

Impeachment Hearing First Day Transcript: Bill Taylor & George Kent Testimony Transcript

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November 13,
2019



Bill Taylor and George Kent testified before the House of Representatives on November 13, 2019 in the first day of the Donald Trump Impeachment Hearings. Both Taylor and Kent revealed new information that wasn't previously known before their testimony. Read the full transcript of their opening statements and questioning right here.

Impeachment Hearing Transcript Series

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Adam Schiff Opening Statement

Adam Schiff: (00:00)

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess so the committee, at any time, there is a quorum present.

Adam Schiff: (00:07)

Here's how the committee will proceed for this hearing. I will make an opening statement, and then ranking member Nunes will have the opportunity to make a statement. And we will go to witness statements and then to questions.

Adam Schiff: (00:19)

For audience members, we welcome you and we respect your interest in being here. In turn, we ask for your respect as we proceed with today's hearing.

John Ratcliffe: (00:27)

Mr. Chairman.

Adam Schiff: (00:28)

It is the intention of the committee to proceed without disruptions.

John Ratcliffe: (00:30)

Mr. Chairman.

Adam Schiff: (00:32)

What purpose?

John Ratcliffe: (00:32)

May I make a parliamentary inquiry?

Adam Schiff: (00:34)

Gentleman will state the inquiry.

John Ratcliffe: (00:36)

Mr. Chairman, this is our first hearing under these new set of rules. House Resolution 660 gives you the discretion to allow yourself and the ranking member periods of extended questions of up to 45 minutes each before other members are allowed to ask questions. If possible, we'd like to know the rules of engagement before we get started. Have you made a decision yet as to how many 45 minute rounds you will allow yourself and the ranking member?

Adam Schiff: (01:07)

I have not. As we informed the minority yesterday, we will see how the first period goes and how much material we are able to get through. At that point, the chair will announce the period, if there is a period of the second round, which may be up to 45 minutes. Or we'll go straight to a five minute questions by members.

Adam Schiff: (01:26)

For audience members, again, we welcome you and your interest. In turn, we expect and will insist on decorum in the committee. As chairman, I'll take all necessary and appropriate steps to maintain order and ensure the committee is run in accordance with House rules and House Resolution 660.

Adam Schiff: (01:45)

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

Adam Schiff: (01:54)

In 2014, Russia invaded the United States ally, Ukraine, to reverse that nation's embrace of the West and to fulfill Vladimir Putin's desire to rebuild a Russian empire. In the following years, 14,000 Ukrainians died as they battled superior Russian forces.

Adam Schiff: (02:18)

Earlier this year, Volodymyr Zelensky was elected president of Ukraine on a platform of ending the conflict and tackling corruption. He was a newcomer to politics and immediately sought to establish a relationship with Ukraine's most powerful patron, the United States.

Adam Schiff: (02:35)

The questions presented by this impeachment inquiry are whether president Trump sought to exploit that ally's vulnerability and invite Ukraine's interference in our elections. Whether President Trump sought conditioned official acts, such as a White House meeting or US military assistance on Ukraine's willingness to assist with two political investigations that would help his reelection campaign. And if President Trump did either, whether such an abuse of his power is compatible with the office of the presidency.

Adam Schiff: (03:09)

The matter is as simple and as terrible as that. Our answer to these questions will affect not only the future of this presidency, but the future of the presidency itself, and what kind of conduct or misconduct the American people may come to expect from their Commander in Chief.

Adam Schiff: (03:28)

There are a few actions as consequential as the impeachment of a president. While the Founders did not intend that impeachment be employed for mere differences over policy, they also made impeachment a constitutional process that the Congress must utilize as necessary.

Adam Schiff: (03:46)

The facts in the present inquiry are not seriously contested. Beginning in January of this year, the president's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, pressed Ukrainian authorities to

investigate Burisma, the country's largest national gas producer, and the Bidens, since Vice President Joe Biden was seen as a strong potential challenger to Trump.

Adam Schiff: [\(04:08\)](#)

Giuliani also promoted a debunked conspiracy that it was Ukraine, not Russia, that hacked the 2016 US election. The nation's intelligence agencies have stated unequivocally that it was Russia, not Ukraine, that interfered in our election. But Giuliani believed this conspiracy theory referred to as CrowdStrike, shorthand for the company that discovered the Russian hack, would aid his client's reelection.

Adam Schiff: [\(04:34\)](#)

Giuliani also conducted a smear campaign against the US ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch. On April 29, a senior state department official told her that although she had done nothing wrong, President Trump had lost confidence in her. With the sidelining of Yovanovitch, the stage was set for the establishment of an irregular channel in which Giuliani and later others. Including Gordon Sondland, an influential donor to the President's inauguration, now serving as ambassador to the European Union could advance the President's personal and political interests.

Adam Schiff: [\(05:08\)](#)

Yovanovitch's replacement in Kiev, Ambassador Bill Taylor, is a West Point graduate and a Vietnam veteran. As he began to better understand the scheme through the summer of 2019, he pushed back, informing Deputy Assistant Secretary Kent and others about a plan to condition US government actions and funding on the performance of political favors by the Ukrainian government. Favors intended for President Trump that would undermine our security and our elections.

