaw. Ambassador Sondland told Mr. Yermak that the security assistance money would not come until President Zelensky committed to pursue the Burisma investigation." And the Burisma investigation, again, is the one involving the Bidens.

Now, again, I want to ask you about conditionality. If Mr. Morrison told you that, according to Mr. Sondland, that Mr. Sondland had communicated to the Ukrainians, to Mr. Yermak, security assistance money would not come until President Zelensky committed to pursue the Burisma investigation, the one is being conditioned on the other, is it not?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: You go on, at the end of that paragraph, top of page 11: "This was the first time I had heard that the security assistance -- not just the White House meeting -- was conditioned on the investigations."

So both of these things you now had learned were conditioned on these two political investigations, right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: That is, but for the Ukrainians' willingness to do these two investigations, they were not only not going to get the White House meeting, they were also not going to get the military assistance.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is what Mr. Sondland told

Mr. Yermak.

THE CHAIRMAN: So that is what's communicated by the U.S. Ambassador to the EU, charged with a Ukrainian responsibility to the Ukrainians, about what they have to do if they want to get the White House meeting and U.S. military assistance.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The only qualification I would put on that is that Ambassador Sondland was not the principal United States representative to Ukraine. Ukraine's not in the EU. He had this irregular, informal commission from President Trump based on May 23rd.

THE CHAIRMAN: But this is someone, an ambassador --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Ambassador.

THE CHAIRMAN: -- high rank --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: -- having direct communication with the President --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: He had direct communication with the President, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: -- and he is communicating to the Ukrainians that if they don't do these political investigations that would help Mr. Trump in the next election, they won't get the meeting with the President and they won't get military assistance. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: If I can go to the second full paragraph on page 11 of your testimony.

"Ambassador Sondland also told me that he now recognized that he had made a mistake by earlier telling the Ukrainian officials to whom he spoke that a White House meeting with President Zelensky was dependent on a public announcement of investigations -- in fact, Ambassador Sondland said, 'everything' was dependent on such an announcement, including security assistance."

Meaning that he had understated the matter before. Am I right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: He thought it would -- he realized that it had been a mistake to condition it only on the meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN: That it was also -- the military assistance was also going to be conditioned on the commitment by Ukraine to do these two political investigations.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: You go on to say in that paragraph, "He said" -- he, Ambassador Sondland -- "said that President Trump wanted President Zelensky 'in a public box' by making a public statement about ordering such investigations."

By that, do you mean, Ambassador, that President Trump wanted Zelensky to have to make a public commitment, to get into a public box -- that is, commit publicly to these two

investigations -- before he was going to get either the meeting or the assistance?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's what Ambassador Sondland told me.

THE CHAIRMAN: So it wasn't even enough that they make a private commitment; Ambassador Sondland was saying that Ukraine and President Zelensky needed to make a public statement for the President.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: In the next paragraph, you say, "In the same September 1 call, I told Ambassador Sondland that President Trump should have more respect for another head of state and that what he described was not in the interest of either President Trump or President Zelensky."

What did you mean that he should have more respect for another head of state?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: What Ambassador Sondland was telling me that President Trump wanted, and, again, presumably based on a phone call between Ambassador Sondland and President Trump, was that President Trump wanted a public statement from President Zelensky. And that struck me to be bad for both, that it would not turn out well for both.

But, in answer to your question, Mr. Chairman, that would show disrespect to another head of state. If President Trump is telling you, I want you to go out and publicly say

you're going to do this, that was disrespectful, in my view, to another head of state.

THE CHAIRMAN: Disrespectful in the sense that he not only wanted this illicit bargain but he wanted him to make it public that he was going to -- in other words, that he couldn't trust the Ukrainian President to honor a private commitment to do these two political investigations, he needed it to be public?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I didn't go that far.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I mean, that was not in my mind, about public/private. It was more the direction from one President to another President. Two sovereign states having a conversation, a respectful conversation, you would not have one telling the other to go out and make a public --

THE CHAIRMAN: In the next paragraph -- well, let me turn to the following page, page 12, of your testimony.

The second-to-last paragraph, in the middle of the paragraph, you testify: "Ambassador Sondland said that he talked to President Zelensky and Mr. Yermak and told them that, although this was not a quid pro quo, if President Zelensky did not 'clear things up' in public, we would be at a 'stalemate.' I understood a 'stalemate' to mean that Ukraine would not receive the much-needed military assistance."

So you understood that, unless President Zelensky made this public statement, they weren't going to get the military assistance.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: On page 13, the middle paragraph, you're talking about the text messages, and you testified: "Before these text messages, during our call on September 8, Ambassador Sondland tried to explain to me that President Trump is a businessman. When a businessman is about to sign a check to someone who owes him something, he said, the businessman asks that person to pay up before signing the check."

Now, when Ambassador Sondland described to you this signing of the check, did you take it by that he was referring to signing the check for the military assistance?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: You go on in the next sentence to say, "Ambassador Volker used the same terms several days later when we were together at the Yalta European Strategy Conference."

Did he use the same "signing the check" term?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Did that strike you as remarkable, that that same analogy was used by both ambassadors?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No. It struck me -- I concluded

that they had had a conversation.

THE CHAIRMAN: And that they both understood that if President Trump was going to sign the check for military assistance then they needed to pay up first and that pay-up was a public declaration of these two political investigations?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That was the parallel.

THE CHAIRMAN: You go on to say, "I argued to both that the explanation made no sense: the Ukrainians did not 'owe' President Trump anything, and holding up security assistance for domestic political gain was 'crazy,' as I had said in my text message."

Well, I think that's self-explanatory.

I'm going to hand it over to Mr. Noble.

Oh, I'm sorry. Oh. Yeah. Okay.

Well, actually, I'm happy to go to members, if they would like to ask some questions.

Mr. Quigley.

MR. QUIGLEY: Ambassador, at any time did anyone detail what Mr. Giuliani's role was in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, sir.

MR. QUIGLEY: How did you keep aware of his activities? Did anyone report to you? Did anyone at all tell you what he was doing? The Ukrainians, for example?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, sir. The work on these

investigations, to make commitments to pursue these investigations, was done by Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Sondland. What I knew was that Ambassador -- that they both, to a greater and lesser degree, extent, had conversations with Mr. Giuliani. I don't know the nature of those conversations.

MR. QUIGLEY: You described, I believe, that there were divergent functions taking place, official and unofficial, and the Giuliani roles were unofficial. Had you ever seen, in all your years working in the field that you do, someone operate in this manner?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, I have seen constructive input coming from outside the government into the government decisionmaking process. In particular -- in every case, that was to push forward, on trying to find ideas coming from the outside, to push forward an agreed policy goal or objective.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did they typically work together with the officials?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: They typically worked together. That's why you -- yeah.

MR. QUIGLEY: They were aware of what each other was doing --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Absolutely.

MR. QUIGLEY: -- and they knew each other's role?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Absolutely. And they can be -- often can be. I mean, there's things called -- at the Institute of Peace, we do some what we call track two, which is the unofficial -- track one is the official dialogue between governments. Track two is unofficial, where you have former members of the government talking to former members of another government. And they come up with ideas that they feed into the track one, to the formal, and they push that forward. That's common practice.

MR. QUIGLEY: And, finally, did the Ukrainians ever ask you about his role and what he was doing, or did --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, sir. About Giuliani's role?

MR. QUIGLEY: Right.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, sir.

MR. QUIGLEY: They never talked to you about it?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Not that I recall.

MR. QUIGLEY: Very good. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I take it from your testimony, Ambassador, that while there are appropriate cases to have that second track, where the second track is ultimately coordinated with the first track, that's not really what happened here.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, it's unusual. There was some coordination. Occasionally I would be included in some of these discussions. I was in the first track, in the

regular track, and as you could see from the emails, or the texts, I was included on some of those. So there was some coordination among that.

THE CHAIRMAN: You know, I guess the more accurate way to ask the question is, in this actual case, not like prior track two discussions, the irregular channel came to co-opt the regular channel in pursuit of an objective that was not in U.S. interests. Is that fair to say?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: In one aspect of the regular channel -- that is, in the security assistance component of the regular channel. The regular channel is all of our interactions with Ukraine, and one of the very important components of that interaction with Ukraine is the security assistance. And the security assistance got blocked by this second channel.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, not just the one, because it was also the meeting, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The meeting as well. Yes, sir. The meeting as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Swalwell.

MR. SWALWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Ambassador.

Do you have any reason to believe, Ambassador, that anytime during your communications with Ambassador Sondland that Ambassador Sondland misrepresented the directives or

intentions of President Trump?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No.

MR. SWALWELL: How would you assess the character of Ambassador Sondland? You've assessed Mr. Volker's earlier. Can you make the same assessment for Ambassador Sondland?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I can do facts, you know.

MR. SWALWELL: Based on your facts, how would you assess his integrity in this irregular process that you engaged in?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I have no reason to believe that he was not acting with integrity.

MR. SWALWELL: What was your concern?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: My concern about the whole second track was that, apparently at the instigation of Mr. Giuliani, Ambassador Sondland and Ambassador Volker were conditioning an important component of our assistance on what would ultimately be a political action.

MR. SWALWELL: And, Ambassador, you were asked earlier about President Trump characterizing this to Ambassador Sondland as "no quid pro quo, no quid pro quo." But as you described this here, the conditions that were laid out to you, at least through Ambassador Sondland relaying President Trump's wishes, you're familiar with the phrase, if it looks like a duck and it walks like a duck, you can say it's not a duck, but it's a duck?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, I can just tell you the

facts. You've stated them. That is, apparently, President -- well, Ambassador Sondland told me many times that President Trump said it was not a quid pro quo. I observed that, in order to move forward on the security assistance, the Ukrainians were told by Ambassador Sondland that they had to pursue these investigations.

MR. SWALWELL: I was moved by page 8's description of your trip to Donbas, and I think you included that for a reason, because you also expressed the concern that 13,000 Ukrainians have been killed in the war.

Can you just talk about the human element here and what it means to Ukrainians every single day that goes by where we have authorized aid, they don't see it in their bank account, and Ukrainians continue to lose their lives, and what that means for our security and just their livelihood?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, the Ukrainians are remarkably focused on the casualties in the east.

When Senator Johnson and Senator Murphy visited, about this time, we had a meeting with the Defense Minister. And it was the first meeting of the day. We went over there. They invited us to a ceremony that they have in front of their ministry every day. Every day, they have this ceremony. And it's about a half-an-hour ceremony where soldiers in formation, the Defense Minister, families of soldiers who have been killed are there.

And the selection of which soldiers are honored, which soldiers who had been killed are honored, is on the date of it. So whatever today's date is, you know, if we were there today, on the 22nd of October, the families of those soldiers who were killed on any 22nd of October in the previous 5 years would be there. And --

MR. SWALWELL: Is it fair to say that the sooner they would have received the aid from the United States, the fewer the casualties would've been?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: So here's what we could say. This is -- I don't want to overstate this. Because it wasn't that the holdup of this particular set of equipment and weapons and radar and communications and vehicles, that that led to, the week that I was there or even any particular -- we can't make that connection.

What we can say is that that radar and weapons and sniper rifles, communication, that saves lives. It makes the Ukrainians more effective. It might even shorten the war. That's what our hope is, to show that the Ukrainians can defend themselves and the Russians, in the end, will say, "Okay, we're going to stop." It's that saving of life. That's how we would save lives.

MR. SWALWELL: Thank you.

Yield back.

THE CHAIRMAN: Our time has expired. Forty-five minutes

to the minority.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q In your statement, on page 2, you mention that, when you were serving outside of government during the Obama administration, after the Russian invasion, you joined two other former Ambassadors to Ukraine in urging the Obama administration officials at the State Department, Defense Department, and other agencies to provide lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine in order to deter further Russian aggression?

A Yes.

Q Who were the two other officials?

A Ambassador John Herbst and Ambassador Steve Pifer.

Q What was the objection to providing lethal defensive weapons at the time?

A The objection was that it might provoke the Russians.

Q But you didn't think that was a good argument?

A I didn't. I thought that the Russians had already been provoked and they had invaded Ukraine.

Q Uh-huh.

Overall, once you joined, you know, the administration in Kyiv, were you happy with the package of aid?

A I was happy that we were providing aid. It could always be more. But I was glad it was coming. I would've

been very unhappy if it didn't come.

Q But the Trump administration had a package of aid to the Ukraine --

A Yes.

Q -- including lethal defensive weapons --

A Yes.

Q -- financial assistance --

A I was very happy about that.

Q Okay.

A Yes.

Q And that was an improvement of years prior?

A It was.

Q Was it a substantial improvement?

A It was a substantial improvement, in that this administration provided Javelin antitank weapons. These are defensive weapons, and they deter, and I believe successfully deter, Russians from trying to grab more territory, to push forward any further tank attack, number one. So there was a military capability.

There was also a very strong political message that said that the Americans are willing to provide more than blankets. I mean, that was the previous. And these weapons are serious weapons. They will kill Russian tanks. So these were serious weapons. It was a demonstration that we support Ukraine.

Q Uh-huh. And "the Americans are willing to provide more than blankets," was that a characterization of the aid in the prior administration?

A The prior administration had been willing to give aid, but "blankets" was just kind of the more derogatory version of it, but it was nonlethal weapons. So there was communications equipment, there were vehicles, there were maybe some rations, there were blankets, there were night-vision goggles. So it was a significant package, but it stopped short of weapons.

Q On page 5 of your statement, right around the June 27th-28th timeframe --

A Yes, sir.

Q -- you stated that you sensed something odd when Ambassador Sondland told me that he did not wish to include most of the regular interagency participants on the upcoming call with President Zelensky.

A Correct.

Q Who was excluded from that call?

A At a minimum, his staff in Brussels. It may have also included people on the Department of Energy staff, because Secretary Perry was on the call. I don't know which -- I don't think the State Department -- I don't know. I don't think State Department was even planning to be on the call, but I -- which is another question, why would that not

be, but that's --

Q Okay. Was the National Security Council staff on that call?

A No.

Q Would they ordinarily be on such a call?

A Not necessarily.

Q Okay.

You state that, before President Zelensky joined the call, Ambassador Volker advised that he planned to meet with President Zelensky in Toronto on July 2nd and discuss with President Zelensky, you know, how to position Ukraine for this White House meeting?

A It was to prepare President Zelensky for the phone call, which we were trying to schedule, which, in turn, would've been a step for the meeting -- would've been a step towards --

Q Okay.

A -- the scheduling of the meeting. Yes.

Q And did you have a concern about that?

A I didn't.

Q About what Ambassador Volker would say in Canada?

A I didn't have a concern. As I think I've mentioned, I didn't, at that time, understand what the code was for investigations.

Q Uh-huh.

A And I don't even think, at that point -- I don't think Kurt said anything about investigations on that call or even on the prep call. So that call, that day, there were two parts; one was Americans only, and then they introduced President Zelensky. And it was in the preparatory call with Americans only that Kurt said he was going to have this conversation with President Zelensky.

Q Right. But Ambassador --

A And --

Q Oh, I'm sorry.

A No, go ahead.

Q "But Ambassador Volker noted that he would relay that President Trump wanted to see rule of law, transparency, but also, specifically, cooperation on investigations to 'get to the bottom of things.'"

A Good point. You're exactly right. So I stand corrected. He did mention investigations --

Q Okay.

A -- in that prep part.

Q And he indicated that this would be a topic in Toronto in a couple days. Is that correct?

A In about 3 days, yes.

Q And did you have any concerns about that?

A I didn't. As I say, I didn't know what "investigations" referred to at this point.

Q Okay.

A You know, I was starting to get suspicious.

Q Okay. But once President Zelensky joined the call, there was no discussion of that?

A There was not.

Q At the top of page 6, you state you reported on this call to Deputy Assistant Secretary Kent and you wrote a memo for the record dated June 30th that summarized the Zelensky call?

A Yes.

Q Did the memo you prepared have anything in it about the pre-call?

A No.

Q Okay. Did you communicate with Kent anything about the pre-call?

A I don't think so. I don't think so. I'm not 100 percent sure.

Q Now, did he ask you to write the memo or --

A He suggested that I write the memo.

So this is on the 30th of June. I got there on the 17th of June. I'd had a previous call on the 18th of June when I first arrived, and then there was this.

So I was, as I said in the testimony, realizing that there are these two channels. At the time, I thought it was beneficial -- benign or even beneficial to have these two,

because they could reinforce each other, or one could at least support the other.

But I thought it was -- it struck me -- the reason I wanted to be sure that Deputy Assistant Secretary George Kent knew about it was he's clearly and solely in the official channel, the normal channel.

It wasn't at all clear to me from that phone call that anyone from the State Department, the normal channel, as you just pointed out -- no State, no NSC -- was on the call. I just wanted to be sure that they knew that this other one was going on. It could still be benign or even beneficial, but it just seemed to me that there ought to be knowledge of the two.

Q Okay. And so you discussed that with Kent?

A I did.

Q Do you remember what he said to you?

A I just remember him saying two things. One is, you better write it down --

Q Okay.

A -- which I did. And two, he said, Bill, I'm glad you're out there, I'm glad that you're there, that you can be the link between these two what we're now calling channels.

Q Okay.

So did you write the memo about the call but also the pre-call?

A I wrote the memo about the call. I'll have to go back and look at --

Q Okay.

A So the memo is in the documents that I submitted to the State Department, so they will be available sooner or later to you.

Q Possibly later.

A This is up to Secretary Pompeo.

THE CHAIRMAN: We're hoping sooner.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q By mid-July, you write, it was becoming clear that the meeting with Zelensky was conditioned on the investigations of Burisma and alleged Ukrainian interference in the 2016 elections.

MR. SMITH: Which page, again, was that?

MR. CASTOR: It's the very next paragraph.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yeah. Yeah.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q And so my question is, what happened in between that time period?

A So, actually, what I meant to imply -- what I meant to suggest was that, right after -- by mid-July, it was becoming clear. And so, on the two paragraphs to follow that, Mr. Castor, I tried to describe what led me to make it -- why it was becoming clear to me that that was the case.

Q Uh-huh.

A And that is the -- oh, I'm sorry. I've gone now to page --

Q We're on page 6.

A You're on page 6, but I've jumped in order to answer that question about why mid-July. It's on the 19th. You have to skip ahead until we get to the paragraph that starts, "In the same July 19 phone call," which on yours is on page 7 in the middle.

This is a readout of the July 10th meeting, where you had Danyliuk and Yermak, Bolton, Sondland, Volker.

Q Right.

A And it's at that one where Sondland connected investigations to an Oval Office meeting, Bolton walked out.

Q And you learned that from Fiona Hill?

A And Alex Vindman, yes.

Q Okay. How frequently did you speak with Hill and Vindman? Was it on an as-needed basis --

A Yes.

Q -- or was it a regular schedule?

A No. As needed.

Q Okay. Any idea why it took so long for the time period between the 10th and the 19th?

A The reason -- I remember it well about the 19th. The 18th was the NSC meeting where the hold on security

assistance was first --

Q Okay.

A -- broached. Troubling. I called these two NSC people the next day. And on that one, they gave me the readout of the July 10th.

Q Had you received a readout from Volker about the meeting?

A About the July 10th meeting?

Q Yeah.

A I don't think so.

Q Okay.

A Yeah. I'll have to check my notes.

Q Have you ever had a readout from Volker about what happened in the July 10 meeting? Or is your only information coming from Dr. Hill and Lieutenant Colonel Vindman?

A It might just be from that source of information. I don't remember having a conversation --

Q Okay.

A -- about these other ones. Danyliuk was, obviously, in that meeting. Yermak was in that meeting. And I've had multiple conversations with them, more often than, actually, with --

Q Did anyone relate to you that Danyliuk was getting way into the weeds with Ambassador Bolton and it was not a long meeting in --

A No, no. Actually, it was -- no. What I heard from Vindman and Hill was that the first part of that meeting went well. Substantive discussions: security, national security, both sides, energy security.

And, apparently, according to them, their boss, John Bolton was appreciating the substance of that meeting. And, in their description, when Ambassador Sondland raised investigations in the meeting, that triggered Ambassador Bolton's antenna, political antenna, and he said, we don't do politics here.

Q Uh-huh.

A And so he ended the meeting.

Q Okay. Did anyone provide you a readout that Danyliuk was talking about establishing new types of institutions in the Ukrainian Government?

A I don't remember that.

Q Okay.

A No.

Q And so no one related to you that Danyliuk was getting into the weeds with Bolton?

A No.

Q On July 10th -- going back to the paragraph on page 6 beginning with, "On July 10" --

A Yes.

Q -- you met with Zelensky's Chief of Staff and

then-foreign policy advisor, who had advised you they had heard from Mr. Giuliani?

A Ah. Yes. This is the one where I mentioned that they had heard this via -- they had heard from Giuliani via the Prosecutor General Lutsenko.

Q Okay. And you relayed your concerns to Counselor Brechbuhl?

A Brechbuhl. That's correct.

Q What was his feedback?

A Again, the Counselor to the Secretary is focused a lot -- I won't say mainly, but focused a lot -- on personnel issues. And yet it was he who -- I had two meetings with him, one just before the one with the Secretary in May. And it was he who said, "Look, Bill, call me anytime if you've got questions or problems. I can check with the Secretary and" -- so that's why I called him.

Q So he is someone who had great influence with the Secretary, right?

A He is very close -- he and the Secretary go back a long ways.

Q Okay. So if you, you know, communicated your concerns to Brechbuhl --

A Yes.

Q -- on July 10th --

A Yes.

Q -- wasn't that, in effect, a signal that your concerns before you took the post were coming to fruition?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And did Brechbuhl have a -- did he recognize that? And did he realize that this was part of having your back and --

A He did. He did.

Q -- the other commitments that were made to you?

A And I think I talked to him a couple of times along these lines. And, again, it comes up when we talk about the security assistance. You know, I called him that time as well. He said he would check. So he was responsive. It wasn't in his area of -- he didn't do this day-to-day. So he had to talk to other people about -- other people in the State Department about this.

Q And then the next event --

MR. JORDAN: Can I jump in for just a second?

MR. CASTOR: Sure.

MR. JORDAN: I want to go back to the July 19th call you had with Dr. Hill and Lieutenant Colonel Vindman. You said, Ambassador, you initiated that call?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, I think so. I know it was on my -- I remember seeing it on the schedule. So, again, the troubling NSC meeting was the 18th.

MR. JORDAN: Understood.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: And the 19th, it may have been a prescheduled call. I can't remember if I initiated it or not. Was that the question?

MR. JORDAN: If it was prescheduled with the NSC, would Dr. Hill or Mr. Vindman have scheduled that call with you? Who would've scheduled that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I can't remember who did it.

MR. JORDAN: You get to Ukraine on June 17th. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

MR. JORDAN: All right. So you're there 1 month. June 17th and July 19th, how many conversations did you have with Dr. Hill and/or Lieutenant Colonel Vindman in that month time period?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: This might have been the first one.

MR. JORDAN: This is the first one?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: This could have been the first one.

MR. JORDAN: And you don't know who initiated it?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The only reason I'm hesitating -- I know that I was concerned about the 18th call.

MR. JORDAN: I understand.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: And they were on that.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: And I know that it was actually on my schedule. Sometimes -- well, I remember seeing it on the

schedule. So sometimes when there's kind of a spur-of-the-moment call it doesn't show up on my schedule. But this was on my schedule. So it was scheduled to happen the following day. I can't remember if it had been previously scheduled and I just took advantage of it or if I scheduled it right then because I wanted to talk about the 18th meeting.

MR. JORDAN: If it had been previously scheduled, do you know why it would've been previously scheduled?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. So would you guess it originated with the NSC calling you?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I can't speculate. I can't remember.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. But this is the only call you've had with him in the month that you've been there as Ambassador?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I think that's correct.

MR. JORDAN: And just to go back where our counselor was, it was both about your concerns that you had learned the day before, relative to security assistance dollars --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: -- and then they volunteered to tell you about their July 10th meeting, right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: And did you talk to them about your

July 10th meeting in Ukraine with the individuals you had met with, Mr. Zelensky's Chief of Staff? Did you fill him in on that as well?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't think I did.

MR. JORDAN: Is it fair to say the bulk of the conversation was Dr. Hill and Lieutenant Colonel Vindman relating to you what happened at the July 10th meeting here in the United States?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The first part of the conversation was about what we had all heard the day before --

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: -- about this security assistance being held up. And none of the three of us had any idea why.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: And then they went into this other discussion about the July 10th meeting.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. Any idea which took the bulk of the time of the phone call?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm sure the July 10th -- discussion of the July 10th meeting took the bulk of the call.

MR. JORDAN: The bulk of the time was on this meeting that took place at the White House.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

Steve, thank you.

[3:05 p.m.]

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q During this time period, did Volker ever talk to you about his view of whether the aid would be released?

A Yes, I can't remember specific conversations, but I remember we had conversations, and we all agreed that it would be released. We were all sure it would be released. The fact is we want -- we were hoping that it would be resolved, released, decided, reversed, lifted, whatever the verb is, before the Ukrainians heard about it because we didn't want to be in the position I found myself later on being embarrassed and not be able to say. So we hoped that it would be fixed, and they would never hear about it, and we wouldn't have to explain.

Q And from time to time, this happens with aid. It gets held up, right?

A Sometimes aid gets held up. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q For whatever reason?

A Mr. Castor, I don't know. So I've been in the aid business for a long time.

Q I mean, you know you can snicker about this, but --

A No, no, no, I'm not.

Q You're not snickering at this. Let me be clear, you're not snickering. But it's been related to us that this happens from time to time. Aid gets held up for whatever

reason --

A So I'm trying to -- Mr. Castor, I've done a bunch of aid stuff as I mentioned here. Aid can be held up when, you know, if there is a CR or something, you know, if there's a congressional -- it could be a congressional hold. Yes, so there are instances that aid gets held up.

Q Okay. But in this instance, everyone was aligned you thought that we ought to work through this and the aid will be lift -- the hold will be lifted.

A Because I was convinced, and all indications were that everyone in the interagency community that had anything to do with this aid was in support of that aid flowing.

Q And bipartisan Members of Congress?

A And bipartisan Members of Congress.

Q And, ultimately, the hold was lifted, right?

A And, ultimately, the hold was lifted on the 11th of September.

Q In total, the Ukrainians knew about this for what about 10 days?

A They knew that there was a hold on the 29th, and they knew it was lifted on the 11th of September.

Q Twelve days?

A [Nonverbal response.]

During that time, I got a lot of questions about it.

Q Fair enough. During the July 19th call, was it

discussed the status of the upcoming call between the Presidents? There was a July 25th call between President Trump and Zelensky that's attracted some attention?

A You're talking about with Fiona Hill and Alex Vindman?

Q Right.

A I don't recall. I don't think so. I think actually I could check my text messages. Scheduling that call was a challenge.

Q Okay.

A And it went back and forth in terms of time. So I don't think I had a conversation with Vindman and Hill about that at that point.

Q What was NSC's position on the call?

A They opposed it.

Q Okay. And so Dr. Hill opposed it?

A Certainly her boss opposed it.

Q So Ambassador Bolton opposed the call?

A He did.

Q Okay?

A And that was clear from the July 10th meeting.

Q So whoever set up the call --

A Yes.

Q -- it wasn't Ambassador Bolton, right?

A I think that's right.

Q So you didn't know anything about the call on the 19th, and then it was scheduled on the 25th?

A You say I didn't know about the call? I --

Q You were talking to Fiona Hill. I'm going back to the 19th?

A Yeah, yeah.

Q You're on the phone with Dr. Hill and Lieutenant Colonel Vindman?

A And we were talking about two things.

Q Two things.

A We were talking about why this assistance was put on the day before, and we're talking about -- and they are relating the discussion of July 10th with Danyliuk and Bolton.

Q Right.

A And the call was not yet locked in, scheduled.

Q Okay.

A And it was going back and forth -- there was some talk. There was some -- as I recall, there was, you know -- it was on and off, the call's on, the call's off. It is scheduled for here. Not going to happen. I could go back through the records if you want.

Q Okay. To the extent that you can recall --

A Yes.

Q -- when did you then learn that this July 25th call

would be scheduled?

A I -- well, we were trying to schedule it for about a week in advance, that whole week. As I say, back and forth, yes, no, this time, that time. So that was -- I was doing it on the Ukrainian side and trying to go back to the -- trying to keep the NSC advised as to what was going on. And I think it was kind of -- it may have been about the day before that it was actually locked down, so about the 24th.

Q Okay. And did you find out why --

A Why?

Q -- the change.

A No. As you just made the point, Ambassador Bolton was not interested in having -- did not want to have the call because he thought it was going to be a disaster. He thought that there could be some talk of investigations or worse on the call. Turned out he was right. So he didn't want to have the call. I think it was the Chief of Staff who helped schedule that call.

Q Mr. Mulvaney?

A Mr. Mulvaney.

Q Okay. Do you remember when you finally found out that the call was happening and you had to go alert the Ukrainians?

A We were alerting the Ukrainians back and forth. We had given them a couple of head fakes all the way through

about this is going to happen; this is not going to happen. And probably the day before. Now the other thing is the White House situation room can work directly with the Ukrainians as well. Most of the time, they would come through me, and I would kind of set the stage. But when it gets to the actual final hours of its schedule, they will -- they can call directly to the Ukrainians.

Q Okay. Also, on the July 19th call, Dr. Hill informed you that Volker had met with Giuliani to discuss Ukraine?

A Yes.

Q Was that the first time that you knew Volker and Giuliani were talking about?

A You know, Mr. Castor it was about that time -- I was looking at my notes last night or the night before -- it was about that time that I heard from Dr. Hill that Kurt mentioned -- Kurt sends a text that I have to check to see if I was on, but in some text that Kurt sent about this time, he said: I had a good breakfast with Mr. Giuliani. Maybe you have already pointed this out earlier today. Was that right? It was in one of your test --

Q I don't think I pointed that out, but fair enough.

A So, so here's what I know. Ambassador Volker sent that text to at least Ambassador Sondland and maybe -- maybe the three-way -- I can't remember.

Q Uh-huh.

A But he said, had a good breakfast with Mr. Giuliani. And oh, then he also -- I think I was not on this one, but I've seen it in some document that says that had Kurt's note back to Rudy Giuliani saying: Thanks for the good breakfast and had a good time.

So it was about that same time. And I think that's the same contact that Fiona Hill was talking about, about the same time.

Q Okay. Did you have any direct conversations with Volker about that or just the text?

A The text that I think I was asked and I didn't get a response.

Q Okay. So you never had any idea what Volker was communicating to Giuliani?

A Correct.

Q Also, on July 20th, which is the next day, you sent or you had a phone conversation with Danyliuk where the discussion of being a pawn had come up.

A Yes.

Q Did you communicate that concern to anybody, such as Brechbuhl or Kent?

A I did it -- I expressed the concern to Volker and Sondland, as I said here. I don't recall going to Brechbuhl or Kent.

Q Okay. But that would have been another fact -- if you had gone to Brechbuhl, that would have been another fact that pointed to the concerns that you discussed before you took the post?

A Yeah. The whole thrust of this irregular channel was to get these investigations, which Danyliuk and presumably Zelensky were resisting because they didn't want to be seen to be interfering but also to be a pawn.

Q Right.

A Right.

Q But you said the irregular channel is -- it happens.

A It does.

Q And it can be okay?

A It can be okay. It can be helpful. In this case -- yeah.

Q But at some point, the irregular channel in your view became a problem?

A It did.

Q And you had the facts from Fiona Hill and Volker and that side, and then now you're getting the facts from the Ukraine side?

A Correct.

Q And I'm wondering, at this point, did it crystalize to you that the irregular path was going to be more of a

concern than you anticipated?

A Yes. The general way I have described it is, during the month of July, it began to be clear --

Q Okay.

A -- that this was a problem.

Q Did you -- I know you sent the cable on the 29th after you spoke with Ambassador Bolton, but at any point in time between the 20th and learning that, did you have any official State Department higher up discussions?

MR. GOLDMAN: Can you clarify 20th and 29th, which?

MR. CASTOR: July. Do you follow?

MR. GOLDMAN: I don't think there was a cable on July 29th.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: August 29th.

MR. CASTOR: August 29th.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Which makes your point?

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q So this is what I'm getting to, is, what did you do between now and the 29th to alert Mr. -- Counselor Brechbuhl or Kent or somebody that this is becoming a problem, this is irregular?

A So before the cable -- so August when it was becoming -- July, I started to identify the problem of the second channel, in particular with regard to the meeting. So then the assistance gets put on hold, and that gets to be --

goes a month, goes from July 18th into the middle of August and still is not resolved. It is attempting to be resolved, and there were descriptions to me from Tim Morrison of how they tried to get the principals in the same room, couldn't do it, schedules, et cetera. I then -- I did, I called Counselor Brechbuhl, talked to John Bolton --

Q This is much later.

A This is in August.

Q Okay.

A This is in August.

Q I'm just -- after the, you know, it seems like the July 20th communication you had with Danyliuk really crystalized that this was also becoming a concern on the Ukrainian side of things.

A It was a concern on the Ukrainian side.

Q And I'm just wondering if you did anything right then and there other than Sondland, Volker channel?

A I will check again.

Q Okay. And then the July 25th call happens.

A Yes.

Q Who did you get a readout from about the July 25th call?

A Three people. One was a very short message from Danyliuk, which said: Went well. Oh, there was also the Ukrainians put out -- the Ukrainian Office of the President

put out a short description. Turned out, looking back on it, that's not a bad one because it talks about corruption and working on corruption would improve relations and that kind of thing, and then kind of normal working -- so that was that.

Tim Morrison and I had a conversation on the 28th. So that was, what, 3 days later. And he had -- this is one where he said, "It could've gone better," or something. I took it as a sarcastic comment: It could have gone better.

And then he described several of the things that happened on that call. He mentioned that Giuliani came up in the call. He mentioned that he -- he mentioned that Gordon Sondland had talked to President Trump before and after the call. So that was not in the call, but that was before and after, he told me. And he mentioned that the so-called previous Ambassador, Ambassador Yovanovitch, was a topic of the call.

Q Okay.

A So there was that.

I got one other readout of the call and this was from George Kent. And his was secondhand. So George Kent had talked to Alex Vindman, who had been on the call. So George hadn't been; Alex had.

Q Was Morrison on the call?

A I'm sorry, who?

Q Was Morrison on the call?

A I think so, yes, yes. I'm sure he was. I'm sure he was. Yes, the answer is yes.

George was not. George talked to Alex Vindman, and George then relayed Alex's comments to me. There was a difference in their two readouts of the call in one specific respect, and that is Tim Morrison was sure that President Trump had asked President Zelensky to fire prosecutor general Lutsenko. Lutsenko was still on the job because he had -- he had to stay on the job until Rada takes him off, so he was still on the job. And Giuliani, we know, wanted to keep Lutsenko on the job out there. And Tim Morrison's recollection or recounting of the call was that President Trump asked President Zelensky to fire Lutsenko. Vindman to Kent to me said the opposite, that is, that President Trump said, "Keep Lutsenko," again because Lutsenko and Giuliani were -- so that actually -- and that turned out to be the case. We now know, going back to the transcript we saw on September 25th, we know -- we think, it is a little bit unclear on that transcript, but we're pretty sure that President Trump in the transcript asked President Zelensky to keep -- it said, I understand you fired or you're about to fire or you're not going to keep this very good prosecutor general, and we think that's a mistake. So it turns out that the Vindman description of that aspect was the correct one,

and Tim Morrison actually got that one wrong.

Q Okay. So you spoke with Morrison and Vindman.

A I spoke to Kent, who had talked to Vindman.

Q Okay. Anybody else?

A And Danyliuk and the report from the --

Q Anybody else before the matter became public at the end of September?

A No.

Q Okay. So that's sort of the roster of --

A That's the roster of reports.

MR. CASTOR: I'm at my -- there's about 10 minutes left. I'd like to pivot to our members.

MR. ZELDIN: Ambassador Taylor, on page 9, the second paragraph.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, I'm sorry. Which page?

MR. ZELDIN: Page 9 of your opening statement, where you discuss Mr. Yermak asking the United States to submit an official request for an investigation into Burisma's alleged violations of Ukrainian law.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

MR. ZELDIN: Was that request ever made by the United States?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, not to my knowledge.

MR. ZELDIN: On page 10 of your opening statement, so second paragraph from the bottom in the middle of the

paragraph, you say, quote, "I was hopeful that at the bilateral meeting or shortly thereafter, the White House would lift the hold, but this was not to be." The hold was released just 10 days later, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

MR. ZELDIN: Also, on page 10, same paragraph at the bottom you say, quote, "The Vice President did say that President Trump wanted the Europeans to do more to support Ukraine and that he wanted the Ukrainians to do more to fight corruption," end quote. Doesn't that align with U.S. law and policy what the Vice President stated?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It does. And as I understand it, Congressman, when President Trump decided not to go to Warsaw and ask Vice President Pence to go for him, President Trump asked Vice President Pence to make those two points.

MR. ZELDIN: Which, as you just stated, is entirely consistent with U.S. law and policy, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes. We want the Europeans to do more for Ukraine, and we want them -- the Ukrainians -- to do more to fight corruption.

MR. ZELDIN: And on page 11, the third paragraph down, you say, quote: In fact, Ambassador Sondland said, quote, "everything" was dependent on such an announcement, including security assistance.

Ukraine never made such an announcement, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct.

MR. ZELDIN: And the hold was still released just 10 days later, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is correct.

MR. ZELDIN: On page 12, first paragraph, on September 5th, I hosted Senators Johnson and Murphy for a visit to Kyiv. During that meeting, did President Zelensky say anything to Senators Johnson and Murphy about a quid pro quo?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, sir.

MR. ZELDIN: Did you say anything to Senators Johnson and Murphy about a quid pro quo?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, sir.

MR. ZELDIN: On page 12, the middle paragraph, you talked about a conversation with Mr. Morrison. And this phone call, was Morrison on that call?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, that's a good question. I don't know what -- I don't know how he knew that. It was the same -- then, in the next paragraph, Ambassador Sondland told me that he had a conversation with President Trump. And so I -- and I think they were talking about the same conversation. I think those two paragraphs talk about the same conversation. And I don't know how Tim Morrison -- unless he may have been on the call, or he may have talked to Sondland after the call.

MR. ZELDIN: I might get back to that, but at the bottom

of page 12 and the bottom of page 13 as well, so I'm skipping ahead to the bottom of page 13, it says, again, I asked Mr. Danyliuk to confirm that there would be no CNN interview, which he did. It seems throughout your opening statement you're talking about this demand for a public statement in order to release aid to Ukraine, but no announcement was ever made and the aid was still released, right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct.

MR. ZELDIN: Earlier on, you had an exchange with the chairman. He asked you with regards to the legal definition of the term "quid pro quo." I believe you said something to the effect of "I don't speak Latin," correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Sorry.

MR. ZELDIN: Correct.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

MR. ZELDIN: In your opening statement, though, you do use the words "quid pro quo."

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I only quote other people using those words, Congressman.

MR. ZELDIN: Okay. At the very end of your opening statement, you do make a reference to quid pro quo as one of the two Ukraine stories. On page 14 --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Ah, I do, yes, sir.

MR. ZELDIN: So it's an important question for us to ask you, if you're going to use that term "quid pro quo," for us

to ask you what you mean by it, and we're not going to -- obviously, we wouldn't accept the answer that you don't speak Latin. We want to know what you mean about it. I'll let Mr. Ratcliffe get into that further with you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's take a 5- or 10-minute break, and then we'll resume.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Sure.

[Recess.]

[4:45 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's go back on the record.

Folks, settle down a bit. Let's go back on the record.

Just a few follow-up questions before I hand it over to Mr. Noble, Ambassador.