Adam Schiff: [\(05:39\)](#)

Several key events in this scheme took place in the month of July. On July 10th, Ambassador Sondland informed a group of US and Ukrainian officials meeting at the White House that according to you, Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, a White House meeting desperately sought by the Ukrainian president with Trump would happen if Ukraine undertook an investigation into the energy sector, which was understood to mean Burisma and specifically, the Bidens. National Security Advisor Bolton abruptly ended the meeting and said afterwards that he would not be quote, "Part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up on this," end quote.

Adam Schiff: [\(06:20\)](#)

A week later on July 18th, representative of the Office of Management and Budget, the White House agency that oversees federal spending, announced on a video conference that Mulvaney, at the direction of the President, was freezing nearly \$400 million in security

assistance authorized and appropriated by Congress, in which the entirety of the US national security establishment supported. One week after that, Donald Trump would have the now infamous July 25th phone call with Ukrainian president, Zelensky.

Adam Schiff: [\(06:53\)](#)

During that call, Trump complained that the US relationship with Ukraine had not been reciprocal. Later, Zelensky thanks Trump for his support in the area of defense and says that Ukraine is ready to purchase more Javelins, an anti-tank weapon that was among the most important deterrence of further Russian military action. Trump's immediate response, "I would like you to do us a favor though." Trump then requested that Zelensky investigate the discredited 2016 Crowdstrike conspiracy theory and even more ominously, look into the Bidens.

Adam Schiff: [\(07:31\)](#)

Neither of these investigations was in the US national interest. And neither was part of the official preparatory material for the call. Both however, were in Donald Trump's personal interest and in the interests of his 2020 reelection campaign. And the Ukrainian president knew about both in advance because Sondland and others had been pressing Ukraine for weeks about investigations into the 2016 election, Burisma, and the Bidens.

Adam Schiff: [\(08:03\)](#)

After the call, multiple individuals were concerned enough to report it to the National Security Council's top lawyer. The White House would then take the extraordinary step of moving the call record to a highly classified server, exclusively reserved for the most sensitive intelligence matters.

Adam Schiff: [\(08:24\)](#)

In the weeks that followed, Ambassador Taylor learned new facts about a scheme that Sondland, even Sondland would describe as becoming more insidious. Taylor texted Sondland quote, "Are we now saying that security assistance and White House meeting are conditioned on investigations?"

Adam Schiff: [\(08:43\)](#)

As summer turned to fall, "it kept getting more insidious," Mr. Sondland testified. Mr. Taylor, who took notes of his conversations, said the ambassador told him in a September 1st phone call that everything was dependent on the public announcement of investigations including security assistance. President Trump wanted Mr. Zelensky in a public box.

Adam Schiff: [\(09:10\)](#)

"President Trump is a businessman," Sondland said later. "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."

Adam Schiff: (09:28)

In a sworn declaration after Taylor's testimony, Sondland would admit to telling Ukrainians at a September 1st meeting in Warsaw quote, "That resumption of US aid would likely not occur until Ukraine provided the public anti-corruption statement that we have been discussing for many weeks."

Adam Schiff: (09:48)

The President's chief of staff confirmed Trump's efforts to coerce Ukraine by withholding aid. When Mick Mulvaney was asked publicly about it, his answer was breathtaking. "We do that all the time with foreign policy," he said, "I have news for everybody. Get over it. There's going to be political influence in foreign policy. That is going to happen." The video of that confession is plain for all to see.

Adam Schiff: (10:19)

Some have argued in the President's defense that the aid was ultimately released. That is true. But only after Congress began an investigation. Only after the President's lawyers learned of a whistleblower complaint. And only after members of Congress began asking uncomfortable questions about quid pro quos.

Adam Schiff: (10:40)

A scheme to condition official acts or taxpayer funding to obtain a personal political benefit does not become less odious because it is discovered before it is fully consummated. In fact, the security assistance had been delayed so long, it would take another act of Congress to ensure that it could still go out. And that Oval Office meeting that Zelensky desperately sought, it still hasn't happened.

Adam Schiff: (11:08)

Although we have learned a great deal about these events in the last several weeks, there are still missing pieces. The President has instructed the State Department and other agencies to ignore congressional subpoenas for documents. He has instructed witnesses to defy subpoenas and refuse to appear. And he has suggested that those who do expose wrongdoing should be treated like traitors and spies.

Adam Schiff: (11:34)

These actions will force Congress to consider, as it did with President Nixon, whether Trump's obstruction of the constitutional duties of Congress constituted additional grounds for impeachment. If the President can simply refuse all oversight, particularly in the context of an impeachment proceeding, the balance of power between our two branches of government will be irrevocably altered. That is not what the Founders intended. And the prospects for further corruption and abuse of power, in this administration or any other, will be exponentially increased.

Adam Schiff: (12:11)

This is what we believe the testimony will show, both as to the President's conduct and as to his obstruction of Congress. The issue that we confront is the one posed by the President's acting Chief of Staff when he challenged Americans to "get over it." If we find that the President of the United States abused his power and invited foreign interference in our elections, or if he sought to condition, coerce, extort, or bribe an ally into conducting investigations to aid his reelection campaign and did so by withholding official acts, a White House meeting or hundreds of millions of dollars of needed military aid, must we simply "get over it"?