My colleagues on the minority asked you about general circumstances in which aid may be withheld, that this kind of thing happens. So I want to ask you a little further about that.

There are certainly legitimate occasions when aid is withheld, such as when Congress decides in its policy judgment to withhold aid. Am I right.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: And there may be other circumstances, changing conditions on the ground somewhere, where a decision will be made to withhold aid, appropriately so, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: But you can distinguish between appropriate circumstances in which aid is withheld and illegitimate circumstances in which aid is withheld to coerce another country to do something improper.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: You can.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, my colleagues asked you, well, ultimately the aid was released. I think the thinking is no, you know, no harm no foul, it ultimately was released. But

at the time that it was released are you aware that the White House was in possession of a whistleblower complaint -- now public -- that alleged that the assistance may be withheld for reasons of wanting leverage over Ukraine for political investigations? Were you aware that at the time it was released the White House already knew the existence of this complaint?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I don't know that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Were you aware at the time that it was -- the aid was released that in fact there were public reports in newspapers that the aid may be withheld for this improper reason?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: When it was released, on September 11th, when it was released?

THE CHAIRMAN: When the aid was eventually released --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Right.

THE CHAIRMAN: -- were you aware there were already public reports suggesting perhaps that it was being withheld for inappropriate or inexplicable reasons?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: In the press? I don't recall.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't recall.

THE CHAIRMAN: And we'll check the timeline. That's my recollection, but I could be wrong.

So if I can go back to your testimony. At the bottom of

page 10 you talk about a phone call you had with Mr. Morrison in which "he went on to describe a conversation Ambassador Sondland had with Mr. Yermak at Warsaw. Ambassador Sondland told Mr. Yermak that the security assistance money would not come until President Zelensky committed to pursue the Burisma investigation. I was alarmed by what Mr. Morrison told me about the Sondland-Yermak conversation. This is the first time I had heard the security assistance -- not just the White House meeting -- was conditioned on the investigations."

At that point did you understand that unless the Ukrainians did this for President Trump, that is committed to these investigations, they were not going to get that military assistance or that meeting?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, what I know for sure is what Mr. Morrison told me that he must have heard Ambassador Sondland tell Mr. Yermak. And as I said, this was the first time I'd heard those two put together, those connected.

THE CHAIRMAN: And when you say that, this was the first time I heard that the security assistance -- not just the White House meeting -- was conditioned on the investigation, when you talk about conditioned, did you mean that if they didn't do this, the investigations, they weren't going to get that, the meeting and the military assistance?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That was my clear understanding, security assistance money would not come until the President committed to pursue the investigation.

THE CHAIRMAN: So if they don't do this, they are not going to get that was your understanding?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you aware that quid pro quo literally means this for that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I am.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Noble.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Ambassador, just sticking in this same general timeframe, still on page 10 of your statement, on September 1st you wrote that you had a conversation with Mr. Danyliuk to let him know that the delay of the U.S. security assistance was a, quote, "all or nothing proposition, in the sense that if the White House did not lift the hold prior to the end of the fiscal year, September 30th, the funds would expire and Ukraine would receive nothing."

How did Mr. Danyliuk respond when you told him that?

A Mr. Noble, the reason I told him that, the reason I made it clear that it was all or nothing, was that he had sent me an earlier note, a note just before that, saying, well, it's a gradually increasing problem, that we're

gradually missing out on this assistance.

And I wrote back and said, no, Alexander -- Sasha -- Mr. Danyliuk, if the hold is not lifted, in particular by the end of the fiscal year, then it goes away. And he was thinking that it was just kind of -- it would be dribbled out.

So in answer to your question, did he respond, nothing substantive. I mean, he may have said thank you or something.

Q Subsequently, though, did you have conversations with the Ukrainians? I mean, did they become increasingly concerned when the freeze remained in place and they weren't getting an explanation why, and you had told that them these funds may evaporate completely?

A Yes. And they -- I may have mentioned this already, I can't remember -- they could not understand why it was being held. And they suggested, well, maybe if I just go to Washington and convince the President or convince the Secretary of Defense that this is important that that would do the trick. They were trying to figure out why this was being held.

Q But then at some point, and again later on page 10, Ambassador Sondland, it appears, told Mr. Yermak, President Zelensky's adviser, that the money would not come until Zelensky committed to pursuing the Burisma investigation. Is

that right?

A That is correct.

Q So, I mean, did the Ukrainians have an understanding at that point what they had to do in order to get the funds released?

A Certainly Mr. Yermak did. That's what he had heard from Ambassador Sondland.

Q Okay. I want to go back now to the first time you, I believe, learned of the freeze. Was that during the July 18th SVTC --

A It was.

Q -- you had?

I'd like to ask some questions about that and the other interagency meetings that you had.

Can you just tell us how did you participate in the SVTC on July 18th?

A So the way it works is that in the White House, in the Old Executive Office Building, there is a room, there's a series of rooms where they have interagency meetings.

MR. BELLINGER: I'm not sure all of this is public.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Ah.

MR. BELLINGER: You guys have to scrub it later.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Fair point. Thank you, Counselor. You think it might be classified that there are those? Anyway, yeah.

MR. BELLINGER: No, no, no. It used to be, it used to be, but times have changed. It was classified when I was there.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Okay. So --

THE CHAIRMAN: I am just going to interject. I want to make sure we're not going it to get into classified information today.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: We're not. Unless the existence of these classified rooms is classified. I can't -- which I don't think it is.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Perhaps a way to navigate this would be to shortcut it and just say it's a conference call system.

A Thank you. That's a good idea. It is a conference call.

Q Okay.

A It is a secure conference call.

Q Okay.

A I'm in Kyiv. I'm in a secure room. Can I say that? And there are several other satellite officers that beam in. And we're all in different parts of --

Q So this is a video conference?

A It's a video conference, a secure video conference.

Q Okay. So you can see who the other participants are?

A It depends on -- so if the camera is right there, all of those folks can be on the screen but I'm not, because it's going right over my head. So the answer is most, but not all. And I couldn't see the person who said -- the OMB person who said: I've been told to stop this.

Q Okay. Do you know the identity of the OMB staffer?

A I don't.

Q But you believe -- I believe your testimony said you believe it was a female staffer?

A It was.

Q Okay. And to this day you still don't know who it was that announced it?

A I don't.

Q Did you participate in the subsequent interagency meetings about the aid?

A One of them. As I say, there -- this was a sub-PCC, so a Sub-Policy Coordination Committee. And then there is a Policy Coordination Committee, and that is chaired at the assistant secretary level. And then there's a Deputies Committee. And then there's a Principals Committee. And then there's an NSC meeting.

And it went -- and so I was present and beamed in from Kyiv for the sub-PC and the PC, but not the ones above that.

Q Okay. Can you tell us what happened at the PCC meeting, the second one?

A Yes. Around the room, observations, information about the value of the assistance. In particular OSD, I think it was Laura Cooper, who is probably on your list, made a very strong case and continued to make a very strong case for the effectiveness -- indeed, her office was the one overseeing this assistance, so she made a very strong case for that.

Others around -- the State Department representative, strong statement, we made a strong statement about the importance of this assistance.

Q And was there an OMB representative there for that meeting?

A I don't know the answer.

Q Okay.

A Probably.

Q Do you recall whether there was any communication from the White House or from OMB regarding the freeze and whether it was going to stay in place at that meeting?

A I don't. I think coming out of that meeting was the instruction that we're continuing -- that we're continuing the policy as it had been. And, probably after the PCC, the State Department and maybe the Defense Department decided they were going to move forward with this assistance anyway, OMB notwithstanding. This was a big decision that L came to over there, over some debate as to

whether or not they could do it without OMB's clearance, send a CN to the Hill without OMB's clearance, and they decided to do that. I don't know if they've ever done that before. This was a big decision for them.

Q So as far as you know, that was unprecedented?

A As far as I know.

Q Was that related to the FMF or USAI portions of the assistance? Do you know?

A I think both.

Q Do you know whether there was any kind of written documentation of kind of the decisions made at these meetings?

A There is every time.

Q Okay. And State Department would have a copy of those?

A NSC would probably have those.

Q NSC.

A And they were then sent out to the interagency, including the State Department.

Q Okay. Are you aware whether there were any kind of preconditions or certifications that had to be made with respect to Ukraine before the funding could flow?

A In this case, for --

Q Yeah, for this assistance.

A The only thing I heard was that there was a request

-- and I'm not sure who it came from, but it may have come from the NSC -- to the Defense Department for an evaluation of the assistance to be sure that it was being well spent and it was effective. And the Defense Department came back very quickly with the conclusion that it was.

Q Well, we've heard claims that President Trump was interested in corruption or concerned about corruption generally in Ukraine. Are you aware that DOD, in consultation with the State Department, had certified that Ukraine had taken sufficient steps to address corruption such that they were entitled to the aid at that time?

A Mr. Noble, I'm not sure. I think in the Defense Authorization Act every year there are conditions that are required to be met in order for that assistance to go forward. And my understanding is those conditions were met. On this specific one I'm not sure. I think so.

Q Okay. In your statement on page 4 you reference several actions that President Zelensky had taken quickly to address corruption in Ukraine, including opening Ukraine's High Anti-Corruption Court, which had been a U.S. policy goal for quite some time.

A We played a big role in that, yes.

Q And President Zelensky had done that at that point?

A He had done that and he showed up himself at the opening of the High Anti-Corruption Court -- with the two

Senators, by the way. They were both there as well.

Q Which two Senators?

A Senator Murphy and Senator Johnson.

Q And then President Zelensky had also, after winning control of the Rada, he changed the Ukrainian Constitution to remove absolute immunity from Rada Deputies, which you say in your statement was a source of corruption for over two decades. Is that right?

A So Rada Deputies -- I imagine Representatives in this body and in the Senate would love to have this -- but the Rada Deputies in Ukraine up until the point where they changed the Constitution could commit any kind of crime and not be prosecuted.

And that was changed, he changed that right away, a commitment that he'd made in his campaign, and he made good on that commitment right away. And overwhelming support. It had been promised every Rada by every President before, it never happened. He got it done.

Q So not only had President Zelensky campaigned on rooting out corruption, I believe his number one priority, but he had taken concrete steps. And yet the OMB, the President, still had decided to freeze the aid purportedly because he had some concerns about corruption in Ukraine?

A It is certainly true that he made -- he is not only fighting corruption. So he changed the -- President Zelensky

changed the language. He said he wants to defeat corruption.

So he was really focused on this, he made it his number two priority. Number one priority was stopping the war on Ukrainian terms and number two was defeating corruption. And he did a lot on that.

And it was -- we talked earlier about how we're focused on institutions fighting corruption. So the High Anti-Corruption Court and the Special Prosecutor and all, the institutional way of fighting corruption, rather than case by case.

And so, yes, he pushed that very hard.

Q Okay. So I want to move, fast forward a little bit to August. And I noticed in your statement that there's a little bit of a time gap between -- on page 9 -- between July 28th to the middle of August, to August 16th, between the first and second paragraphs on page 9.

And I also noticed that in the text messages that we have in which you're a participant that Ambassador Volker produced, there's also a similar gap in that timeframe.

So if you take the -- if you have the text messages and you turn to -- let's go to page 28 first. And if you look at -- I'll direct your attention to the top there. And beginning on or around August 11th -- well, actually, yeah, back to the top there.

So these are text messages between you and Ambassador

Volker.

A Okay.

Q There's one July 24th, 2019, where Volker says: Hi, Bill. Can you talk now?

Do you see that?

A I do.

Q And then it skips forward till August 3rd and you have a discussion about: Did Tim -- I believe that's Tim Morrison -- say how he was doing on the call?

And then it skips forward to August 11th. And it's not until August 16th, I believe, that you kind of start talking again about the investigations or the requests for a White House meeting. Do you see that?

A I do.

Q Okay. And then, if you move to page 38, so this is the three-way text message chain between you and Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Sondland. And if you look toward the bottom, there's a big gap between August 6th, 2019, and it then jumps to August 29th, 2019. Do you see that?

A I see that, right.

Q Do you recall whether you had any WhatsApp conversations with Ambassador Sondland and Ambassador Volker basically during the month of August, or the last 3 weeks of August?

A From the 6th to the 29th?

Q Yeah. Do you know whether there'd be any messages that might have been deleted here?

A Oh, I don't know if it's possible to delete on these things. I don't know. I don't know the reason for the gap.

Q Okay.

A Yeah, yeah, yeah. The State Department has all of mine. I have them as well. But, yeah, the State Department has all of these.

Q Okay. But in this timeframe were you aware that Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Sondland were in direct communication with Mr. Yermak and with Mr. Giuliani about the drafting of a statement that they wanted President Zelensky to release?

A So only after -- only after Ambassador Volker released his texts. I think that's where they showed up.

Q So you weren't involved, as far as you can remember, in the drafting of that?

A I was not.

Q Okay. So that was something that Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Sondland were doing with Giuliani and Yermak?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So I would like to show you kind of the end result of that process. If you turn to page 23 of the text messages. And, again, these aren't ones that you were on.

But the last couple messages on that page, from August 13th, 2019, this is an exchange between Ambassador Volker and Mr. Yermak.

And Volker writes: Hi, Andrey. Good talking. Following is text with insert at the end for the two key items. We will work on official requests.

And then Ambassador Volker drafts -- pastes the statement that they want President Zelensky to release. And it reads: "Special attention should be paid to the problem of interference in the political processes of the United States, especially with the alleged involvement of some Ukrainian politicians. I want to declare that this is unacceptable. We intend to initiate and complete a transparent and unbiased investigation of all available facts and episodes, including those involving Burisma and the 2016 elections, which in turn will prevent the recurrence of this problem in the future."

So this is a draft statement that Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Sondland had drafted with Rudy Giuliani for President Zelensky to release. Were you involved in the crafting of this?

A I was not.

Q Okay. So you had no knowledge that this was going on at the time?

A I had no knowledge.

Q Were you aware of any statement generally that --

A I wasn't until I saw these once they were released.

Q Okay. How did you react when you learned, I guess from seeing Ambassador Volker's text messages, that this had been going on behind the scenes, given that you're the Charge d'Affaires in Ukraine, and yet you have no idea that Volker and Sondland are working with Giuliani and Yermak to get out a statement from the President of Ukraine and you had no idea that that's going on? Did that concern you?

A It did. When I found out about it -- again, this was the irregular channel, I was in the regular channel. Every now and then I would see what was going on in the irregular channel, but not in this case.

And, yeah, I mean, I should have been involved, but I knew that there were a lot of communications between Ambassador Volker preceding -- and President Zelensky and Yermak -- preceding my arrival. They had a relationship.

And similarly with Ambassador Sondland. Ambassador Sondland had a relationship, he told me, I don't know -- I think this is true -- that he could WhatsApp and phone and call President Zelensky. And normally, in a normal arrangement, the ambassador helps either facilitate that or monitors that or is at least aware of that and gets back-briefed on that. I had accepted that this was an unusual circumstance.

Q I mean, is it -- would you say or would you agree that these text messages and the drafting of this statement was, in effect, making concrete the quid pro quo that you had realized in mid-July, as you describe in your statement, that a White House visit was dependent on President Zelensky making a public commitment to those two specifics investigations?

A So again, being careful about my use and understanding of quid pro quo, which is imperfect at best, the facts were that these relationships between the announcement and the meeting -- or phone call and the meeting -- and then the security assistance, it was clear to me that there was that relationship.

What I didn't know was there were these -- this drafting session, this drafting exercise to put together the language that President Zelensky would use.

Q Okay. I want to fast forward a little bit to September 7th or 8th. Do you recall sending George Kent a WhatsApp message regarding your conversation with Tim Morrison about what President Trump wanted Zelensky to do? Do you recall telling George Kent about that?

A Is this mentioned in my statement --

Q No, but if you go to your statement --

A September 5th. This is with -- Senators Johnson and Murphy were in town.

Q And then on page 12 in the middle.
A Right.
Q It says you had a call with Mr. Morrison where he had a, quote, sinking feeling --
A Yes.
Q -- after learning about the conversation that President Trump had with Ambassador Sondland.
A Yep.
Q Did you relay that in a written communication to George Kent? Do you remember that?
A I don't remember.
Q Can we go back to the text messages and turn to page 53, the last page?
A Okay. I'm informed that on my text message there was a text back to George Kent.
Q Okay.
A So let me be clear. I didn't remember it until just now and this great colleague back here reminded me that this was there.
Q Okay. And those text messages have been turned over to the State Department?
A They have, they have, they have.
Sorry, where are we now?
Q Sure. Last page of the text messages, page 53.
A Yes.

Q At the top of the page, I believe, on September 8th, 2019, 11:20 a.m. Gordon Sondland says: Guys, multiple convos with ZE.

That's Zelensky, correct?

A Yes.

Q And POTUS.

A Yes.

Q President Trump.

A Yes.

Q Let's talk.

A Right.

Q And then you go on to have a conversation, which I believe is the conversation you describe in your statement. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q On page 12?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And that's where President Trump had made clear that if Zelensky did not, quote, "clear things up in public," there would be a, quote, "stalemate." Is that right?

A That is correct.

Q And you understood that stalemate meant that Ukraine would not get the military assistance?

A That's correct.

Q Okay. Was Ambassador Volker on that call with you and Ambassador Sondland?

A I'm sure he was, yes.

Q During that call, did you discuss the possibility of President Zelensky --

A Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. On the phone call?

Q The phone call, yes.

A No, no, no, no. The phone call was just --

Q Just you and Sondland?

A Yes. Right. Sorry. The text was the three of us, the phone call was just the two of us.

Q Okay. During that phone call did you discuss the possibility of President Zelensky doing the CNN interview during the YES Conference in Ukraine? Is that when that first came up?

A That's when he -- yes, that's when Ambassador Sondland said that he had talked with them and they -- and the Ukrainians had agreed to do a CNN interview.

Q Okay. Can you just describe in a little more detail your recollection of that conversation with Ambassador Sondland? Was this the first time you had heard the idea of President Zelensky making a public announcement on CNN about these investigations?

A It was certainly the first time I'd heard about it on CNN. We'd had earlier conversations about making public

comments. I think that is the case here. I'm remembering the thing about the interest that Ambassador Sondland had in having President Zelensky go in a box, in a public box. So there were those conversations on a couple of occasions. This is the first time on CNN, talking about CNN interview.

Q And do you recall the dates of the YES Conference? When was this interview supposed to take place?

A The interview, the CNN interview I think was going to be in UNGA, which is at the end of September. The YES Conference was the first week in September, as I recall, maybe the first -- oh, no, no, sorry. It was the Friday, Saturday -- Saturday is the 14th of September. But I don't -- and there was a lot of press at the YES Conference. I don't think there was talk about doing an interview there.

Q Okay. So you think that the interview that President Zelensky was going to do that you discussed with Ambassador Sondland during your call on September 8th was going to be during UNGA?

A When we were talking about it on September 8th, I think it was not clear when it was going to be.

Q Okay.

A And when it didn't -- when it didn't happen, didn't happen, and then they were approaching the UNGA meeting on, what, the 25th of September, then they got more serious -- then I started hearing about the CNN interview. And so it

was going to take place in New York.

Q Okay. Going back to the text messages, do you see the message on September 8th at 12:37 p.m.? Can you just read what you wrote there about "the nightmare"?

A I will.

"The nightmare" is they give the interview and don't get the security assistance. The Russians love it -- parenthetical -- (and I quit.)

Q Can you unpack that a little bit for us?

A Sure.

Q What did you mean by "the nightmare" and what would the Russians love?

A "The nightmare" is the scenario where President Zelensky goes out in public, makes an announcement that he's going to investigate Burisma and the election in 2016, interference in 2016 election, maybe among other things. He might put that in some series of investigations.

But he had to -- he was going -- the nightmare was he would mention those two, take all the heat from that, get himself in big trouble in this country and probably in his country as well, and the security assistance would not be released. That was the nightmare.

The Russians loving it. The Russians are paying attention. The Russians are paying attention to how much support the Americans are going to provide the Ukrainians.

The Russians are leaning on Ukraine. They are leaning on Ukraine about Donbas. They are leaning on Ukraine about sovereign -- small little sovereign countries here, little statelets. They are leaning on economically, they have got the Nord Stream coming through, they have got -- they are putting pressure on -- they have to come to a new gas agreement by the 1st of January.

So they are leaning on them. And they, the Russians want to know how much support the Ukrainians are going to get in general, but also what kind of support from the Americans.

So the Russians are loving, would love, the humiliation of Zelensky at the hands of the Americans, and would give the Russians a freer hand, and I would quit.

Q And why would that make you quit?

A That's exactly the scenario that I was worried about when I had my meeting with Secretary Pompeo on the 28th of May where I said: Mr. Secretary, you know, your current strong policy of support for Ukraine is one I can support and I would be glad to go out to Kyiv and support it and push it hard.

However, I told him and the others who were in the room, if that changes -- and this would have been a change, this would have been -- it was a nightmare. This would have been throwing Ukraine under the bus. And I told the Secretary: If that happens, I'll come home. You don't want me out

there, because I'm not going to defend it, you know. I would say bad things about it. And you wouldn't want me out there doing that. So I'm going to come home on that. So that was the message about I quit.

Q And did you communicate that, these concerns around this time to Secretary Pompeo or --

A I had done so on August 29th.

Q In your -- in the cable?

A Correct.

Q What was the distribution on that cable?

A It was called "NODIS."

Q Okay. What's that mean?

A So it's very limited distribution. It's also first person, which means the way it reads is: Mr. Secretary, I am concerned -- I, Bill Taylor -- I am concerned about this problem.

So that's first person. Normally these cables are not first person, they are third person. So it gets attention, there are not many first person cables coming, so it gets attention when it comes in from the ambassador saying: I am concerned.

And "NODIS" means that it is very limited distribution. It goes obviously to the Secretary. And then if other people want to read it they have to come up to the Operations Center in the State Department and they can go into the special room

and they can read it.

Q And in your statement, I believe page 10, you said you heard soon thereafter the Secretary carried that cable with him to a meeting at the White House focused on security assistance for Ukraine. Where did you hear that from?

A Deputy Assistant Secretary George Kent.

Q Okay. And do you know what, if anything, else Secretary Pompeo did after receiving your cable to follow up?

A I know that -- I know that he had been pushed -- I think I mentioned that after the July 18th meeting where the assistance was frozen by the OMB hand, that there were a series of these meetings, up to and including Secretary of State and Defense. And so I know that Secretary Pompeo was working on this issue, that he wanted it resolved.

I was getting more and more concerned that it wasn't getting resolved. And so I wanted to add my concern and my arguments, from the perspective of Kyiv and the Ukrainians, about how important this assistance was.

Q Okay. And you said -- how did you learn that the aid had been unfrozen? I believe it was on September 11th, is that right?

A It was September 11th. So, yeah, I remember getting an email from a staffer, a Senate Armed Services Committee staffer. And of course Senate staffers -- House staffers too, I'm sure -- get the word much earlier than

anybody else.

And so I got this email, I think it was probably overnight, which I then sent to Tim Morrison and I think maybe to George Kent saying: Oh, this is great news. This is what we've been waiting for.

And Tim hadn't heard it yet. So that's how I first heard. And then he later that day confirmed.

Q Okay. Are you aware that The New York Times published some communications, some emails, relating to the release of the freeze that involved you on October 9th, 2019, with a State Department employee, Brad Freedon (ph)?

A Oh, I do remember this, yes.

Q Do you recall those emails?

A This is the one where Brad said something about nothing to see here, move along.

Q I believe the quote is: Keep moving people, nothing to see here.

A There you go.

Q Did you have any communications with Mr. Freedon (ph) or anyone else at the State Department about why they wanted to keep the release of the funds quiet?

A No, I didn't have a conversation with Mr. Freedon (ph) on this one. I imagine that -- my understanding -- my view of this was that, as I said earlier, this was an embarrassment, this freeze on assistance was a mistake, an

embarrassment, and it was going to be fixed, it had to be fixed. And the less said and the less attention it got, the less embarrassing it was.

So I was fine with don't talk about this or, you know, let's not make a big deal of this.

[4:23 p.m.]

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Okay. On or about September 14th, so after the aid was released, do you recall a meeting that you and Ambassador Volker had with Andriy Yermak?

A I do. It was a dinner.

Q A dinner. Can you tell us what happened at that dinner?

A One of the things that happened was Mr. Yermak described to Kurt and me, described to Ambassador Volker and me, their plans for a resolution of Donbas, how they were going to get to a resolution with Donbas.

There was a fourth person there, another of his -- another Ukrainian colleague.

There were a couple other topics discussed, Mr. Noble, but anything in particular that I should try to remember?

Q Do you recall anything about an investigation involving former Ukrainian President Poroshenko coming up during that meeting?

A I do.

Q Can you tell us about that conversation?

A Yes. I can. I can see Ambassador Volker has been here.

Yes, so Ambassador Volker suggested to Mr. Yermak and Mr. Novikov, the other Ukrainian, that it would be a good

idea not to investigate President Poroshenko, the previous President. And one of the reasons Kurt said that was there were indications, and maybe even some actions taken by that time, that made it clear that the new government, the new Zelensky government, was going to go after President Poroshenko for a range of issues, on things like -- people in this room will remember that President Poroshenko was in office at the time of the Kerch Strait incident. This was Thanksgiving a year ago, when the Russians attacked these Ukrainian patrol ships, patrol boats. And President Poroshenko was getting blamed for and being possibly even taken to court for some of those military decisions that he made.

And, at that dinner, both Mr. Yermak and Mr. Novikov took out their cell phones -- I, of course, don't have -- but took out their cell phones and pulled up pictures of their relatives -- one was a brother, and one was a cousin -- who had been killed or wounded in the east. And they showed this to Kurt and me, and they said, Poroshenko is responsible for this.

There was a deep-seated anger at Poroshenko at an emotional level. And that was one of the things motivating -- one of the things motivating the attacks on, or the court cases on President Poroshenko. Not the only ones. There were others. This oligarch that I mentioned earlier,

Kolomoisky, also had it in for Poroshenko.

And Kurt said, you know, you should move forward, don't prosecute Poroshenko. And they responded, take a look at this.

Q Do you recall Yermak saying anything to the effect that, why shouldn't we investigate Poroshenko when you're pushing us to investigate Joe Biden?

A Oh, I don't remember that, but -- I don't remember that.

Q Okay.

After the freeze was lifted, it sounds like, from your statement, you still had concerns that President Zelensky might go forward with the CNN interview and still announce the investigations. Is that right?

A That's right.

Q Why did you have that concern that that was going to happen?

A I had the concern because I had a couple of meetings with President Zelensky and Andrei Bohdan, his Chief of Staff, about this time. It was just after -- it was on the 13th, I think, of September, just after the hold had been released.

And walking out of that meeting, Andriy Yermak was about to walk in. And I had just said to President Zelensky, bipartisan support of Ukraine in Washington is your most

valuable strategic asset, don't jeopardize it. And don't intervene -- don't interfere in our elections, and we won't interfere in your elections. I had just said that to President Zelensky, and on the way out I said the same thing to Andriy Yermak. And the body language was such that it looked to me like he was still thinking they were going to make that statement.

Q At that point, had there been a White House meeting for President Zelensky scheduled?

A No. And there still hasn't been.

Q Okay.

Did you participate in UNGA? Were you here in New York?

A No.

Q No? Did you help prepare for President Trump's meeting with President Zelensky?

A Yes. I sent in a suggestion to Tim Morrison on what should -- you know, what he could use as the President's talking points when he sat down with Zelensky, basically making the point that, you know, correct, a good, solid, substantive conversation. Yeah. And that's in the cables, I'm sure, that the State Department is preparing.

Q Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to give priority to the members that have been here for most of the day.

Mr. Welch?

MR. WELCH: I'll be brief.

I just want to, first of all, thank you. But I've been listening all day and -- pretty much all day, and what I understand your testimony more or less is, succinctly -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- is: You have a longstanding interest in Ukraine; it's been the U.S. policy since 1991 to support Ukraine; that the policy has been internally for Ukraine to fight corruption, and we've been supportive of that, externally to resist aggression from Russia, and we were trying to be supportive of that; that when you were faced with this question of whether to return to public service at the request of Secretary Pompeo, you had a frank conversation where you made it clear that you had to be assured that you could defend what had been the consistent United States policy in both those respects; that if, in fact, you were unable to do that or the policy changed, you candidly said you would have to quit; that you then began your service on the understanding that the policy was to fight internal corruption and to resist external aggression; and that, as time developed, you started having questions as to whether there was a secondary channel for that policy; and, over time, you came to see that not only was there a secondary channel but that it included a policy variance from the traditional one of fighting aggression and corruption; that you had specific information from people who had talked

to President Trump, including Mr. Volker and Mr. Sondland, that what that policy was was essentially to extract an agreement from the President of Ukraine to do these investigations and that everything, not just the White House meeting but the aid itself, was conditioned on getting that agreement and that explicit statement; and, at the end, there was an effort to, quote, put President Zelensky in a box, which the public statement would make him do.

Is that a fair summary of what you've said?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Excellent summary, Congressman. The one thing -- the only clarification I would make is that, in the beginning, in late June and early July, in July, there was, in my view, my observation, not a conflict. There was not a conflict --

MR. WELCH: Right.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: -- between these two channels.

MR. WELCH: No. And you were clear that just having somebody outside of the normal State Department isn't necessarily a bad thing.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. WELCH: Having two policies was the question.

But just a couple more, because I want to yield to my colleagues.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Welch, our time has expired.

MR. WELCH: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll come back to you at the very top of the next.

MR. WELCH: Sure, Mr. Chairman. I yield.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Forty-five minutes to the minority.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Where we last left off was a discussion of -- it was right around the time of this telephone call, July 25th.

A 25th, yes.

Q And the very next day, you had a meeting with President Zelensky.

A Correct.

Q And I think you told us that feedback from the call from the Ukrainians was positive, for the most part.

A Yes.

Q They had put out a statement --

A They had put out a statement. They'd mentioned investigations or -- I should look at that statement. But they had mentioned something that led me to believe that they were in the same meeting, that they were describing exactly that call.

Q Okay. So --

A Law enforcement, I think it was. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q Was there any other discussion during that meeting that was a fallout from the call?

A Not that I recall. The bulk -- so it was Ambassador Volker, Sondland, and I were all there. And the bulk of the call, after the brief conversation about the -- I'm sorry. The bulk of the meeting after the brief conversation about the call was on how to solve Donbas.

Q Were you surprised when you read the whistleblower complaint? And, first of all, did you see the whistleblower complaint before it was public?

A No.

Q Okay. So it was made public, I think, on Thursday, September 26th.

A Okay.

Q Were you surprised when there was a discussion of this July 26th meeting in the whistleblower complaint?

A Mr. Castor, I remember reading that quickly, but I may have missed that July -- but can you remind me what the --

Q Sure.

A Yeah.

Q On page 4 of the complaint -- we can give you the complaint.

A I'm sure I have it somewhere, but that's okay.

Q You know, it states that Ambassadors Volker and Sondland reportedly provided advice to Ukrainian leadership about now to navigate the demands that the President had made

to Zelensky.

Does that ring any bells? Does anything of that sort --

A This is in the 26th meeting?

Q Yeah.

A Advice to Zelensky about how to navigate the --

Q Demands of the President.

A I was in that -- so the records of -- my records of that meeting are in the State Department, and they will come.

Q Okay.

A I don't recall that.

Q Okay. By that --

A Ah. Ah. Thank you, Counsel.

He did ask -- one thing that was in addition to the brief conversation about the call and Donbas, and it may have been at the end, President Zelensky still expressed his interest in the face-to-face meeting in the Oval Office.

Q Okay.

A Yeah. Thank you.

Q But by that point in time, from your limited knowledge of what had occurred on the call, you didn't know that the President had made any demands or there was anything to navigate.

A Correct.

Q Okay. So, to the extent the whistleblower complaint chronicles that -- and you were in the meeting, and

you don't remember anything of that sort.

A I don't remember that.

MR. MEADOWS: Steve, let me -- your response, that you don't remember that, is really an indication that you don't recall that happening. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

MR. MEADOWS: Okay. I just wanted to clarify that.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes. Yes. Good point.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Now, the various requests for the Ukrainians to open investigations that had been closed, did you have any opposition to the effort for Ukraine to investigate, you know, Ukrainians that had been engaged in wrongdoing that may have --

A Just in general? Was that the question? Or --

Q Right. You didn't have any objection to investigations being reopened that genuinely deserved to be reopened?

A So when President Zelensky comes into office -- well, even before that -- when he runs for President and then is elected and then takes office, again, his second priority was defeating corruption. And he said, I think in the call, in the July 25th call, he said he has a new prosecutor general, who is very good, by the way. And President Zelensky said, this man will do the investigations and, you

know, he will enforce the law.

Q Okay.

A And so, yes, he committed to have Prosecutor General Ryabshapka, and then again recently saying that he'll take a look at all these --

Q Uh-huh.

A -- take a look at all these cases.

Q Okay.

There was a reference to reaching out to the Justice Department. You mentioned Deputy Assistant Attorney General, which I assume is Bruce Swartz?

A It is.

Q Did you ask Ambassador Volker to reach out to Bruce Swartz?

A He volunteered to do that.

Q Okay. And what was the feedback from Swartz?

A I don't know that they ever connected.

Q Okay. And was there any followup effort to close the loop with the Justice Department?

A No. I thought the whole thing was a bad idea.

Q You thought it was a bad idea to reach out to Bruce Swartz?

A No. I thought the idea of the Americans asking the Ukrainians to investigate a violation of Ukrainian law was a bad idea.

Q Okay.

A But Kurt, for some reason, wanted to pursue that. And when he volunteered to take that question to Bruce Swartz, that was fine with me.

Q Okay. I mean, is it possible that Swartz's feedback on that issue would have been compelling to the group? Like, why didn't anyone follow up with Swartz?

A No idea.

Q Okay.

You called Counselor Brechbuhl on August 21st to engage about whether there was a change in U.S. policy.

A Yes.

Q And presumably that was on the heels of the security assistance being held up?

A Yes.

Q Was that the first time you had engaged Brechbuhl, you know, in the month of August?

A In the month of August?

Q Uh-huh.

A So I'd had a couple meetings with him before I left.

Q Right.

A I called him early on, I think in -- this may have still been July, about the security assistance, and then -- I think about security -- and then called him again.

Q Okay.
A Yeah.
Q So, on the 8/21 call that you mention on page 9 of your statement --
A Yep.
Q -- did you, at that time, alert him that you had concerns about the irregular channel?
A At that time? Let's see. At some point, I had a conversation with him about -- I wasn't calling it the irregular channel at this point. I was talking about Ambassador Sondland, Ambassador Volker. And it might have also been in this case.
Q Okay.
A But it was not the main thing.
Q Okay.
A The main thing was security assistance.
Q Okay. I'm just wondering, you know, during July and August, you're getting increasingly concerned, correct?
A Correct.
Q It culminates on August 27th when you wrote this first-person cable.
A I sent it in on the 29th.
Q Okay, but the end of August, right?
A Right.
Q And then by September 8th, you're discussing the

prospect that you might have to quit, right?

A I was discussing that even earlier. I was -- my cable on the 29th hinted at that as well.

Q Okay. And so, on the 21st, did you raise any of these concerns? I mean, you had him on the telephone, right?

A Yes. Yes. So when I asked him explicitly about a change in policy, he and I both remembered that a change in policy was what I was concerned about on May 28th. And this is why on a couple of times we've had that conversation. He knew exactly what I was talking about.

Q Okay. And did he give you any feedback or -- I mean, you're sounding -- are you sounding the alarm? Is that a fair characterization?

A I'm sounding the alarm on the 21st. I'm sounding the alarm on the 23rd. I had another conversation, oh, with Tim Morrison, I think, asking the same question. Is that -- am I getting these numbers right? Next day, yes, on the 22nd with Morrison, I asked him the same thing, had there been a change in policy.

Q Uh-huh.

A So, yes, I am getting increasingly concerned. I'm trying to get from Washington what's going on.

Q And did Brechbuhl give you any indication that he was going to talk to the Secretary or he hears you loud and clear --

A Hears me --

Q -- and he'll try to do something about it?

A He says, "I will check."

Q Okay.

A "I will check."

Q And did he check?

A I don't know. I didn't hear anything back from him.

Q Okay.

And then Ambassador Bolton comes to Ukraine on August 27th?

A Correct.

Q And did you discuss these issues with him at that time?

A At the end of -- yes. Yes. At the end of his -- he was there for, like, 3 days. And the second day -- he left the morning of the third day, early. The evening of the second day, which I think is maybe the 28th of September or so, I asked for a meeting with him to talk about this. And, again, this is the 28th.

September 29th is when the word leaks out in the Politico article, okay, there is a hold on -- so it wasn't out then, and, thus, it wasn't a topic of conversation with the Ukrainians. And he saw the full range of Ukrainians, including the President.

But I knew it. And I asked him at the end of his meeting, at the end of his visit, before he went to bed, if I could have a session with him. And I did, and I raised exactly this question. It was he who suggested then at that meeting that I write this note to Secretary Pompeo, which I did the next day.

Q Okay. Did he urge -- he didn't urge a telephone call or anything of that sort?

A No. He urged the first-person cable to get attention back there.

Q Okay. Did you ask him whether he was trying to work the issue from his vantage point?

A He indicated that he was very sympathetic. I had known from earlier conversations with people that he was also trying with the two Secretaries and the Director of the CIA to get this decision reversed. So he confirmed that and urged me to make my concerns known to the Secretary again.

MR. SMITH: Before we leave this, I think the Ambassador said the meeting was on September 27th. It was August 27th.

MR. CASTOR: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct. Oh, did I say September?

MR. SMITH: I think you did.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Thank you, Counselor.

MR. MEADOWS: So, Ambassador -- can I follow up with just one clarifying?

So, Ambassador, you said that you were aware of Ambassador Bolton's advocacy for this. You were aware of that how? From whom?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I was aware, Congressman, in the discussions that followed the meeting at the NSC where the hold was put on. And it rapidly went up the chain to Ambassador Bolton. And was told a couple of times by people at State and people at the NSC that the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, and the head of CIA all strongly supported the resumption of this assistance.

MR. MEADOWS: Who told you that? That's what I'm trying to get at. I mean, who were the conversations with?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm sure they were with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent.

MR. MEADOWS: From the State Department standpoint.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The State Department.

MR. MEADOWS: All right. From the NSC standpoint -- I mean, who would have direct knowledge of what Ambassador Bolton had done or was doing that conveyed that to you?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, again, what I know is those principals were trying to get together with the President to have this meeting. So, knowing that --

MR. MEADOWS: Right, but you said somebody told you about Ambassador Bolton's advocacy --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's what I was referring to. I was referring to that I knew what his position was, because he wanted to get that group together to make the case.

MR. MEADOWS: So did he tell you he was getting the group together? Or who told you the group was getting together?

I guess I'm a little concerned on who at NSC would've been telling you about Ambassador Bolton. You felt like he was a kindred spirit on this. So who was telling you from the NSC that he was?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It would've been either -- it would've been Tim Morrison. But I can't remember the specific phone call.

But, again, the main reason I know where Ambassador Bolton was was that interest in getting it reversed, getting the decision reversed, and the way to do that was to get a meeting with the President. So that was my main source of information. And that came, as I say, from the State Department.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q And then you had a subsequent conversation with Morrison? It sounds like you're talking to Morrison pretty much every day during this time period?

A "Every day" is too strong, but -- let's see. Yeah. So Morrison is with Bolton.

Q Okay.

A So he's in Kyiv. He goes on to Warsaw with Bolton, and he and I have conversations from Warsaw.

Q Okay. What's Morrison's background? Where did he come from?

A He came -- so he took Fiona Hill's place, coming from another part of the NSC doing arms control, and I don't know what before that.