Adam Schiff: (12:57)

Is this what Americans should now expect from their president? If this is not impeachable conduct, what is? Does the oath of office itself, requiring that our laws be faithfully executed, that our president defend a constitution that balances the powers of its branches, setting ambition against ambition so we become no monarchy, still have meaning?

Adam Schiff: (13:24)

These are the questions we must ask and answer. Without rancor if we can, without delay regardless, and without party favor and without prejudice if we are true to our responsibilities. Benjamin Franklin was asked what kind of a country America was to become. "A Republic, he answered, "if you can keep it." The fundamental issue raised by the impeachment inquiry into Donald J. Trump is, "Can we keep it?"

Devin Nunes Opening Statement

Devin Nunes: (00:00)

In a July open hearing of this committee following publication of the Mueller report, the Democrats engaged in a last-ditch effort to convince the American people that President Trump is a Russian agent. That hearing was the pitiful finale of a three year long operation by the Democrats, the corrupt media and partisan bureaucrats to overturn the results of the 2016 election. After the spectacular implosion of their Russia hoax on July 24th in which they spent years denouncing any Republican, whoever shook hands with a Russian. On July 25th they turned on a dime and now claim the real malfeasance is Republican's dealings with Ukraine. In the blink of an eye, we're asked to simply forget about Democrats on this committee falsely claiming they had more than circumstantial evidence of collusion between President Trump and Russians. We should forget about them reading fabrications of Trump, Russia, collusion from the steel dossier into the congressional record.

Devin Nunes: (01:13)

We should also forget about them trying to obtain nude pictures of Trump from Russian pranksters who pretended to be Ukrainian officials. We should forget about them leaking a false story to CNN while he was still testifying to our committee claiming that Donald Trump

jr. was colluding with WikiLeaks. And forget about countless other deceptions, large and small that make them the last people on earth with the credibility to hurl more preposterous accusations at their political opponents.

Devin Nunes: (01:49)

And yet now here we are, we're supposed to take these people at face value when they trot out a new batch of allegations. But anyone familiar with the Democrats, scorched earth war against President Trump would not be surprised to see all the typical signs that this is a carefully orchestrated media smear campaign. For example, after vowing publicly that impeachment requires bipartisan support, Democrats are pushing impeachment forward without the backing of a single Republican.

Devin Nunes: (02:23)

The witnesses deemed suitable for television by the Democrats were put through a closed-door audition process and a cult-like atmosphere in the basement of the Capitol where Democrats conducted secret depositions, released a flood of misleading and one-sided leaks and later selectively release transcripts in a highly staged manner. Violating their own guidelines Democrats repeatedly redacted from the transcripts the name of Alexandra Chalupa. A contractor for the Democratic National Committee who worked with Ukrainian officials to collect dirt on the Trump campaign, which she provided to the DNC and the Hillary Clinton campaign. The Democrats rejected most of the Republican's witness request, resulting in a horrifically one-sided process where the crucial witnesses are denied a platform if their testimony does not support the Democrats absurd accusations. Notably, they are trying to impeach the president for inquiring about Hunter Biden's activities. Yet they refuse our request to hear from Biden himself.

Devin Nunes: (03:37)

The whistleblower was acknowledged to have a bias against President Trump, and his attorney touted a coup against the president and called for his impeachment just weeks after the election. At a prior hearing, Democrats on this committee, read out a purely fictitious rendition of the president's phone call with President Zelensky. They clearly found the real conversation to be insufficient for their impeachment narrative, so they just made up a new one.

Devin Nunes: (04:09)

And most egregiously the staff of the Democrats on this committee had direct discussions with the whistleblower before his or her complaint was submitted to the inspector general. Republicans can't get a full account of these contacts because Democrats broke their promise to have the whistleblower testify to this committee. Democrat members hid these contacts from Republicans and then lied about them to the American people on national television.

Devin Nunes: [\(04:38\)](#)

I've noted before, the Democrats have a long habit of accusing Republicans of offenses they themselves are committing. Let's recall for years they accused the Trump campaign of colluding with Russia when they themselves were colluding with Russia by funding and spreading the Steele dossier, which relied on Russian sources. And now they accused President Trump of malfeasance and Ukraine when they themselves are culpable. The Democrats cooperated in Ukrainian election meddling, and they defend Hunter Biden's securing of a lavishly paid position with a corrupt Ukrainian company. All while his father served as vice president.

Devin Nunes: [\(05:22\)](#)

Despite this hypocrisy, the Democrats are advancing their impeachment sham, but we should not hold any hearings at all until we get answers to three crucial questions the Democrats are determined to avoid asking. First, what is the full extent of the Democrats prior coordination with the whistleblower? And who else did the whistleblower coordinate this effort with? Second, what is the full extent of Ukraine's election meddling against the Trump campaign? And third, why did Burisma hire Hunter Biden and what did he do for them? And did his position affect any US government actions under the Obama administration? These questions will remain outstanding because Republicans were denied the right to call witnesses that know these answers.

Devin Nunes: [\(06:17\)](#)

What we will witness today is a televised theatrical performance stage by the Democrats. Ambassador Taylor and Mr. Kent, I'd like to welcome you here. I'd like to congratulate you for passing the Democrats star chamber additions held for the last weeks in the basement of the Capitol. It seems you agreed witting or unwittingly to participate in a drama, but the main performance the Russia hoax has ended and you've been cast in the low rent Ukrainian sequel.