Q So you sent the first-person cable where you mention the term "folly."

A I did.

Q Did you get any feedback from the seventh floor on that cable?

A I got feedback from the sixth floor on that.

Q Okay. What feedback did you get?

A I got feedback saying, I'm glad you sent that cable.

Q Okay. Did you get any feedback from the Secretary or --

A I didn't. I didn't. As I say, I know he carried it with him to one of these meetings where they were going to try to reverse the decision, but no direct feedback.

Q Okay. How about from Mr. Brechbuhl?

A Nope.

Q Anybody else?

A Not -- no, again, other than the desk. I somehow made sure -- I think I sent an email to Ulrich Brechbuhl to ensure that he saw that cable, and he may have sent back an acknowledgement that he'd seen it.

Q Okay.

After the hold was lifted --

A Yes.

Q -- and the funds started to flow, was there any other activities that concerned you in the irregular channel?

A Not that I can remember.

Q Okay. I mean, you talked about the statement, the possible CNN interview, and some of these --

A Correct.

Q -- concerns from that channel.

A Correct. But that had been in train for -- so I was trying to be sure that the things from the other channel that had been put in place, like the CNN interview, didn't happen.

Q Okay.

A And then the focus was on UNGA, as we said, on the General Assembly. And that, of course, was back into the regular channels, I mean, all the preparations for that.

Q Did any of your conversations with Morrison reveal any concerns about the Giuliani-Sondland-Volker channel from that point on?

A Not that I recall.

Q Okay. Did you ever have any communications with Morrison after the aid was released where he indicated to you that the problem was solved and on to the next issue?

A No. No. His -- no. My conversations with Tim Morrison have been primarily, in particular since then, since the aid was released, on China. He was very concerned about China's investments in Ukraine, so we've had many conversations about that.

Q Okay. So you still talk with Mr. Morrison with some regularity?

A I do.

Q When did the fact that there was a complaint lodged about these matters come to your attention?

A I'm not sure, Mr. Castor.

Q The whistleblower complaint, when did that first come to your attention?

A The whistleblower complaint?

Q Yeah.

A I guess when I read it in the paper.

Q Okay. Which was towards the end of September or before it was made public?

A No, no, no. In the newspaper.

Q Okay. Did anyone try to contact you to find out any information, any firsthand information?

A No.
Q Okay.
A No.
Q How frequently do you have conversations with the DNI about these issues? Any?
A I think none.
Q Okay. Does a person by the name of Eric Ciaramella ring a bell for you?
A It doesn't.
Q So, to your knowledge, you never had any communications with somebody by that name?
A Correct.
Q After the aid was released, did you ever have a close-the-loop session with Volker and Sondland?
A About that topic?
Q Yes.
A I don't think so.
Q Okay. So, once the aid was released, it was sort of --
A That was my big concern.
Q Okay.
A Right.
Q The telephone conversation that Sondland relates, talking to the President, was pretty definitive, was it not?
A I think so. It is the one we're talking about that

he relates he had with the President --

Q Right.

A -- and then Morrison also reports on that same conversation, I think.

Q Right.

A That's right. Yes.

Q And Morrison's view of that conversation is slightly different than Sondland's, is it not?

A It could well be.

So I'm looking at, what, page 12 here. He described a phone call earlier in the day between Sondland and Trump. Sinking feeling from Ambassador Sondland.

So that may answer this question earlier about whether he was on it.

Q Yeah.

A According to Morrison, President Trump asking for a quid pro quo -- was not asking. Did insist that President Zelensky go to a microphone.

And then Sondland and I spoke on the phone. He said he talked to President Trump. Adamant Zelensky himself had to clear things up. The same comment about no quid pro quo. Sondland said he talked to the President and then he talked to Zelensky and Yermak after that.

Q Uh-huh.

A So it sounds like they're talking about the same

phone call.

Q What was the sinking feeling?

A This was a comment that Mr. Morrison made when he heard that there were a Sondland-President Trump phone call, and that gave him a sinking feeling. And I think what he meant by that was, he recognized that that channel -- that's the irregular channel I've been talking about all day -- has the potential to be counter to the regular channel. And whenever he heard that there was an activation of that irregular channel, you know, he was concerned.

Q Okay. How frequently, to your knowledge, was Sondland in discussion with the President?

A This is a good question. Ambassador Sondland will tell you, has told you, told me: frequently. Frequently. I mean, I can't -- I don't know.

I know for a fact that he can call the President directly and does. And I've known this has -- I have heard that on several occasions he had done that, so it's not just a one-off. I mean, he's done it a bunch -- a couple times that I know of.

Q Okay. So it's a regular enough occurrence that he's probably talked to the President 10, 20, 30 times?

A I have no idea of the number.

Q Okay.

There's a little bit of a disconnect between -- like,

right around this time period is when Sondland reports the President is pretty definitive, "I don't want anything. I want nothing." But right at the same time, Morrison is revealing that he has a sinking feeling.

And so I'm just curious as to how you piece those two together. Because, on one hand, the President says, I want nothing, then the aid's released; but, on the other hand, Morrison has the sinking feeling.

A Morrison's sinking feeling is anytime there is an activation of that kind of Giuliani-oriented channel.

Q Uh-huh.

A But it seems to me that they describe the -- it seems to me that they describe the same phone call. You're right, there was some variance.

Q Right.

A And both related that the President said no quid pro quo. But they also both related that President Trump did insist that Zelensky go to a microphone and open investigations of Biden and 2016, and President Zelensky should want to do it himself, and --

Q But that part's not from Sondland's readout of the call.

A This is Morrison telling me about a Sondland-Trump meeting --

Q Okay.

A -- phone call. Right? And then Sondland -- Gordon tells me the next day, on September 8th, that he talked to President Trump -- it must have been the day before -- and that Trump was adamant that President Zelensky himself --

Q Uh-huh.

A Because a week earlier, I had suggested to Gordon that maybe the prosecutor general could make this statement; it would be more logical than the President.

Q But, in any event, you're only hearing this from either Sondland or Morrison, and you have no idea whether these calls actually happened.

A I think they actually happened, just because I got two reports of what sounded like the same call.

Q Okay. But by --

A But it's true that I never talked to the President.

Q Okay. But by September 9th, there had been some -- I mean, it had become public, right, with the Politico story that the aid was being withheld?

A That was August 29th.

Q Right. So by September 9 --

A Correct, it was out there.

Q -- on the eve of the aid hold being lifted --

A Yep.

Q -- it had been public.

A For a week, week and a half.

Q Right.

A Yeah.

Q And, as we understand it, there were Senators, you know, calling the --

A Two Senators came up. Oh. Right, right. You're exactly right. Senators called the President. Yes.

Q Okay. So it's possible Sondland -- when Sondland says the President doesn't want anything, no quid pro quo, it's possible the President's reacting to the fact that he's getting some heat on this issue and he's about to lift the hold.

A I don't know.

Q Okay.

A Don't know.

MR. MEADOWS: So I wanted a few clarifications --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Please.

MR. MEADOWS -- because sometimes my ears --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I have the same problem. I have the same problem.

MR. MEADOWS: So are you saying you got a call about the Sondland-Trump phone call from Morrison --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. MEADOWS: -- before you did from Sondland?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct. I got the Morrison call on the 7th, and I got --

MR. MEADOWS: Is that unusual, I mean, that you would get a report from the NSC on a phone call between an Ambassador and the President of the United States before you got a readout from the Ambassador or to the President?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, it's just a matter of logistics of when you're on what call.

MR. MEADOWS: Yeah, but I guess the question I have is, does Morrison report on other phone calls between the President and other individuals to you? I just find that just interesting, that he would pick up the phone and call you and say "by the way" about this readout between a phone call and the President before Ambassador Sondland did that.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It was before. There's no doubt it was before Ambassador Sondland did that. That's clear from the 7th and 8th of September.

But Tim Morrison and I have a lot of interactions that I just mentioned to Mr. Castor, and I may have called him with some other questions about, I don't know, China, and he may have related that. So it was not a regular -- I don't remember any other time when he related a conversation about the President.

MR. MEADOWS: So, obviously, this would've been a big deal, this phone call, I mean, with the President saying, no quid pro quo. Did you have a relief at that point that, well, gosh, since there's no quid pro quo, I guess the funds

are going to be released?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That was not my reaction at the time, Congressman. My --

MR. MEADOWS: Well, what was your reaction? Because I guess I'm a little -- I mean, if this is such a big deal --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It is a big --

MR. MEADOWS: -- that you raised it with a Ukrainian official on September 1st --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. MEADOWS: -- why would you have not reacted in a more, I guess, exuberant manner?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: To the statement that I heard twice, that it was not a quid pro quo? Is that --

MR. MEADOWS: Right.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I should've been exuberant about that? Oh, because -- I'm just trying to understand your question. And so --

MR. MEADOWS: Yeah. No, that's the question. You understand it. I guess I find it that it was just very blase that you got a phone call --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I --

MR. MEADOWS: -- when you had raised this, and you didn't --

THE CHAIRMAN: Please let the witness answer.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The answer, Congressman, is that --

MR. MEADOWS: Adam, I have not interrupted you at all today.

THE CHAIRMAN: I know, but he's trying to answer three times in a row.

MR. MEADOWS: I'm trying to clarify my question. He's asked me two or three times.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: And I think I got the question now. Thank you.

MR. MEADOWS: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Thank you, Congressman.

So the answer is that, even after the statement that I heard both times from both recollections, recitations, descriptions of the phone call, after the quid pro quo, there is none, there is none, there is none, then it went on -- both conversations went on to say: But President Trump did insist that President Zelensky go to a microphone and say he is opening investigations of Biden and 2016, and President Zelensky should want to do this himself. That was the -- that's what Tim --

MR. MEADOWS: And that came from Morrison?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That came from Morrison.

MR. MEADOWS: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: What came from Sondland when he told me this story was President Trump said it was not a quid pro quo. Ambassador Sondland said that he had talked to

President Zelensky and Yermak and told them that, although this was not a quid pro quo, if President Zelensky did not clear things up in public, we would be at a stalemate.

MR. MEADOWS: All right.

And so let me go back to one other thing, because I think you said -- you've said it twice now, and I want to make sure I understand you. You do not think it's appropriate for the Ukraine Government to investigate a violation of Ukrainian law. Is that what you said?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, no. I think it's perfectly appropriate for the Ukrainian Government to investigate a violation of Ukrainian law. I think it's --

MR. MEADOWS: Okay. All right. I thought so.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yeah, yeah.

MR. MEADOWS: All right.

So one other area. You talked about -- and I think it was Mr. Noble had asked you about the funds being withheld, and you said you believed that it was the aid and foreign military sales as well, all together in one bunch, in answer to his question.

And I want to remind you, actually, the talk of the Javelins and foreign military sales, it comes at a separate time. And I want to refresh your memory on that and perhaps allow you --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: You're --

MR. MEADOWS: -- to correct the record. Because I think Mr. Noble asked the question and you lumped it all together and said it came at one time --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No --

MR. MEADOWS: -- and we know that that's not accurate.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Let me tell you what I think is accurate.

MR. MEADOWS: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: What I think is accurate is there was 250 million in something called the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, USAI. And that --

MR. MEADOWS: Controlled by DOD.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: -- is owned by DOD, correct.

MR. MEADOWS: That's correct.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct. And there's another 141 million of, I think it's FMF that's run by the State Department.

MR. MEADOWS: State Department.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is separate from -- those two things are separate from the purchase of Javelins by the Ukrainians with their own money --

MR. MEADOWS: That's correct.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: -- of about $29 million for about 150 Javelins, right? So those are three separate pieces. If I was not clear on that --

MR. MEADOWS: Yeah. Because they came in three separate tranches. And I used to be on Foreign Affairs, and when we talk about all of this stuff, there's a whole lot of things that hold up foreign aid.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. MEADOWS: And so you're a career Foreign Service --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I am actually not a career Foreign Service, but I've been in the State Department for a long time.

MR. MEADOWS: Well, you've been in the State Department for a long time.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct.

MR. MEADOWS: And so have you seen aid held up for a variety of reasons other than just a normal appropriations glitch? Have you seen Senators put a hold on foreign aid occasionally --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. MEADOWS: -- to get votes on things that --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't know about getting votes on things. But, sure, there are certainly holds put on foreign assistance packages. There's no doubt about it.

MR. MEADOWS: That have nothing to do with our overall foreign policy initiative. Have you seen that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't remember, but I would not be surprised. I would not be surprised.

MR. MEADOWS: All right.

MR. JORDAN: Ambassador, how many conversations and/or meetings did you have with Mr. Morrison in this relevant time period?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: "Relevant time" meaning all summer?

MR. JORDAN: Well, you said you had one -- you get there on June 17th and you had one conversation with the individual who held Mr. Morrison's position at NSC. You had one conversation in your first month there, and it was on July 19th.

So, between July 19th and the September timeframe when Mr. Morrison calls you to tell you about a call that Mr. Sondland had with the President of the United States, how many times between July 19th and September 9th, roughly, how many times did you communicate with Mr. Morrison? It sounds like it was a lot.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yeah. I was going to say 8, 10, 12. A good number. A lot.

MR. JORDAN: Yeah. So his predecessor you had one conversation with in this timeframe.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Well, no. I actually had -- before I went out, I sat down with Fiona and Alex -- actually, a couple times before I went out. And then had this meeting -- or had this call --

MR. JORDAN: Well, earlier, in a previous hour, when I

asked you how many conversations you had with Dr. Hill between June 17th and July 19th, you said one, and that was on July 19th.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: And I think that's correct. And what I'm saying is before I --

MR. JORDAN: And we tried to establish -- it sounded like it was on your calendar. She probably called you, but you weren't sure. Am I characterizing that accurately?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct.

MR. JORDAN: So you had one conversation with Dr. Hill in your first month on the job.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I think that's correct, yes.

MR. JORDAN: And now you've said you had multiple conversations with Mr. Morrison.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. This one that was in your testimony, was this Mr. Morrison called you to tell you about that, or was it his previously scheduled call?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: We're talking about September 7th now, Congressman?

MR. JORDAN: Let me just go back and look. Yeah, the September 7th -- you described a phone conversation between Ambassador Sondland and President Trump. Did he call you?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The way we do these phone calls is, to be secure, to be secure -- September 7th may be a -- was

it a Sunday? September 7th. It was a Saturday. So to have a secure call on a weekend, I go into the Embassy.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: And the way we arrange these calls is through unclass email. We say, Tim, you know, you got time? Or he may have sent me a note saying, do we have time? And I'd said, sure, I'll go into the Embassy at such and such a time.

So the short answer is I'm not sure who called whom.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. But you had multiple calls between July 19th and this call on September 7th.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: And did you have a prior friendship or relationship working with Mr. Morrison prior to his time as coming in --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, I had not met him before.

MR. JORDAN: So you'd never met him before.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: He gets Dr. Hill's position.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: And then you have multiple phone calls with him in this timeframe.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct.

MR. JORDAN: And I think you said some of it was relative to China. And Ukraine as well? The linkage --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: -- between China and Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, China in Ukraine.

MR. JORDAN: I understand.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: China investing in -- yes.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yeah, he's very -- he and Dr. Kupperman and many people, as you are I'm sure aware, are concerned about the Chinese interest in buying up some of Ukrainian technology and a company called [redacted]. Yes. So we had many conversations about that.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. And of these multiple conversations, many conversations you had, do you think it's -- characterize it. Was it more Mr. Morrison reaching out to you to communicate information to you or the other way?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Both.

MR. JORDAN: Who initiated?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It's both.

MR. JORDAN: Who initiated most? I'm just curious.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm just --

MR. JORDAN: You don't know?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Both. I don't know.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. Thank you.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It's some of each.

MR. JORDAN: All right.

MR. MEADOWS: And so this phone call you had was on a Saturday.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: September 7th I think was a Saturday.

MR. MEADOWS: So how many times do you go in to make phone calls on urgent matters on a Saturday?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Not infrequently, sadly.

MR. MEADOWS: So you literally say, well, I need to go talk to Washington, D.C., and go in on a Saturday --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: If it has to be secure, yes, I go into the Embassy. And the Embassy is 25 minutes away.

MR. MEADOWS: No, I get the secure nature, but --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yeah.

MR. MEADOWS: So what you're saying is you go into the Embassy to make this phone call to talk about a phone call that he had with the President.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That he had it --

MR. MEADOWS: Sondland had it with the President.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Right. Morrison is talking about a Sondland conversation with the President, correct.

MR. MEADOWS: Okay. And so, as you go in -- you don't recall what else you talked about?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: In that phone call?

MR. MEADOWS: Yeah.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q You first learned you were going to be coming here today to answer questions last week? Or before?

A No, no, no. You sent me -- somebody sent me a note or an invitation to come probably 2 weeks ago?

Q Okay.

A Yeah.

Q But prior to today, have you had any communications with congressional staff about any of the issues that we've discussed here today?

A No.

Q Okay. And, you know, there was a report running yesterday about things that may or may not have occurred on a codel, and I just want to --

A Staffdel, maybe. Was it a staffdel?

Q Codel or staffdel.

A So I saw a report. Maybe this is what you're asking.

While I was in Kyiv -- this must've been -- maybe about the same time. I can't remember. In September. The Atlantic Council had one of its many visits, and the Atlantic Council invites congressional staff. Generally, they are fairly junior congressional staff. And I think there were probably 15 or so congressional staffers on this trip.

John Herbst, Ambassador Herbst organizes these. It was

a Sunday afternoon. They were just off the plane. They came to my residence, and I gave them a briefing. And it could've been that one of your staffers was on this, Mr. Chairman.

Q My question was just simply, you haven't had communications with --

A I have not.

Q -- congressional staff outside of what we're here doing here today?

A That's right. Other -- if the question is about that Atlantic Council one, there were a bunch of congressional staffers whom I gave a regular briefing to.

Q Okay. Fair enough.

What else -- what can you tell us about the Atlantic Council? Did you know they were funded in part by Burisma?

A You know, I didn't know that. I didn't know that. So I have great respect for the people -- I know a lot of the people at the Atlantic Council. And I know that -- and I know that they have to raise funds. I didn't know that Burisma was one of their funders.

Q Okay. But you learned that recently or --

A Maybe in the past week.

Q Do a lot of Ukrainian business enterprises contribute money to the Atlantic Council, to your knowledge?

A I don't know.

MR. CASTOR: Mr. Armstrong, did you have something you

wanted to --

MR. ARMSTRONG: Yeah, just briefly.

You were talking about the High Court of Anti-Corruption. And that was actually set up under Poroshenko, but it was inactive. And when Zelensky got elected, he brought it back, right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir. "Inactive" is probably -- well, it wasn't put into effect. It wasn't -- it didn't start. And the problem was, it didn't have a place to meet. And so -- under President Poroshenko. And so people were thinking that he was kind of dragging his feet.

MR. ARMSTRONG: Yeah.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: And then Zelensky gets in, and within, like, 2 weeks, the same fellow, this prosecutor general that I mentioned a minute ago, Ryabshapka, came up with a place, got them in, and they opened it on September 5th.

MR. ARMSTRONG: But earlier in your testimony, you said -- we had a comment about Parliament, and you said you can buy your way into Parliament. We asked about criminal justice. You can buy your way out of prosecution essentially is going on.

And there were actually -- you had talked earlier about concerns about Zelensky's relationship with a particular oligarch. There were concerns about the Naftogaz board, the

boards of state-owned banks, and, obviously, even outside of all of this, some questions about Burisma and what we just found out.

And corruption relating to oligarchs is not something new, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. ARMSTRONG: I mean -- and during this, we went through it. I mean, there was a parliamentarian, Leshchenko, who was investigated. You said he was an original supporter of Zelensky and then wasn't?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: So he was originally -- well, he started off as a journalist. He joined President Poroshenko's party and was elected to Parliament. And then, as a reformer, he was advising the Zelensky campaign, self-selected out of the Zelensky camp.