Devin Nunes: [\(06:54\)](#)

I'll conclude by noting the immense damage the politicized bureaucracy has done to Americans' faith in government. Though executive branch employees are charged with implementing the policies set by our president who is elected and responsible to the American people. Elements of the civil service have decided that they not the president are really in charge.

Devin Nunes: [\(07:19\)](#)

Thus, as we'll learn in these hearings. After expressing skepticism of foreign aid and concern about foreign corruption on the campaign trail, President Trump outraged the bureaucracy by acting skeptically about foreign aid and expressing concerns about foreign corruption. Officials alarm at the president's actions was typically based on second hand, third hand,

and even fourth hand rumors and innuendo. They believed it was an outrage for the president to fire an ambassador. Even though the president has full authority to retain or remove diplomats for any reason, at any time.

Devin Nunes: [\(08:01\)](#)

Officials show the surprising lack of interest in the indications of Ukrainian election meddling that deeply concerned the president at whose pleasure they serve. Despite all their dissatisfaction with President Trump's Ukraine policy, the president approved the supply of weapons to Ukraine. Unlike the previous administration, which provided blankets as defense against invading Russians. By undermining the president, who they are supposed to be serving, the elements of the FBI, the Department of Justice, and now the State Department have lost the confidence of millions of Americans who believe that their vote should count for something. It will take years, if not decades, to restore faith in these institutions.

Devin Nunes: [\(08:54\)](#)

This spectacle is doing great damage to our country. It's nothing more than an impeachment process in search of a crime. With that, I yield back.

Bill Taylor Opening Statement

Bill Taylor: [\(00:00\)](#)

I'm appearing today at the Committee's request to provide my perspective on the events that are the subject of the Committee's inquiry. I want to emphasize at the outset that while I am aware that the Committee has requested my testimony as part of impeachment proceedings, I am not here to take one side or the other or to advocate for any particular outcome of these proceedings. My sole purpose is to provide facts as I know them about the incidents in question as well as my views about the strategic importance of Ukraine to the United States.

Bill Taylor: [\(00:36\)](#)

By way of background, it has been a privilege for me to serve our country and the American people for more than 50 years. Starting as a cadet at West Point is, you have mentioned Mr. Chairman, then as an infantry officer for six 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. I retired from the State Department in 2009 to join the United States Institute of Peace. I'm neither a career member of the Foreign Service nor of the civil service. I am nonpartisan and have been appointed to my positions by every president from President Reagan to President Trump.

Bill Taylor: [\(01:20\)](#)

Let me summarize my main points. First, Ukraine is a strategic partner of the United States,

important for the security of our country as well as Europe. Ukraine is on the frontline in the conflict with the newly aggressive Russia. Second, even as we sit here today, the Russians are attacking Ukrainian soldiers in their own country and have been for the last four years. I saw this on the frontline last week. The day I was there, a Ukrainian soldier was killed, and four were wounded. Third, the security assistance we provide is crucial to Ukraine's defense and to the protection of the soldiers I met on the frontline last week. It demonstrates to Ukrainians and Russians that we are Ukraine's reliable strategic partner. It is clearly in our national interest to deter further Russian aggression.

Bill Taylor: [\(02:23\)](#)

Finally, as the Committee is aware, I wrote that withholding security assistance in exchange for help with a domestic political campaign in the United States would be crazy. I believe that then, and I believe it now. Let me tell you why. On May 28th of this year, I met with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who asked me to rejoin the State Department and return to Kyiv to lead our embassy in Ukraine. It was and is a critical time for US-Ukraine relations. I had served as ambassador to Ukraine from 2006 to 2009 having been nominated by George W. Bush, and in the intervening 10 years, had stayed engaged with Ukraine.

Bill Taylor: [\(03:06\)](#)

Across the responsibilities I have had in public service, Ukraine is the highlight, and so Secretary Pompeo's offer to return as chief of mission was compelling. Since I left Ukraine in 2009, the country had continued to turn towards the west, but in 2013, Vladimir Putin was so threatened by the prospect of Ukraine joining the European Union that he tried to bribe the Ukrainian president. This triggered mass protest in the winter of 2013 that drove that president to flee to Russia in February of 2014, but not before his forces killed a hundred Ukrainian protesters in the Central Kyiv.

Bill Taylor: [\(03:50\)](#)

Days later, Mr. Putin invaded Crimea, holding a sham referendum at the point of Russian army rifles. The Russians absurdly claim that 97% voted to join Russia. In early April, Putin sent his army and security forces into South Eastern Ukraine to generate illegal armed formations and puppet governments and what we know is Donbass. You can see this on the map in right-hand portion, in the eastern portion of the country. 14,000 Ukrainians have died in the war in Donbass, and more die each week.