MR. ARMSTRONG: And people were excited about Zelensky's election, but also, at the same time -- and I'll get back to this in a second -- I mean, there was at least four current or former members of the Ukrainian Government that were, I mean, participating in our 2016 election. And I don't mean anything -- I mean, they were posting on Facebook, whether it was former Prime Minister Yatseniuk was posting on Facebook; Minister of Internal Affairs -- who is still a member of government, correct.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. ARMSTRONG: -- Avakov, who has, I mean, said some pretty derogatory things about the President. Chaly, who was the Ambassador to Ukraine, coined an op-ed in The Hill during the campaign.

So we have a concern about a potential relationship with Zelensky. We have -- I mean, this is systemic, and it's gone on for a long time.

So, I mean, while we're excited and this is moving forward and some of these things are going on, you can see probably how this administration maybe had a little concern, particularly not only with corruption but also with direct relationship to what went on with --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, the only thing I'd say is that the concern should not have been about the new team. Now, your point is a good one -- that is, they had one carryover from --

MR. ARMSTRONG: Well, let me ask you this. Because you weren't the Ambassador during the 2016 election.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's true.

MR. ARMSTRONG: But you were the Ambassador during the 2008 election.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I was.

MR. ARMSTRONG: And if four members of the Ukrainian Government were directly involved in the election of -- which ended up being President Obama, in your position of

Ambassador, how would you have handled that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: What would I have done to -- so the scenario is --

MR. ARMSTRONG: Let me ask -- let's start here: Would that have concerned you?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Any interference of diplomats or of government officials in an election in another country would concern me.

MR. ARMSTRONG: So I'm assuming none of that happened in 2008.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Not that I know of.

MR. ARMSTRONG: Any Ukrainian officials that you're aware of.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Not that I'm aware of.

MR. ARMSTRONG: Okay. Thanks.

MR. CASTOR: I think our time has expired.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's take a 5- or 10-minute break. We do have votes coming up. It would be my intention for staff to continue the interview during votes. And I don't think we have a lot more questions for you. I don't know where the minority is, but hopefully we won't go too much longer.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm at your service, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you, Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Thank you.

[Recess.]

[5:31 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: We're going to go back on the record to try to get to as many members as we can before votes. And let me start by recognizing Mr. Malinowski.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ambassador, for your service and your patience with us today. I just wanted -- you've answered most of my questions, so I wanted to maybe try to sum things up a little bit. It seems to me from your testimony and from that of others that we've heard that there was a group of officials in the executive branch who were working on Ukraine and who cared about Ukraine across the interagency.

And at the start of this drama, all of you basically agreed on the objective, supporting Ukraine against Russia, fighting corruption, promoting democracy. You wanted a good relationship between the two countries. And then, at a certain point, you all learned that the President was in a different place, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes. So, in the May 23rd, before I got out there, in his meeting with the delegation that came back enthusiastic about Zelensky, the President was less enthusiastic.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Right. And at that point, things -- that group of people, roughly speaking, split into two different camps. You all still had the same goals, but there

was one group of folks who felt that they didn't want to have anything to do with what Mr. Bolton reportedly described as the drug deal because it was wrong, it was unprincipled, we should not be operating that way.

And then there was a second group of people that may have included Kurt Volker, Ambassador Sondland, Secretary Perry, who decided that they had to somehow go along with this drug deal because they felt it was the only way to bring the President back, to get him to support the vision of the relationship that you wanted. Is that a fair assessment?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It is, Congressman. And it was motivated, but as you said, toward a strong relationship. It was just a different -- they thought they had to take a different route through Giuliani to get there.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Right. And so the problem wasn't with either of those groups of people. The problem was the drug deal itself, in effect. It was this decision that, you know, you had to go through this path to get to that outcome. And so let me ask you, who was responsible for the drug deal? Who was responsible for setting all this into motion? Was it Mr. Sondland? Was it Ambassador Sondland?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't think so. I think the origin of the idea to get President Zelensky to say out loud he's going to investigate Burisma and 2016 election, I think the originator, the person who came up with that was

Mr. Giuliani.

MR. MALINOWSKI: And he was representing whose interests in --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: President Trump.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Krishnamoorthi.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Hello, Mr. Ambassador.

Thank you for your incredible service to our Nation.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Thank you, sir.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: First of all, on page 12 of your statement, you talked about the meeting that you helped facilitate between Senators Johnson and Murphy with President Zelensky. Do you recall that meeting?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I do.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: And in your statement, you say that they emphasized that President Zelensky should not jeopardize bipartisan support by getting drawn into U.S. domestic politics. What exactly were they referring to when they said he should not jeopardize bipartisan support by getting drawn into U.S. politics?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The Senators were concerned -- the Senators could see that President Zelensky faced a dilemma, and the dilemma was investigate Burisma and 2016 or don't. And if they investigated, then that would be seen to be interfering on the side of President Trump's reelection; if

they didn't investigate, that would be seen to be interfering in favor of some of his -- of President Trump's opponent. So they told him: Just don't get involved, just don't get involved.

MR. MALINOWSKI: And both Senator Murphy and Senator Johnson said -- or expressed that sentiment, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I want to be careful about quoting Members of Congress and Senators. This is why I was counseled by smarter people than I about how to phrase this. But that was spoken by Senator Murphy.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Okay. And, now, some folks might say that the beginning of those investigations was merely investigating corruption. Why was it your and their sentiment that it was actually getting Zelensky drawn into U.S. politics?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It would get into U.S. politics if the Ukrainians were to go -- was to investigate the Burisma cases that were closed at the time when Vice President Biden was in town -- in Kyiv frequently making the point about anticorruption and when his son was on the board of Burisma. So it was that cluster of issues surrounding Burisma that would be highlighted by an investigation.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: And you agreed with the sentiment expressed by the Senators, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I did.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Now, let me turn your attention to page 8 for a second. There?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yep.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Ambassador Sondland said that -- I'm looking at the top of the page -- said that a call between President Trump and President Zelensky would take place soon. This is in the July timeframe. And Ambassador Volker said that what was, quote, most important for Zelensky to say that he will help investigation and address any specific personnel issues if there are any, closed quote.

What specific personnel issues are being referred to?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, I don't know. To this day, I don't know what he was referring to there.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Okay. And did Ambassador Sondland ever bring up personnel issues?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Not in my -- not that I know of.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Finally, Giuliani. You may or may not be aware of this, but Giuliani had a hand in trying to force out Ambassador Yovanovitch from her post as Ambassador. Are you aware of any attempts by Giuliani or anyone else to come back at you for some of the text messages that you had sent basically questioning the wisdom of Ukraine policy that was being pursued by Volker, Sondland, Giuliani, or anyone else?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, sir.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: And did anybody ever question you directly about your statements and whether you were somehow out of line in making the statements that you made?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Not yet.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Okay. Thank you. I hope never.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Thank you.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Do me a favor though: Stay honest as you are. Thank you, sir.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Thank you, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just one followup question before I go to my next colleague. Prior to the codel you mentioned with Senators Murphy and Johnson, Senator Johnson told The Wall Street Journal that Sondland had described to him a quid pro quo involving a commitment by Kyiv to probe matters related to U.S. elections and the status of nearly $400 million in U.S. aid to Ukraine that the President had ordered to be held up in July.

Apparently, Senator Johnson had told this to the Journal before the codel. Did he ever raise this with you during those meetings?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: He didn't raise that, no, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Representative Lynch. Then Maloney and Speier, if you have questions, Speier, Jackie Speier.

MR. LYNCH: Thank you. Thank you, Ambassador. I really appreciate your courage in coming forward, and thank you for your service.

I'd like you to focus on page 10 and 11 of your opening statement. And September 1st seems to be a red letter day, so to speak. You have a conversation -- excuse me, yeah, you have a number of conversations here that are very important.

One you had with Mr. Morrison, who described a conversation between Ambassador Sondland with Mr. Yermak at Warsaw, where Ambassador Sondland told Mr. Yermak that the security assistance money would not come until President Zelensky commits to pursue the Burisma investigation.

You also say that's the first time you've heard that security assistance, not just the White House meeting, was conditioned on the investigation. And then you text message Ambassador Sondland, and you're saying -- it's a question: We are now saying the security assistance and the White House meeting are conditioned on investigations, question mark, end quote.

There's also a statement here that you relate that Ambassador Sondland also told you that he now recognized he'd made a mistake by earlier telling the Ukrainian officials to whom he spoke that a White House meeting with President Zelensky was dependent on a public announcement of investigations, in fact. Ambassador Sondland said everything

was dependent on such an announcement, including security assistance.

He said the President -- Trump wanted President Zelensky, quote, in a public box, close quote, by making a public statement about ordering such investigations. This is a rich description. This is all one day, September 1st. And so I would like to know, is this a product of your memory, or is this something that you took contemporaneous notes, you know, at the time that this was occurring?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Contemporaneous notes, Mr. Lynch.

MR. LYNCH: They are. And that is your usual practice?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It is, indeed.

MR. LYNCH: And did you surrender these notes to the State Department?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I did.

MR. LYNCH: You did?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I did.

MR. LYNCH: And do you have copies in your custody?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I do.

MR. LYNCH: You do. Okay. That's all I got. I yield back.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Maloney.

MR. MALONEY: Just a quick followup on that one point. Over here. My name is Sean Maloney. Ambassador Sondland, thank you for your testimony today.

Just to follow up on my colleague's question, along those same lines, when you use quotation marks in your opening statement, did you have a standard that you applied? In other words, would we find those phrases, those quotes in the notes you just described to my colleague, Mr. Lynch?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir. If I had them -- if I put them in quotation marks, that means I can find them in my notes. And I took notes -- it would either be in a text message or WhatsApp message or notes that I took on my little notebook that I carry around, or a notebook that I keep in my office that I take notes on phone calls when I'm in the office. So the answer is, yes, if I've got quotes on them, I can find them.

MR. MALONEY: Thank you.

I want to direct your attention to page 10. I just have a couple of questions about the Warsaw meeting.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. MALONEY: Now, we see towards the bottom of page 10 you describe the meeting that Vice President Pence had with President Zelensky. I believe that was on September 1st?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. MALONEY: And in that fourth paragraph towards the bottom, you mentioned that while President Zelensky, and I'm quoting, had opened the meeting by asking the Vice President about security cooperation, you go on to say, the Vice

President did not respond substantively but said he would talk to President Trump that night.

Do you see where I'm reading from?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I do.

MR. MALONEY: Do you know whether the Vice President spoke to the President that night?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't.

MR. MALONEY: And then you also go on to say, the Vice President did not say the President wanted the Europeans to do -- excuse me, the Vice President did say that President Trump wanted the Europeans to do more to support the Ukraine and that he wanted the Ukrainians to do more to fight corruption.

In the next paragraph, however, you describe another meeting that's going on also in Warsaw, also the same day, as I understand it, between Ambassador Sondland and Mr. Yermak. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: This is a report of a phone call I had with Mr. Morrison. I think it's the same one that we just -- I think he called me to tell me about or I called him to ask about the events in Warsaw on September 1st.

MR. MALONEY: And --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm sorry, Congressman. This is the same phone call with Mr. Morrison. He went on to describe this subsequent conversation with Sondland, Yermak.

MR. MALONEY: I think I understand your answer, sir. But my question is, is in the phone call you're having with Mr. Morrison --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: And he's describing a Warsaw meeting between Mr. Sondland and Mr. Yermak --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. MALONEY: -- which seems to have happened at the same time as the Vice President was meeting with President Zelensky. Am I correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It was the same event, but probably -- I wasn't there, but what happens at these is there's a bilateral meeting between Vice President and the President with all the aides. And then, after that, the aides may get together separately, and that's what I imagine happened here.

MR. MALONEY: I understand. Do you know whether Ambassador Sondland ever spoke to the Vice President about his conversation with Mr. Yermak?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't know.

MR. MALONEY: I want to ask you about one other thing, sir, which is, on page 12 and on page 13, my colleague Chairman Schiff has taken you at some length through the various statements of conditionality and your view of that. And it's not my intention to go back into that. I just wanted to ask you about the wording you use at this point in

the sequence of events.

So, on September 8th, there is the call between Sondland and Volker and you, and you recount this expression about how when a businessman is about to sign a check to someone who owes him something, the businessman asks that person to pay up before signing the check. And then, of course, you mention that Ambassador Volker used the same term several days later. Do you see where I'm reading from the from in the middle of the page?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I do.

MR. MALONEY: And you go on to say that holding up security assistance for -- and you use the words "domestic political gain" was, quote, crazy. Do you see that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I do.

MR. MALONEY: And the day before -- excuse me, the day after that, on September 9th, it comes before in your testimony a couple paragraphs up, but it's actually the next day is when you write the famous text: I think it's crazy to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign. Do you see that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I do.

MR. MALONEY: And so my question, sir, is, when you use phrases like "domestic political gain" or a "political campaign," I want to understand what you meant by that, because, of course, we're not just talking now about whether

or not an investigation was launched or whether or not it would be appropriate or not to do that. I'm curious about why you connected it up to, quote, a domestic political gain and, quote, a political campaign?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Because as I understood the reason for investigating Burisma was to cast Vice President Biden in a bad light.

MR. MALONEY: That would be the domestic political gain?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. MALONEY: To cast Vice President Biden in a bad light?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Right.

MR. MALONEY: And the political campaign would be what political campaign?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: A political campaign for the reelection of President Trump.

MR. MALONEY: On page 2 of your testimony -- last question. On page 2 of your testimony, you say that Ukraine was special, which struck me. You talk about your many years of service and the extraordinary work you've done for our country, but in that third paragraph, you say: Ukraine is special for me. Do you see that? In fact, you say, across the responsibilities I've had in public service, Ukraine is special for me. It's in the third paragraph, halfway through.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes. Yes, sir.

MR. MALONEY: Throughout the day, you've responded to our questions in a very professional manner. I take it this is your years of training as a diplomat. But I'm curious about your emotional reaction to these events. Ukraine, as you say, was special to you, and you witnessed this over the series of a couple of months this summer from June, I guess, through the present, but really to early September, especially. What was your emotional reaction to these events?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It was a reaction based on the fact that, as I mentioned, either before or after that, just after that, that I think Ukraine is important objectively to the United States. That is not emotionally, but we can do some kind of analysis and determine why it's important for Ukraine to succeed as a state and why it's important for Russia not to succeed in its aggression. That's kind of the analytic piece.

The emotional piece is based on my time in Ukraine in 2006, 2009, when traveling around the country, I got to know Ukrainians and their frustrations and difficulties and those kind of things. And then coming back and seeing it now where they have the opportunity, they've got a young President, a young Prime Minister, a young Parliament, the Prime Minister is 35 years old. This new government has appealed to young

people who are so idealistic, pro-West, pro-United States, pro-Europe, that I feel an emotional attachment, bond, connection to this country and these people.

MR. MALONEY: You cared about it?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I cared about this country.

MR. MALONEY: And you didn't want to see it screwed up?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I didn't want to see it screwed up. I wanted to see it succeed.

MR. MALONEY: And you didn't want to see it screwed up by some political agenda coming from Washington. Is that fair to say?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Well, what I didn't want to do is have United States assistance to Ukraine blocked or suspended for no good reason that I could see. And there are some bad reasons that -- I didn't want to see that blocked. That was my concern, in this episode.

MR. MALONEY: Thank you, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just one followup question before I go to Representative Speier. In Warsaw, Morrison relates to you there are two meetings going on. There is a meeting with a Vice President and President Zelensky, and then there's the separate meeting between Sondland and Yermak, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct, and they're probably in sequence. They're probably not at the same time.

THE CHAIRMAN: And the meeting with the Vice President

and Zelensky was actually a big meeting with one or two dozen people. Am I right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Probably. I was not there, but, yes. Normally that's the case.

THE CHAIRMAN: So, at a big meeting like that, it stands to reason they're not going to get into the specifics about that we want you to do this political investigation in order to get this. Am I right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: That takes place, in fact, in this small, private meeting between Sondland and Yermak?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, without -- presumably without the Vice President.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Representative Speier.

MS. SPEIER: Thank you.

Ambassador, thank you for really a lifetime of service to our country. You're really a great American.

I've got a couple of kind of strings I'd like to just get some clarification on. You said that you met with Ambassador Volker and Mr. Yermak over dinner on the 14th of September after the money had been released. And Mr. Volker kept pushing, saying, do not investigate Poroshenko. Did you have a subsequent conversation with him as to why he was doing that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: With Mr. Volker, no. I wouldn't

characterize it, Ms. Speier, as saying that he -- or he kept doing it. I mean, he raised it once, got a pretty emotional response or kind of, you know, a strong response from both Ukrainians at the table. And he didn't push --

MS. SPEIER: He backed off?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Kurt did not pursue it.

MS. SPEIER: But you didn't ask him afterwards why he was --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I didn't.

MS. SPEIER: Okay. Did anyone in the Zelensky administration indicate to you a sense of confusion with what you have dubbed as the irregular policy channel?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Indirectly. So, in my conversations in the regular channel with President Zelensky and his team, they would, on occasion, express confusion or uncertainty about what direction they were getting from the United States because they were hearing, as I mentioned earlier, directly from Ambassador Sondland who could and would pick up the phone and call President Zelensky or President -- Assistant Yermak and give them advice outside of the normal channel -- outside of my channel, outside of the normal channel. So they were hearing different things from both -- from those two channels. And that's confusing.

MS. SPEIER: There's hardly any reference to Secretary Perry, who has been included as one of the tres amigos. Did

you have any contact with him?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I didn't.

MS. SPEIER: And he was never in any of your text messages?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, not in any text messages. He was in two phone calls, Ms. Speier. Early on the -- I think two phone calls. Certainly was in the June 28th phone call, and he might have been -- I'll check my notes to see if he were in the June 18 phone call. But those were the only two times that I heard him on the phone or had any interaction with him.

MS. SPEIER: Did you think it was peculiar that he was engaged in this?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No. Secretary Perry is very interested in energy markets. Ukraine could be a big energy market. It would be -- Secretary Perry knows that there are a lot of companies, in particular in Texas, but I'm sure in other places, who would like to sell liquid natural gas, liquefied natural gas, LNG, to Ukraine or east Europe more broadly. So he had been interested in this, and I didn't think this was very unusual.

MS. SPEIER: So, on page 12, third paragraph, you reference that President Trump did insist that President Zelensky go to a microphone and say he is opening investigations of Biden and the 2016 election interference.

Was that specific reference to Biden and not Burisma?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I would check my notes, but I think the answer is yes.

MS. SPEIER: So it was very specific to an investigation of Biden?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MS. SPEIER: All right. There was a lot of discussion after September 11th that it might be difficult to get all the money out to Ukraine -- by the September 30th end of the fiscal year. How much money actually got released?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I should know the answer to that. I don't know the answer to that. I know it's probably about 90 percent of -- that's rough, Ms. Speier, but roughly 90 percent.

MS. SPEIER: Okay. And my last question is, at one point, there was a reference made, I think it's on page 9, where Mr. Morrison references that the President doesn't want to provide any assistance at all. And that's in quotes.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yeah.

MS. SPEIER: Did that alarm you?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It did.

MS. SPEIER: And coupled with that May 23rd, I think it was, meeting in the White House where everyone came back very excited and the President seemed very unexcited, what does that tell you about his interest in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Again, I have never -- I wasn't in that meeting. I've never had conversations with the President. Secretary Pompeo did tell me the same thing that the participants of that May 23rd meeting said, and that was the President was skeptical of Ukraine. And we've heard several descriptions of the skepticism. Some appear in this -- the Politico article. I mean, he was concerned about the allegations here. And that's as much as I know about the President's view.

MS. SPEIER: Okay. Thank you.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Representative Lieu.

MR. LIEU: All right. Thank you, Ambassador Taylor, for your service to our country. Thank you for serving in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne. I note for the record you jumped out of perfectly fine airplanes, so thank you for your courage.

I'd like to talk about U.S. national security. It's a fundamental principle, intent of U.S. national security to push back against Russian aggression, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: [Nonverbal response.]

MR. LIEU: And Ukraine is one of the countries at the tip of the spear of pushing back against Russian aggression, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It is.

MR. LIEU: And on page eight of your statement, you write, Ambassador Volker and I could see the armed and hostile Russian-led forces on the other side of a damaged bridge across the line of contact. Over 13,000 Ukrainians had been killed in the war, one or two a week. More Ukrainians would undoubtedly die without the U.S. assistance.

But I want to make clear, U.S. security assistance to Ukraine isn't just to help Ukrainian national security. It's also to help U.S. national security. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It is. That's correct.

MR. LIEU: All right. And, in fact, that's why, as you said, the Department of Defense within a day came back with analysis saying: We need to give security assistance to Ukraine.

Isn't that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That is correct.

MR. LIEU: Okay. When the President of the United States freezes aid to Ukraine, the Russians can detect weakness, isn't that right, between the U.S. and Ukrainian relationship?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The Russians are very careful observers of Ukraine and the United States, and they would immediately -- my bet is they knew. They're very good. My bet is they knew that there was something up with the security assistance. So --

MR. LIEU: And if the U.S. doesn't give security assistance, it could in effect embolden the Russians to be even more aggressive towards Ukraine. Isn't that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Absolutely right.

MR. LIEU: Okay. So, when the President of the United States freezes security aid to Ukraine for months and months and months, that not only harms Ukrainian national security, it also harms U.S. national security. Isn't that right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

MR. LIEU: All right. Let me move on quickly to one other aspect. The public reporting on Ambassador Sondland's testimony is that he didn't remember a lot of stuff. You have a number of conversations here with Ambassador Sondland. I just want to make sure, in those conversations, there was no indication he was under the influence of alcohol, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. LIEU: He didn't slur his words, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. LIEU: There was no indication that he was under any medications that caused him short-term memory loss, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Not that I know of.

MR. LIEU: Okay. And last couple questions. The State Department told you not to come here today. Is that fair?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: They did.

MR. LIEU: So did they tell you to also not give

documents and notes to Congress, your notes? Did they say you can't provide that to --

MR. BELLINGER: They did. We've been prohibited from providing documents directly to Congress.

MR. LIEU: Okay. Thank you. That's all I have.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Thank you.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Lieu.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Just a couple of sort of cleanup questions for you, Ambassador Taylor, and then I think, at least, on the majority side, we'll be finished.

You were asked by Mr. Jordan about the number of conversations that you had with Tim Morrison, the senior director on the NSC. Is it fairly common to speak regularly with members of the NSC who cover the country where you are the effective Ambassador or Charge de mission?

A Mr. Goldman, you know, a lot of it depends on the pace of activity in certain issues, and it certainly is the case in this one. So the role, of course, of the senior director is to be the interface between the President, National Security Advisor and the President, and the interagency.

And, often, they'll be in direct interactions with people in the field. In particular, I think it's the case that embassies or ambassadors will be in touch. I try to

keep my, you know, DAS Kent, the Deputy Assistant Secretary George Kent, advised on all of these things, but it's also very common for an NSC director or senior director to be directly in touch.

And when I said it was dependent to some degree on the issue, I think I mentioned that Tim Morrison, much more than Fiona Hill, Dr. Hill, was very interested in Chinese investment in Ukraine, continues to today. So our conversations, the vast bulk of the conversations I had with Tim Morrison concerned the Chinese attempts to buy a Ukrainian [redacted] manufacturer [redacted].

And he has been a -- Tim Morrison has been a driving force in Washington to try to prevent that, and we are on the front end of that. And so, you know, I go down to [redacted], and I visit and talk to people who are looking for alternative investors, and Ambassador Bolton, when he was there, and Tim was there for that visit.

The main focus of Ambassador Bolton's visit and conversations with all of these officials that he had in the Ukrainian Government was China. And, again, this was the day before Ukrainians knew that there was even a hold. But it was China and its attempt to buy [redacted].

So, when the question comes, how often are you talking to -- well, it depends on the issue. And if there's any --

so, for example, Fiona was focused on Russia. She's a Russia expert. And the Russia-Ukraine Donbas negotiations were stalled. So there was not much happening there. What was not stalled was the Chinese attempt -- well, what was not stalled was our attempt to block Chinese purchase of these [redacted]. So that's what -- Tim was on the phone a lot for those purposes.

Q You mentioned that you kept Deputy Assistant Secretary Kent as much up to date as you could.

A Yeah.

Q Did you speak -- during the last few months, since you arrived there in mid-June, did you speak at all with Assistant Secretary Phil Reeker?

A A couple of times. Phil Reeker has not focused very much on Ukraine. He relies heavily on George Kent as the DAS. And George, as we know, is -- you have had him. You know George, so he's great. He's an incredible resource on Ukraine and Thailand, by the way.

When I was there in 2006, 2009, he was the deputy political counselor. He then, of course, went back as the DCM. He then was pulled back to be the DAS, Deputy Assistant Secretary. He is a wealth of -- as you probably heard from him, he's a wealth of knowledge. So Phil Reeker relies on George Kent, and I'm in constant contact with George Kent. We have weekly -- we have regular weekly SVTC meetings.

Q Did you ever raise any concerns about the -- what you call the irregular policy path or track with Ambassador Reeker?

A I don't think so. I think it was primarily with George Kent.

Q Any other conversations on the sub topics today with Ambassador Reeker that come to mind?

A No. So, let's see, Ambassador Reeker, I think, was in my -- I have to check my notes on this too -- I think was in my meeting with Secretary Pompeo, I'm pretty sure he was, on the 28th of May, before I decided -- as I was deciding. And Phil was there. And Phil Reeker travels a lot. He has got all the European countries, and so he's on the road more than average, I will say, and so hasn't focused a whole lot on Ukraine.

Q You said you received reaction to your cable on August 29th from the sixth floor. Who responded to you?

A It was actually George Kent, who may actually be on the fifth floor, but, you know, down one.

Q Okay. What about Under Secretary David Hale? Did you communicate at all with him?

A On occasion. I went to see him before I went out. And he had visited Kyiv before I got there, so I was hoping to have him come out, but he didn't. But only on occasion would I -- I may have tried to be sure that he got the cable,

the notice cable.

Q Okay. But you never spoke to him about it?

A No.

Q Did you ever speak to anybody other than George Kent about your -- at the State Department about your notice cable?

A Ulrich Brechbuhl, I believe, the counselor, just to be sure that he got it because I wanted to be sure that the Secretary got it.

Q Right. But you never received a response --

A I didn't.

Q -- in any meaningful way?

A I didn't.

Q Did you ever receive any indication when you relayed any concerns to the State Department about this irregular policy group that anyone in the Department actually took any steps to resolve anything?

A There was some discomfort within the State Department with Ambassador Sondland's role in Ukraine. Of course, Ukraine is not in the EU. But it was well-known that, in that famous May 23rd meeting in the Oval Office, that Ambassador Sondland was given direction, with Secretary Perry and Ambassador Volker, to focus on Ukraine, to do something with regard to Ukraine policy.

Q You testified a little bit earlier about a staffdel

or Atlantic Council trip --

A Yep.

Q -- where you met with a staff member from the Intelligence Committee, right? And you had no conversations about any of these issues --

A No.

Q -- with that individual?

A No.

Q Were you aware that there were also three staff members from -- Republican Members of Congress who were on the Foreign Affairs Committee on that trip as well?

A I knew the names and affiliations and members or committees that each of those members of the staffdel were on.

Q Did you have any conversations with any of those staff members about any of the issues here today?

A No. This was a briefing, as I say, in my residence. I gave them a briefing, and then we had an opportunity for questions and answers, and they hit it off.

Q Are you familiar with the individuals Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman?

A I only know them through the newspapers.

Q Or the indictments?

A Or the indictments in the newspapers.

Q So you were not -- but prior to the public reports

about their involvement in Ukraine and their association with Rudy Giuliani, you were not aware of them in any way?

A Mr. Goldman, looking back on this, I think back in like March or April someone had -- again, when I was at the Institute of Peace -- sent me some description of interference in -- what was this deal -- in maybe a natural gas -- I think there was a -- I think there was a proposal to sell natural gas to Ukraine.

And I think the person who was telling me this referenced these two names, which I didn't recognize at the time, and I didn't even register at the time. But now, you know, in the last, you know, now they're indicted or now they were picked up at -- then I now recollect that they were mentioned in this previous discussion.

Q Who were you having this conversation with?

A I got a note from a man named Dale Perry. He's a businessman.

Q Did you get an open letter from Dale Perry? Did you ever see that, or a memo of some sort?

A Yes. Yes. Which I then sent -- again, it meant nothing to me. I was at the Institute of Peace. I had no idea what he was talking about, but I sent it to George Kent and to Masha Yovanovitch.

Q Okay. Did you ever get a readout of the private meeting between President Trump and President Zelensky at

UNGA in New York after their press conference?

A Ambassador Volker gave me a description, I think, of that meeting. It was not too private. I mean, there were staffs on both sides, right. Okay. I think there's only one. So I think -- and Ambassador Volker, with not in great detail, he was in the meeting and said that it was a good meeting.

The President left pleased that they had finally met face to face. They discussed some connections between President Zelensky's cabinet or his government and several cabinet members on President Trump's team that they should connect.

Q Was there any discussion that you heard of, whether it was at the principal level or the staff level, about any of these investigations that we've been talking about?

A No.

Q Now, you said that the new prosecutor general --

A Yes.

Q -- confirmed that he is looking into the issues that were the subject of the --

A "Confirmed" may be too strong.

Q Sorry. Just for the record --

A Right. Right. Right. So what he said, I think fairly recently, last couple of weeks, was that he was going to take a look at all of the cases that had been closed over

the past several years to be sure they were done correctly.

Q And would that include a Burisma investigation?

A Could.

Q Or the 2016 election interference --

A Could.

Q -- investigation?

A Could.

Q So would you say that, at the end of the day, that President Trump got the investigations that he was pressuring Ukraine for?

A Hasn't gotten them yet, and, of course, President Zelensky didn't have to go in front of a mike and say this. But Mr. -- but the prosecutor general did say that he was going to take a look at any or all of these cases that may have been closed for no good reasons.

Q All right. So he's at least open to looking into this?

A He's at least open, yes.

Q Okay. I think -- all right. We are out of time anyway. So we'll yield to the minority.

MR. JORDAN: Thank you, Ambassador.

I want to go back to the phone calls you had with Mr. Morrison. In the last hour, when I asked you, you said that there were several -- just a few minutes ago when majority counsel asked you, you said that many of those calls

dealt with the issue of China and its influence or attempt to influence Ukrainian -- the country of Ukraine.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: That's all fair?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: But there were at least four calls where it wasn't about China because you reference four calls in your testimony?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Absolutely.

MR. JORDAN: Were there other calls that weren't about China that were about this subject that aren't reflected in your testimony?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, I don't think so. I tried, as I went through my notes, to pull out everything that I could on this topic. I think I got them all, but I -- I think I got them all.

MR. JORDAN: So you think any conversation you had with Mr. Morrison relative to the subject that we've been discussing all day are at least highlighted and referenced in your opening statement?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, that was my intent --

MR. JORDAN: That was your intent.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: -- and I hope I succeeded. Others have taken a look through these, and I think I'm okay on that.

MR. JORDAN: And it's not out of the -- well, let me ask it this way. Let's go to the first -- the first call is a couple days, 3 days after the call between President Trump and President Zelensky, and you get a readout from Mr. Morrison about President Trump and President Zelensky's call. Is that accurate? It's on page nine of your testimony at the top.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Page nine, let's see.

MR. JORDAN: Top of page nine.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: All right. Yes.

MR. JORDAN: That's your first readout of the call between President Trump and President Zelensky?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. And why did Mr. Morrison call you? Did he call you to give you a readout of that call, or was there -- and/or some other reason?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That will be in my notes. So what I did, Congressman, in preparation for this, I tried to pull out all relevant phone calls, meetings, et cetera, and within each of those phone calls, I wrote down the components of those or aspects of those that was relevant here, which means that I didn't write down, and so I'm not remembering what other topics. I know that there were other topics in many of these calls.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. You don't know about this one?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't --

MR. JORDAN: You know this was talked about, what you referenced in your testimony, that he gave you a readout of President Trump, President Zelensky's call.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I do.

MR. JORDAN: And there may have been something else on the call. You don't recall?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: There could have been other things on the call as well, yes.

MR. JORDAN: Who initiated this call?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: You asked me this before, and I probably told you that I couldn't remember. It's not clear to me from my notes here whether or not I did it or he did it. Again, I --

MR. JORDAN: Can you hazard a guess who likely initiated the call? Was it you calling him, or did he call you to talk about this? And was this his primary focus of the call, giving you a readout of President Trump, President Zelensky's call?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I can't hazard a guess.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Probably other issues on the call. Again, his main focus was not this; it was China.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: But I don't want to guess.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. Let's go to the next page.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: Your second call with Mr. Morrison, it looks like the big paragraph about halfway down, on September 1st.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yep.

MR. JORDAN: And can you give me the particulars of this call? Did he call you? Did you call him? Was it a scheduled call?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Ah, so this was -- so he was in Warsaw on September 1st, yeah.

MR. JORDAN: You indicate at the bottom of the paragraph that he gives you a readout of the call that took place between President Zelensky and Vice President Pence. Is that accurate?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes. Yes. Yes.

MR. JORDAN: All right. And, again, how did this call come about?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Same way the others did, which is one of the two of us emails on an unclass system the interest in having a phone call. The other writes back and says: The time is good. Let's go it at such and such a time.

I go to a secure phone and get on it. So I can't hazard a guess on who initiated this one either, Congressman.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. And was it the primary focus to give

you a readout of the call between the President of Ukraine and the Vice President of the United States?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. So now we have two calls that you get from Mr. Morrison, you initiate, he initiates. It's on the thing. Some of them are on the weekend. And both are readouts from Mr. Morrison giving you a readout between either the President's call with the President of Ukraine or the Vice President's call with the President of Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: Right. And then we have the third one, that we discussed earlier, which I think took place on the 7th. Is that right? Page twelve of your testimony.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Conversation with Mr. Morrison in which he describes -- yes.

MR. JORDAN: So now we have Mr. Morrison and you getting on the phone again, and Mr. Morrison is giving you a readout of a conversation that Ambassador Sondland had with President Trump?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: And is this -- I guess, maybe it is. I don't know. Is it customary for the NSC to call up the Ambassador and give them readouts of the President and Vice President's phone calls?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It's not unusual for the NSC to be

describing the policy steps that need to be implemented coming out of phone calls. That's not unusual.

MR. JORDAN: That's not what I asked. I asked --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Sorry.

MR. JORDAN: -- is it unusual for the new guy at the NSC to call you three times in 5 weeks and give you a readout of the Vice President's call with President Zelensky, the President's call with President Zelensky, and the President's call with Ambassador Sondland? I'm asking, is that unusual?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, I'm trying to be responsive here. It doesn't seem unusual to me.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. Yeah. I mean, I read this, and it's like Mr. Morrison, new on the job, and he calls you four times relative to the subject matter that this committee is looking into.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yeah.

MR. JORDAN: And three of those four times is to give you a direct readout of the Vice President's conversation with someone else or the President, on two occasions the President of the United States talking with someone else. And you're saying that happens all the time?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Those meetings don't happen all the time, as we know. So it doesn't happen all the time.

MR. JORDAN: Is it customary for the person at the NSC to, when the President of the United States has a

conversation with someone and the Vice President of the United States has a conversation with someone, is it customary for someone at the NSC to call up the Ambassador and say, "Hey, I just want to let you know what the President said on his call"?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Congressman, my understanding is not unusual.

MR. JORDAN: Not unusual?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Not unusual.

MR. JORDAN: And the fact that you had three of those in this sort of time period, that's not unusual?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The unusual aspect of that is that there were meetings of the President of the United States with someone having to do with Ukraine in that short period of time.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. All right.

MR. ZELDIN: And, by the way, Ambassador, just to follow up with one quick question on that, when did you first meet Mr. Morrison?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: In person, I met him when he came with Ambassador Bolton to Ukraine the end of August. That's when I first met him in person.

MR. ZELDIN: And so these phone calls from Tim Morrison to you, you hadn't even met Tim Morrison before?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct.

MR. ZELDIN: An Ambassador can be recalled by the President at any time with or without cause, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm sure that's -- yes.

MR. ZELDIN: A lot of claims in your opening statement are without firsthand knowledge, and I just -- I wanted to ask about one of them. So, in your opening statement, you reference Burisma five times. You reference Biden twice. One of those references of Biden was just a reference to the July 25th call. The other reference was on page 12 of paragraph 3. And so, on September 7th, Ambassador Sondland has a call with the President, according to a conversation that you had with Tim Morrison, right?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: September 7th. Are we looking at the same paragraph?

MR. ZELDIN: Third paragraph down on page 12.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Right, in which he described a phone conversation with Sondland and President Trump, yes, sir.

MR. ZELDIN: This is the only reference in your opening statement to Biden other than your one reference to the July 25th call. And this isn't firsthand. It's not secondhand. It's not thirdhand. But if I understand this correctly, you're telling us that Tim Morrison told you that Ambassador Sondland told him that the President told Ambassador Sondland that Zelensky would have to open an investigation into Biden?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct.

MR. ZELDIN: Is it possible that somewhere in that chain of events that the President spoke to President Zelensky about Burisma? Probably assume President Trump spoke to Ambassador Sondland about Burisma?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't know, Congressman.

MR. ZELDIN: Yeah. It's just -- it's hard when we -- I mean, it's one thing if you have firsthand information, but a lot of what you're saying in your opening statement is not firsthand information. That's one example. And it happens to be the only reference at all in your opening statement to Joe Biden.

You testified that the goal requesting investigations into the 2016 election in Burisma was to influence the U.S. election. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm sorry. Say that again, Congressman.

MR. ZELDIN: I believe you testified earlier that the goal of requesting investigations into the 2016 election and Burisma was to influence the U.S. election. Is that an accurate reflection of your testimony from earlier?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't think so.

MR. ZELDIN: Would you like to tell us what your position is on it? What was the goal of requesting investigations into 2016 election and Burisma?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: As I understand it from one of the -- maybe the article in The New York Times about Mr. Giuliani's interest in Burisma, in that article, he describes, and I think he quotes Giuliani at some length, that article indicates that Giuliani was interested in getting some information on Vice President Biden that would be useful to Mr. Giuliani's client. I think that's what he says. He says he's got one client, and he's useful to the client.

MR. ZELDIN: And then it's your inference that Mr. Giuliani's goal would be the President's goal?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. ZELDIN: And your source is The New York Times?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. ZELDIN: So do you have any other source that the President's goal in making this request was anything other than The New York Times?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I have not talked to the President. I have no other information from what the President was thinking.

MR. ZELDIN: Is it possible that requesting an investigation, for example, into the 2016 election wasn't to influence a future election?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm sorry. Can you say that one again?

MR. ZELDIN: Is it possible that the request to investigate interference with the 2016 election was not to influence a future election?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't know, Congressman.

MR. ZELDIN: Well, you just told us what you inferred based off of what The New York Times told you Rudy Giuliani was thinking, which inferred what the President was thinking. I'm asking you to answer a question that, is it possible that the request to investigate the 2016 election was for a reason other than influencing the 2020 election? Is that possible?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't know if it's possible.

MR. ZELDIN: I remember you testified a little earlier that you're familiar with the Robert Mueller investigation.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I said I'd heard of the Robert Mueller investigation, yes, sir.

MR. ZELDIN: And the investigation was still ongoing at that time, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I suppose -- yes.

MR. ZELDIN: Was your understanding of the Robert Mueller investigation that Robert Mueller was investigating foreign interference in the U.S. election --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. ZELDIN: -- from 2016?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. ZELDIN: As far as Burisma and Zlochevsky, when did

you first become familiar with this corruption case?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: With Burisma, I think this summer when it became -- when it was an item in the press.

[6:30 p.m.]