Bill Taylor: [\(04:27\)](#)

In July of 2014 these Russian-led forces in Donbass shut down a civilian airliner en route from Amsterdam to Malaysia, killing all 298 people on board. We, the Europeans, and most of the west imposed economic sanctions and kicked the Russians out of the G8. Beginning in 2014, we and NATO began to provide military assistance to Ukraine's armed forces in the form of training, advice, military equipment, and weapons. It is this security assistance that is at the heart of the controversy that we are discussing today. The pro-Russian president

who was run out of Kyiv in 2014 had let the Russian armed forces deteriorate to the point of ruin. In response to the Russian invasion, the new Ukrainian authorities, with an amazing outpouring of support from regular Ukrainian people, rebuilt the army nearly from scratch, spending more than 5% of Ukrainian GDP on defense since the war started. The whole Ukrainian nation fiercely responded to the Russian attack. The nation united like never before. A ragtag army developed into a strong fighting force, and the United States played a vital role.

Bill Taylor: [\(05:47\)](#)

Since 2014, you and Congress have provided over \$1.6 billion in military assistance to Ukraine. The security assistance provides small unit training at an army base near Lviv in the western of the country. It provides ambulances, night vision devices, communications equipment, counter battery radar, navy ships, and finally, weapons. The security systems demonstrates our commitment to resist aggression and defend freedom.

Bill Taylor: [\(06:16\)](#)

During the 2014 to 2016 period, I was serving outside of government and joined two other former ambassadors to Ukraine and 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. I also supported much stronger sanctions on Russia. I was pleased when the Trump administration provided Javelin anti-tank missiles and enacted stronger sanctions. All to say, I cared about Ukraine's future and the important US 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 has been treated poorly, caught in a web of political machinations both in Kyiv and in Washington. I feared that those problems were still present.

Bill Taylor: [\(07:13\)](#)

I consulted both my wife and a respected former senior Republican official who has been a mentor. I will tell you that my wife in no uncertain terms strongly opposed to the idea. The mentor counseled, "If your country ask you to do something, you do it if you can be effective." I could be effective only if the US 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, and I worried about what I had heard concerning the role of Rudy Giuliani, who had made several controversial statements about Ukraine and US policy toward the country. During my meeting with Secretary Pompeo on May 28, I made clear to him and the others present that if US 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 chargé d'affaires ad interim. In effect, I was the acting ambassador to Ukraine.

Bill Taylor: (08:40)

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. But once I arrived in Kyiv, I discovered a weird combination of encouraging, confusing, and ultimately alarming circumstances.

Bill Taylor: (09:07)

First, the encouraging: President Zelensky was reforming Ukraine in a hurry. He appointed reformist ministers and supported long-stalled anti-corruption legislation. He took quick executive action, including opening Ukraine's High Anti-Corruption Court. With a new parliamentary majority stemming from snap elections, President Zelensky changed the Ukrainian Constitution to remove absolute immunity from Rada deputies, the source of raw corruption for two decades. The excitement in Kyiv was palpable. This time could be different, a new Ukraine finally breaking from its corrupt, post-Soviet past.

Bill Taylor: (09:47)

Yet, I found a confusing and unusual arrangement for making US policy toward Ukraine. There appeared to be two channels of US policy-making and implementation, one regular and one highly irregular. As the acting ambassador, I had authority over the regular, formal diplomatic processes, including the bulk of the US effort to support Ukraine against the Russian invasion and to help it defeat corruption. My colleague, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent and our colleagues at the National Security Council were my main points of contact in Washington in this regular channel. This channel is formally responsible for formulating and overseeing the implementation of US foreign policy with respect to Ukraine, a policy that has consistently enjoyed strong, bipartisan support, both in Congress and in all administrations since Ukraine's independence from Russia in 1991.

Bill Taylor: (10:42)

At the same time, however, I encountered an irregular, informal channel of US policy-making with respect to Ukraine, unaccountable to Congress, a channel that included then-Special Envoy Kurt Volker, US Ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland, Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, 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 including me in certain conversations. Although this irregular channel was well-connected in Washington, it operated mostly outside of official State Department channels. The irregular channel began when Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Sondland, Secretary Perry, and Senator Ron Johnson briefed President Trump on May 23 upon their return from President Zelensky's

inauguration. The delegation was as enthusiastic as I would soon become about the new Ukrainian president and urged President Trump to meet with him early on to cement the US-Ukraine relationship. But from what I understood from the participants, President Trump did not share their enthusiasm for a meeting with President Zelensky.

Bill Taylor: (12:08)

When I arrived in Kyiv, the actions of both the regular and the irregular channels of foreign policy appeared to serve the same goal: a strong US-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, both channels were trying 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 29. The Ukrainians were clearly eager for the meeting to happen.

Bill Taylor: (12:48)

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 27, 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.

Bill Taylor: (13:17)

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 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 US participants that he, Ambassador Volker, planned to be explicit with President Zelensky in a one-on-one meeting in Toronto on July 2. In that meeting, Ambassador Volker planned to make clear-

Bill Taylor: (14:03)

In that meeting, Ambassador Volker planned to make clear what President Zelensky should do, to get the White House meeting. I did not understand what this meant, but Ambassador Volker said 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 war in Donbass. President Zelensky also said he looked forward to the White House visit President Trump had offered in his May 29th letter.

Bill Taylor: (14:38)

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 and 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. In a regular NSC secure video conference call on July 18th, I heard a staff person from the Office of Management and Budgets say that there was a hold on security assistance to Ukraine, but could not say why. Toward the end of an otherwise normal meeting, a voice on the call... The person was off screen... said that she was from OMB, and her boss had instructed her not to approve any additional spending on security assistance for Ukraine until further notice. I, and others, sat in astonishment. Ukrainians were fighting 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 regular policy channel was running contrary to the goals of longstanding U.S. policy.

Bill Taylor: (16:03)

There followed a series of NSC-led inter-agency 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. 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 a 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 a meeting was hard to schedule, and the hold lasted well into September.

Bill Taylor: (16:46)

On July 9th, in a phone call with then-Senior Director for European and Russian Affairs Fiona Hill, and Director of European Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Alex Vindman at the NSC, they tried to assure me that they were not aware of any official change in U.S. policy towards Ukraine, OMB's announcement notwithstanding. They did confirm that the hold on security assistance for Ukraine came from Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, who maintained a skeptical view of Ukraine.

Bill Taylor: (17:17)

In the same July 19th phone call, they gave me an account of a July 10th meeting with Ukrainian and American officials at the White House. They told me that partway through the meeting, Ambassador Sondland had connected investigations with an Oval Office meeting for President Zelensky, which so irritated then-national security advisor John Bolton, that he abruptly ended the meeting, telling Dr. Hill and Lieutenant Colonel 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 deal as, "This is 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.

Bill Taylor: (18:08)

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

Bill Taylor: (18:28)

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 these two separate decision making channels, the regular and the irregular, were separate and at odds.

Bill Taylor: (18:52)

Later that day, I received text messages on a three-way WhatsApp text conversation with Ambassadors Volker and Sondland, a record of which was provided by Ambassador Volker. Ambassador Sondland said that a call between President Trump and President Zelensky would take place soon. Ambassador Volker said that what was most important is for Zelensky to say that he will help investigation, and address any specific personnel issues, if there are any.

Bill Taylor: (19:20)

On the next day, 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.

Bill Taylor: (19:49)

Also on July 20th, I had a phone conversation with Alexander [inaudible 00:19:54], President Zelensky's National Security Advisor, who emphasized that President Zelensky did not want to be used as an instrument in a U.S. reelection campaign. The next day, I texted both Ambassadors Volker and Sondland about President Zelensky's concern.

Bill Taylor: (20:15)

On July 25th, President Trump and President Zelensky had the long-awaited phone conversation. Even though I was acting ambassador, 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.

Bill Taylor: (20:35)

During a previously planned July 26th meeting, President Zelensky told Ambassador Volker and me that he was happy with the call, but did not elaborate. President Zelensky then asked about the face to face meeting in the Oval Office, as promised in the May 29th letter from President Trump. We could give him no firm answer.

Bill Taylor: (20:56)

After our meeting with President Zelensky, Ambassador Volker and I traveled to the front line in northern Donbass to receive a briefing from the commander of forces on the line of contact. Arriving for the briefing in the military headquarters, the commander thanked us for the 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. Russian-led forces continued to kill Ukrainians in the war, one or two a week. More Ukrainians would undoubtedly die without the U.S. assistance.

Bill Taylor: (21:36)

Although I spent the morning of July 26th with President Zelensky and other Ukrainian officials, the first summary of the July 25th 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.

Bill Taylor: (22:16)

By August, I was becoming more concerned. On August 16th I exchanged text messages with Ambassador Volker, in which I learned that Andriy Yermak, a senior advisor to President Zelensky, had asked that the United States submit an official request for an investigation into Burisma's alleged violations of Ukrainian law, if that is 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. request for a foreign investigation.

Bill Taylor: (23:06)

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 support for Ukraine was shifting. I called State Department Counselor Ulrich Brechbuhl to discuss this on August 21st. He said he was not aware of a change in policy, but would check on the status of the security assistance.

Bill Taylor: (23:31)

My concern deepened the next day, on August 22nd, during a phone conversation 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.

Bill Taylor: (24:07)

Just days later, on August 27th, Ambassador Bolton arrived in Kiev, and met with President Zelensky. During their meeting, security assistance was not discussed. As far as I knew, the Ukrainians were not aware of the hold 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.

Bill Taylor: (24:51)

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. "The Russians," as I said in my deposition, "would love to see the humiliation of President Zelensky at the hands of the Americans." 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 to Ukraine.

Bill Taylor: (25:32)

The same day that I sent my cable to the secretary, Mr. Yermak contacted me very concerned, asking about the withheld security assistance. The hold that the White House had placed on assistance had just been made public that day, in a political story. At that point, I was embarrassed that I could give him no 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.

Bill Taylor: (26:01)

On September 1st, just three 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. [inaudible 00:26:22], to let him

know that the delay of U.S. 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.

Bill Taylor: (26:46)

On the evening of September 1st, I received a readout of the Pence/Zelensky meeting over the phone from Mr. Morrison, during which he told me that President Zelensky had opened the meeting by immediately asking the vice president about the security cooperation. The vice president did not respond substantively, but said that 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 the Ukrainians to do more to fight corruption.

Bill Taylor: (27:17)

During the same phone call with Mr. Morrison, he described a conversation Ambassador Sondland had with Mr. Yermak in 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. I understand that Mr. Morrison testified in his deposition that Ambassador Sondland proposed it might be sufficient for the Ukrainian prosecutor general to commit to pursue the investigations, as opposed to President Zelensky. But this was the first time that I had heard that the security assistance, not just the White House meeting, was conditioned on the investigation.