MR. ZELDIN: And can you give us a rough idea of when that might have been?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I can't.

MR. ZELDIN: A month?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: July.

MR. ZELDIN: And you wrote in your opening -- you testified in your opening statement, it's on page 6, paragraph 2, quote: By mid-July it was becoming clear to me that the meeting President Zelensky wanted was conditioned on the investigations of Burisma and alleged Ukrainian interference in the 2016 elections.

So that was mid-July. Is it -- had you back familiar with this case before mid-July?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: As I say, I don't remember exactly when I became familiar with that case.

MR. ZELDIN: I'm having trouble understanding how you would have concluded it was clear to you by mid-July that the meeting President Zelensky wanted conditioned on the investigations of Burisma if you can't even testify now that you had even heard of the Burisma case by then.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I think I said it was sometime this summer. And I don't know exactly when it was.

MR. ZELDIN: So it's possible that you did hear Burisma before mid-July?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. ZELDIN: And then in mid-July it, as you testified, became clear to you that the meeting that President Zelensky wanted was conditioned on an investigation into Burisma and alleged Ukrainian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections. Obviously you would be identifying at that point that it's important to the President, that investigation, if you were reaching that conclusion?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No. What I know is what -- what Ambassador Sondland was able to tell me about those investigations and Ambassador Volker. I don't know what was in the President's mind.

MR. ZELDIN: So where was this condition coming from if you're not sure if it was coming from the President?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I think it was coming from Mr. Giuliani.

MR. ZELDIN: But not from the President?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't know.

MR. ZELDIN: And you testified earlier that Mr. -- you were interpreting Rudy Giuliani's advocacy as the position of the President?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: What I said -- what I said, I think, was the President was Giuliani's client.

MR. ZELDIN: And by Rudy Giuliani -- you believe in mid-July, when you reached this conclusion, that Rudy

Giuliani wants an investigation into Burisma. Are you believing at all that the President wants an investigation into Burisma or no?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't know. What I know is that the direction was coming from Giuliani.

MR. ZELDIN: Okay. Well, it's important to point out then, because your opening statement has leaked because that's what's been happening during these depositions, so everyone outside has read your opening statement, but what they haven't read obviously is that you're testifying now that you're not even sure if that condition came from the President. You don't even know where it came from. You're guessing maybe Rudy Giuliani and you're not sure whether or not it came from the President. Is that what you're saying?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: What I'm saying is that I'm describing conversations that I heard. I didn't hear it from the President. I can't say what the President was thinking. I can -- I can say what Kurt Volker and Ambassador Sondland told me.

MR. ZELDIN: Did you have any firsthand knowledge that confirms that the President was conditioning an investigation into Burisma and alleged election -- Ukrainian interference in the 2016 elections with a meeting with President Zelensky?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Again, I had no conversations with the President.

MR. ZELDIN: So did you have any firsthand knowledge at all to support that?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Firsthand meaning -- firsthand meaning had I talked to the President? No, I've never talked to the President.

MR. ZELDIN: Or any other firsthand knowledge, other than a communication directly with the President.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No communication with the President.

MR. ZELDIN: And no communication with Rudy Giuliani.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: There was none with Giuliani, only with Sondland and Volker.

MR. ZELDIN: Why wouldn't you want to get more familiar with the case on its merits at this time?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm sorry, Congressman, say it again.

MR. ZELDIN: Why wouldn't you want to get more familiar with the case on its merits at that time?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I am trying to do U.S. foreign policy. I am trying to stay out of U.S. domestic policy and politics. So I'm not looking to get involved in that.

MR. ZELDIN: Did the merits of the case matter to you -- did the merits of the case matter to you in taking that position?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The merits of the case matter by taking the position of staying out of domestic politics.

MR. ZELDIN: But the merits of whether or not there was actual corruption was not part of your decisionmaking process at that time?

As part of your decision -- in mid-July you make this conclusion of a condition. And I'm just asking if part of that decisionmaking process of what to do next included any analysis of this particular corruption case on its merits.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I did not investigate the Burisma case on its merits.

MR. ZELDIN: Were there any meetings at that time at the embassy to discuss the case on its merits?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: What we did at the embassy, as I mentioned, is we are focused on institutions, not on specific cases. We're looking to fight back against corruption and to help the Ukrainians fight back against corruption by improving their courts and their judicial system. That's -- not on individual cases.

MR. ZELDIN: And if you did take the time to analyze the case on its merits and you were to determine that it, in fact, had merit, that this was a corruption case impacting parties from both the Ukraine and the United States, wouldn't you possibly conclude differently with regard to an answer you gave earlier where you said this was not in the U.S. interest?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Can't answer that one. Don't know.

MR. ZELDIN: If the case had merits, maybe it would be in the U.S. interest.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Don't know, Congressman.

MR. ZELDIN: And I believe you might have testified earlier, U.S. law conditions aid to Ukraine based off of their efforts to make progress in fighting corruption, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Some of the security assistance has conditions in the Defense Authorization Act every year that has conditions on their -- having to do with civilian control of the military and those kinds of things. And it may well have some language about governance in contracting.

MR. ZELDIN: If the President believed that looking further into Ukrainian interference in the 2016 election and Burisma had merit where would he have gone if you aren't going to even look into it? What other way does he have to look into these two cases?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: He has -- he has a lot of resources, Congressman, as you know. In the Justice Department I think he's suggested or directed further investigations of 2016 and related things. So he's got many ways to investigate.

MR. ZELDIN: But you weren't one of those resources?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's correct.

MR. ZELDIN: So before you send your text on September 1st, it appears that there were two things that you come in

contact with, one being the Politico story that we spoke about earlier and on page 10 a September 1st conversation between Ambassador Sondland and Mr. Yermak in Warsaw.

With regards to that September 1st reference in your opening statement, the source of your information is Tim Morrison, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I'm looking for your cite here.

MR. ZELDIN: The bottom of page 10.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: The bottom of page 10, right.

During the same phone call I had with Mr. Morrison, he went on to describe a conversation Ambassador Sondland with Yermak.

Yes, it was with Morrison.

MR. ZELDIN: Tim Morrison. Is he your only source of information?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. ZELDIN: Was he in that meeting? Was he part of that conversation with -- between Ambassador Sondland and Mr. Yermak?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't know.

MR. ZELDIN: Well, how would Mr. Morrison know that information if he wasn't in the meeting?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Because he could have talked to Ambassador Sondland. I don't know which of those two.

MR. ZELDIN: Okay. So that conclusion, again, it's not

firsthand or secondhand?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: It could have been firsthand. I don't know. First or second --

MR. ZELDIN: But it's not your firsthand. So best case scenario it's your secondhand information, but maybe it's thirdhand information.

On your call with Tim Morrison after the July 25th call between President Trump and President Zelensky, did he tell you anything in his readout other than the reference to -- anything else specifically from the call other than the reference to fire Lutsenko?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes. He mentioned -- I think it was he who mentioned -- that there had been discussion of the previous ambassador.

Did I mention that? I think I did. Let's see here.

Yes, here we are. Yes, he said, fire Lutsenko. Talked about the previous ambassador. He mentioned Giuliani. And he mentioned -- and he mentioned that Gordon had -- Gordon Sondland had called the President before and after the meeting -- the phone call.

MR. ZELDIN: But as far as what was on the July 25th phone call, other than a reference to fire Lutsenko, what else was specifically said on the call?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Again, I just said that he also talked about the previous ambassador, Ambassador Yovanovitch.

He mentioned Giuliani. And that's all I have written down.

MR. ZELDIN: After the text on September 1st, you then had a conversation with Ambassador Sondland, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: September 1st, you're going to go back to that one.

MR. ZELDIN: Yes, we're going back to that.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Hang on here. So -- this is when -- are you looking at page 13, Congressman?

MR. ZELDIN: Well, you do talk about it on page 10. At the bottom is the reference to Ambassador Sondland's meeting with Yermak that you heard from Tim Morrison. And then it goes through, as you go into the next page, the following paragraphs are leading you into your conversation that you had with Ambassador Sondland. The first full paragraph on page 11 is your text, and then you get into specifics about the phone call in the following paragraph.

In that conversation between you and Ambassador Sondland, did you ask him about the meeting he had with Mr. Yermak that Tim Morrison told you about?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I did not.

MR. ZELDIN: So the basis of your information, secondhand or thirdhand, that there was a link between money and an investigation into Burisma, you then have an opportunity to talk to the person who was in the meeting and you don't even ask him whether or not that meeting happened

or if this was discussed?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I was -- there's no doubt that the meeting happened. And I didn't ask him further about the conversation with Yermak.

And those are -- you know, all I'm reporting -- all I'm reporting is firsthand knowledge of my phone call with people or my texts with people.

MR. ZELDIN: Right.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: But you're right, those are often about other conversations.

MR. ZELDIN: But it seemed like that would have been a good opportunity to ask Ambassador Sondland about the meeting with Mr. Yermak, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: And I didn't take the opportunity.

MR. ZELDIN: How long was that phone call, if you remember, between you and Ambassador Sondland on September 1st?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I don't remember.

MR. ZELDIN: Maybe -- any idea? Like a couple minutes or 30 minutes? Was it a short call, a long call?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Let's see here. So we're talking about the phone call on 11, on page 11. Is that right?

MR. ZELDIN: On page 11.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yeah, yeah. Right. Asked me to call him, which I did. During that phone call, right.

Sondland told me he now recognized he made a mistake.

So probably, I don't know, 15 minutes, 20 minutes.

MR. ZELDIN: And here you have a -- so the reference on the phone call is to Burisma, not the Bidens, is that --is that correct? That's what's -- that's what's in your opening statement?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: During the phone call Ambassador Sondland told me that President Trump told him he wants President Zelensky to state publicly investigate Burisma and alleged --- is it that the one you're talking about?

MR. ZELDIN: Yeah.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: On the second paragraph?

MR. ZELDIN: Yes.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. ZELDIN: And nothing linking that to aid, correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, the next paragraph describes how it's linked to aid.

MR. ZELDIN: Where -- where did -- where did -- where did Ambassador Sondland --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Link it to aid? So --

MR. ZELDIN: Go ahead.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Yeah. So Ambassador Sondland on this phone call tells me that he now recognizes that he'd made a mistake when he told the Ukrainians that the only thing they had to do in order to -- the only thing they had

to do -- only thing they would get if they -- if they announced these investigations was a meeting. Said that was a mistake.

MR. ZELDIN: That was never actually communicated to Ukraine; correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: No, I think that is what he communicated to Yermak.

MR. ZELDIN: According to a conversation that you had with Tim Morrison about what Ambassador Sondland spoke to Mr. Yermak?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: That's on the previous page, that's correct.

MR. ZELDIN: You had this conversation with Ambassador Sondland and you didn't ask him?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Did you just ask that? Is that the same question? I just want to be sure I'm getting this.

Yeah, I did not ask him.

MR. ZELDIN: Go ahead.

VOICE: No, I'm just confused as to which call.

[6:46 p.m.]

MR. ZELDIN: We are talking about the September 1st phone call. I believe the Ambassador is testifying that Ambassador Sondland had communicated this to Mr. Yermak. But that information is not from Ambassador Sondland; that information is from Tim Morrison, who may or may not have been in that meeting with Ambassador Sondland and Mr. Yermak.

And then when Ambassador Taylor then sent this text and had a call, during the call with Ambassador Sondland, he didn't even raise that meeting at all with Mr. Yermak.

I just want to understand --

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Got it. Got it. Right.

MR. ZELDIN: -- that chain. Is that all correct?

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: I didn't raise the Yermak meeting. What I raised was the concern about linking the security assistance to the investigation. That was the concern.

MR. ZELDIN: Right, but you didn't confirm, though, that that was actually communicated. You didn't ask Ambassador Sondland that.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: If he'd communicated it to the Ukrainians? No, I asked him about the linkage.

MR. ZELDIN: Right.

Okay, Steve.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Looking back on these events, would you have

handled anything differently in terms of your communications with the seventh floor of the State Department?

You sent your cable. You know, you had a couple phone calls with Mr. Brechbuhl. But it doesn't seem like your concerns penetrated.

A Mr. Castor, I don't think that's true. I think that, first of all, they shared my concerns. Second of all, they got my cable. Third of all, based on the concerns and the cable, Secretary Pompeo went to the White House, probably on a couple of occasions, you know, in trying to have these meetings, and attempted to get the decision changed. So I'm comfortable --

Q Okay.

A -- that I got a response.

Q Okay. So, looking back on things, you wouldn't have handled anything different?

A Correct.

Q Okay.

MR. CASTOR: I'd just note for the record we haven't seen a copy of the subpoena and we haven't made it a part of the record. Is that still on the table as an option?

MR. GOLDMAN: We're happy to show you a copy of the subpoena.

MR. BITAR: We're more than happy for you, Mr. Castor, to also make sure that the seal is authentic and that the

signature is authentic. No worries. I'll get it for you now.

MR. GOLDMAN: And apparently you have an email in your inbox with the --

MR. CASTOR: Oh, okay. Yeah, I mean, I don't have my email.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q You would agree that, if Burisma -- if their motivation for engaging Hunter Biden for their board was not related to his corporate governance expertise but, in fact, was hoping to buy some protection, you would agree that that's worthy of investigating, right?

A Mr. Castor, I don't know why Burisma got him on the board.

Q But if Ukrainians were engaged in misdeeds or wrongdoing with regard to putting Hunter Biden on their board, that could be something that could be worth investigating, right?

A I don't know. I don't know. I don't know the relationship that he had with the board. I don't know.

Q Okay. And, at the time, the Vice President had a, you know, policy supervision of Ukraine on some respects.

A He was very interested in policy with Ukraine, yes.

Q Okay. So do you see a perceived conflict of interest there?

A I'm a fact witness. I'm not giving opinions on --
Q Okay.
A -- this thing, but -- so I --
Q Is it reasonable to see a perceived conflict of interest there, or is that crazy?
A I've said other things are crazy.
Q A reasonable person could conclude that there is a possible perceived conflict of interest there, right?
MR. BELLINGER: You asked him that question earlier, at the beginning, about 7-1/2 hours ago. It was one of the first questions you asked him. He's already answered it.
MR. CASTOR: So he's not going to answer it?
MR. BELLINGER: He's already answered it.
BY MR. CASTOR:
Q Have you had any communications with other witnesses or likely witnesses before this investigation, such as Mr. Morrison? Presumably he's sort of on the docket next to come in. Have you had any conversations about your testimony with other possible witnesses?
A Not about testimony. Again, he's very interested in China, and we continue to talk about China --
Q Okay.
A -- but nothing about --
Q With Mr. Reeker?
A No.

Q With some of the others?
A No.
Q You didn't have any communications with some of our previous witnesses?
A No. Nothing on the substance of the testimony.
Q And just one other item. The State Department, they didn't order you to not appear under subpoena, right?
A Correct.
MR. CASTOR: I think that's all I've got. I'm out of members, so -- I'm almost out of time.
BY MR. GOLDMAN:
Q Ambassador Taylor, you've been here a long time. I just wanted to address one thing --
A Please. Please.
Q -- which was brought up in the last --
A Yep.
Q It will just be a couple minutes. But we understand you're tired and it's been a long day, and we --
A No, no. I am tired, but it's okay.
Q We appreciate it. This won't be long.
A Not a problem.
Q So I think you testified earlier today that you drafted your statement based on, in part, a review of your notes and the various WhatsApp and text messages that you are in possession of, right?

A Correct.

Q And so is it accurate that the statement, the opening statement, that you gave is based on your very best recollection after reviewing your own notes?

A It is correct.

Q Okay. And so is that the most accurate recitation of events that you can remember today? Is --

A It is.

Q -- that right?

A It is.

Q When Mr. Zeldin was questioning you, he was talking about the connection -- he was sort of conflating a couple things between Mr. Giuliani, Mr. Trump, and the New York Times article. I just want to clarify a couple of things for now.

You did see that May 9th New York Times article, which I believe is exhibit 1, right?

A I did.

Q And so you understood from that article that Mr. Giuliani was interested in pressing Ukraine to conduct investigations into Biden and the 2016 election?

A Correct.

Q And that was before you took the job.

A It was.

Q Okay.

A It was one of the hesitations about taking the job.

Q Right. I believe you expressed in your text messages your concerns about Rudy Giuliani and Biden in those text messages. Do you recall that?

A I do.

Q And were you aware of other public statements, either on Twitter or on television, that Rudy Giuliani was making frequently on this topic, about these investigations?

A Not on Twitter or television, because I rarely do either of those. But in the general press, I think this is pretty well-described.

Q Okay.

And then you also testified, right, that at that May 23rd Oval Office meeting you understood that President Trump directed Ambassadors Sondland, Volker, and Secretary Perry to consult with Rudy Giuliani in order for a White House meeting to occur?

A That was my understanding.

Q That was your understanding.

A Yes.

Q And then after that point, you had many conversations with Ambassadors Sondland and Volker about Rudy Giuliani's interest in the investigations in Ukraine. Is that accurate?

A Mr. Goldman, I don't remember many conversations

with those two about Rudy Giuliani's specific interest, but certainly with the interest that they were expressing, presumably coming from Giuliani, in having these investigations proceed.

Q Right. And you say presumably coming from Rudy Giuliani because you, A, understood that Rudy Giuliani was interested in these investigations and, B, understood that the President had directed them to discuss Rudy Giuliani's concerns before scheduling a White House meeting.

A A and B both correct.

Q Okay.

And then you had a telephone call with Tim Morrison on July 28th where he gave you a brief readout of the President's call with President Zelensky.

A Yes.

Q And I believe you testified that you understood also that Ambassador Sondland spoke to President Trump both before and after that call?

A Tim Morrison said that, that he had -- in that call. He said -- yes.

Q Okay. And then when you actually read the call transcript, Tim Morrison's readout was accurate, correct?

A It was.

Q It wasn't complete --

A It wasn't complete, but what he said was accurate.

Right. Yes.

Q And, subsequently then, you in early September had two separate phone calls, right, with Tim Morrison and Ambassador Sondland about a phone call between Ambassador Sondland and President Trump?

A Correct. And both --

Q Right?

A Yes.

Q And both of those conversations, so what Ambassador Sondland told you about his own conversation with President Trump and what Tim Morrison told you about Ambassador Sondland's conversation with President Trump, were pretty consistent.

A They were pretty consistent.

Q Right. And you understood that President Trump was insisting and conditioning the White House meeting on, I think, quote, "everything," which was both the security assistance and the White House meeting.

A That's what Ambassador Sondland said. He said that they were linked. They were linked.

Q Right.

A I don't remember him saying President Trump said that they had to be linked.

Q Right. But you understood Ambassador Sondland was speaking regularly --

A Having just gotten off the phone call with President Trump, and he was then relaying it to Yermak and me.

Q Right.

And then you also had your own conversations with Ukrainian officials about Rudy Giuliani, right? And if I could refresh you, because it's late, you, I think, testified that on July 10th, when you had your meeting with the Chief of Staff and the Defense Minister, they relayed to you that they understood that Mr. Giuliani had said that there would not be a phone call.

A Ah. Yes. Yeah, that's exactly right. And that came through the Prosecutor General Lutsenko. Yes.

Q Right. And they certainly understood that Mr. Giuliani represented President Trump, correct?

A They did.

Q Because why else would they care what Rudy Giuliani thought?

A Correct.

Q And just to be clear, who ultimately decides whether or not there is a White House meeting between the President of the United States and any other foreign leader? Is it Rudy Giuliani, or is it the President of the United States?

A It's the President of the United States.

Q Okay.

MR. GOLDMAN: Just 1 minute.

All right. I think we are done. I don't know if the minority has a couple followup questions?

MR. CASTOR: Thank you for coming in today. We appreciate your cooperation.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Glad to be here.

THE CHAIRMAN: I can tell my timing is good.

MR. GOLDMAN: Chairman Schiff has arrived to adjourn the proceedings.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Unless he has questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no. We are adjourned. And I want to thank you, Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Whereupon, at 7:00 p.m., the deposition was concluded.]