Bill Taylor: (28:02)

... house meeting was conditioned on the investigations. Very concerned, on that same day, September 1st, I sent Ambassador Sondland a text message asking if we are now saying that the 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 election. Ambassador Sondland also told me that he now recognized that he had made a mistake by earlier telling Ukrainian officials that only a White House meeting with President Zelensky was dependent on a public announcement of the 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 public box by making a public statement about ordering such investigations.

Bill Taylor: (29:09)

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

Bill Taylor: (29:48)

The next day, September 2nd Mr. Morrison called to informed me that Mr. [Donneluc 00:29:54] had asked him to come to his hotel in Warsaw. So Donneluc expressed President Zelensky's concern about the possible loss of US support for Ukraine. In particular, Mr. Morrison relayed to me that the inability of any US officials to respond to the Ukrainians explicit questions about security assistance was troubling them.

Bill Taylor: (30:16)

I was experiencing the same tension in my dealings with the Ukrainians, including a meeting I'd had with a defense minister that day. On September 5th, I accompanied Senators Johnson and Murphy during their visit to Kiev. When 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 in to US domestic politics.

Bill Taylor: (30:59)

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

Bill Taylor: (31:25)

Two days later, September 7th, I had a conversation with Mr. Morrison in which he described a phone conversation earlier that day between Ambassador 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, 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.

Bill Taylor: (32:10)

The following day on September 8th, Ambassador Sondland and I spoke on the phone. He confirmed that 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. I believe this was the same conversation between Ambassador Sondland and President Trump that Mr. Morrison had described to me on September 7th. Ambassador Sondland also said that he had talked to President Zelensky and Mr. [Yermak 00:04:47] and had 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 on CNN. Shortly after that call with Ambassador Sondland, I expressed my strong reservations in a text message to Ambassador Sondland stating that my nightmare is that they, the Ukrainians, give the interview and don't get the security assistance. The Russians loved it and I quit and I was serious.

Bill Taylor: (33:34)

The next day, September 9th, I said to Ambassadors Sondland and Volker, that the message to the Ukrainians and the 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 the political campaign

Bill Taylor: (33:58)

Ambassador Sondland responded about five hours later that I was incorrect about President Trump's intentions. The President has been crystal clear. No quid pro quos of any kind. During our meeting, 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, the businessman asks that person to pay up before signing the check. Ambassador Volker used the same language several days later while we were together at the Yalta European Strategy Conference. I argued to both that the explanation made no sense. 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 Ambassadors Sondland and Volker on September 9th. Finally on September 11th, I learned that the hold had been lifted and security assistance would be provided. I was not told the reason why the hold had been lifted.

Bill Taylor: (34:59)

The next day, I personally conveyed the news to President Zelensky and the Ukrainian foreign minister and I again reminded Mr Yermak of the highest strategic value of bipartisan support for Ukraine and the importance of not getting involved in other countries' elections. My fear at the time was 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 US politics. I sought to confirm through Mr. Donneluc that President Zelensky was not planning to give such an interview to the media. While Mr. Donneluc 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. Donneluc to confirm that there would be no CNN interview, which he did.

Bill Taylor: (35:54)

On September 25th at the UN General Assembly session in New York City, President Trump met President Zelensky face to face. He also released the transcript of the July 25th call. 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.

Bill Taylor: (36:42)

Last Friday, a member of my staff told me of events that occurred on July 26th. While Ambassador Volker and I visited the front as a member of my staff accompanied Ambassador Sondland. Ambassador Sondland met with Mr Yermak. Following that meeting in the presence of my staff at a restaurant Ambassador Sondland called President Trump and told him of his meetings in Kiev. The member of my staff could hear President Trump on the phone asking Ambassador Sondland about the investigations. Ambassador Sondland told President Trump the Ukrainians were ready to move forward. Following the call with President Trump, the member of my staff asked Ambassador Sondland what President Trump thought about Ukraine. Ambassador Sondland responded that President Trump cares more about the investigations of Biden which Giuliani was pressing for.

Bill Taylor: (37:34)

At the time, I gave my deposition on October 22nd, I was not aware of this information. I'm including it here for completeness. As the committee knows, I reported this information through council to the state department's legal advisor as well as to counsel for both the majority and the minority of this committee. It is my understanding that the committee is following up on this matter. Mr. Chairman, I recognize that this is rather lengthy recitation of the events of the past few months told from my vantage point in Kiev but I also recognize the importance of the matters your committee is investigating and I hope that this chronology will provide some framework for your questions. As I mentioned in my October 22nd deposition, the information in quotes in my testimony are based on my best recollection as well as a review of my personal notes.

Bill Taylor: (38:29)

Let me return to the points I made at the outset. Ukraine is important to the security of the United States, the largest country in Europe by landmass, Ukraine is a young democracy struggling to join Europe and ally itself with the United States. It has been violently attacked by Russia, which continues its armed aggression against Ukraine to this day. If we believe in the principle of the sovereignty of nations on which our security and the security of our

friends and allies depends. If we believe that nations get to decide on their own economic, political and security alliances, we must support Ukraine in its fight against its bullying neighbor. Russian aggression cannot stand.

Bill Taylor: (39:17)

Republican and Democratic administrations over three decades have been generous with assistance funding both civilian and military and political support. With overwhelming bipartisan majorities, Congress has imposed harsh sanctions on Russia for invading and occupying Ukraine.

Bill Taylor: (39:37)

Mr. Chairman, there are two Ukraine stories today. The first is the one we're discussing this morning that you have been hearing about for the past two weeks. It's a rancorous story about whistleblowers, Mr. Giuliani, side channels, quid pro quos, corruption, and interference in elections. In this story, Ukraine is merely an object. But there's another story, a positive bi-partisan 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 that 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. And I'm now looking forward to your questions.

George Kent Opening Statement

George Kent: (00:00)

Good morning. My name is George Kent, and I am the deputy assistant secretary of state for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. I have served proudly as a nonpartisan career foreign service officer for more than 27 years under five presidents, three Republican and two Democrat. As I mentioned in my opening comments last month in the closed-door deposition, I represent the third generation of my family to have chosen a career in public service and sworn the oath of office that all US public servants do in defense of our Constitution. Indeed, there has been a George Kent sworn to defend the constitution continuously for nearly 60 years, ever since my father reported to Annapolis for his plebe summer. After graduating first in his Naval Academy class in 1965, the year best known for his Heisman-winning classmate, Roger Staubach, my father served a full, honorable 30 years, including as a captain of a nuclear ballistic missile submarine during the height of the Cold War.

George Kent: (01:04)

Five great-uncles served honorably in the Navy and the Army in World War II. In particular, Tom Taggart was stationed in the Philippines at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor. He survived the brutal Bataan Death March and three and a half years in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp unbroken. He returned to service as an Air Force judge advocate, upholding the rule of law until his death in 1965. Today, I appear before you once again under subpoena as a fact witness ready to answer all of your questions about the events and developments examined in this inquiry to the best of my ability and recollection, subject to the limits placed on me by the law and this process. I will begin with some opening comments on the key principles at the heart of what brings me before you today, to wit, principled public service in pursuit of our enduring national interests and the place of Ukraine international and security interests.

George Kent: (02:06)

For the past five years we have focused our united efforts across the Atlantic to support Ukraine in its fight for the cause of freedom and the rebirth of a country free from Russian dominion and the warped legacy of Soviet institutions and post-Soviet behavior. As I stated in my closed-door deposition last month, you don't step into the public arena of international diplomacy in active pursuit of principled US interests without expecting vigorous pushback, including personal attacks. Such attacks came from the Russians, their proxies, and corrupt Ukrainians. That tells me our efforts were hitting their mark. It was unexpected and most unfortunate, however, to watch some Americans, including those who allied themselves with corrupt Ukrainians in pursuit of private agendas, launch attacks on dedicated public servants, advancing US interests in Ukraine. In my opinion, those attacks undermined US and Ukrainian national interests and damaged our critical bilateral relationship.

George Kent: (03:15)

The United States has very clear national interests at stake in Ukraine. Ukraine's success is very much in our national interest in the way we have defined our national interest broadly in Europe for the past 75 years. After World War II, US leadership furthered far-sighted policies like the Marshall Plan in the creation of a rules-based international order protected by the collective security provided by NATO. Western Europe recovered and thrived after the carnage of World War II, notwithstanding the shadow of the Iron Curtain. Europe's security and prosperity contributed to our security and prosperity. Support of Ukraine's success also fits squarely into our strategy for Central and Eastern Europe since the fall of the wall 30 years ago this past week. A Europe truly whole, free, and at peace, our strategic game for the entirety of my foreign service career, is not possible without a Ukraine whole, free, and at peace, including Crimea and the Donbass, territories currently occupied by Russia, represented by the red in the map.

George Kent: (04:26)

Looking forward, the Trump administration's national security strategy makes clear the global strategic challenge now before us: great power competition with rivals such as Russia and China, and the need to compete for positive influence without taking countries for granted. In that sense, Ukraine has been on the front lines, not just of Russia's conventional war in Eastern Europe since 2014 and its broader campaign of malign influence, but of the greater geopolitical challenges now facing the United States. Ukraine's popular revolution of dignity in 2014 forced a corrupt, pro-Russian leadership to flee to Moscow. After that, Russia invaded Ukraine, occupying 7% of its territory, roughly equivalent to the size of Texas for the United States. At that time, Ukraine's state institutions were on the verge of collapse. Ukrainian civil society answered the challenge. They formed volunteer battalions of citizens, including technology professionals and medics. They crowdsourced funding for their own weapons, body armor, and supplies.

George Kent: (05:37)

They were the 21st century Ukrainian equivalent of our own Minutemen of 1776, buying time for a regular army to reconstitute. Since then, more than 13,000 Ukrainians have died on Ukrainian soil, defending their territorial integrity and sovereignty from Russian aggression. America's support in Ukraine's own de facto war of independence has been critical in this regard. By analogy, the American colonies may not have prevailed against the British imperial might without the help of transatlantic friends after 1776. In an echo of Lafayette's organized assistance to General George Washington's army and Admiral John Paul Jones' navy, Congress has generously appropriated over \$1.5 billion over the past five years, and desperately-needed trained and equipped security assistance to Ukraine. These funds increase Ukraine's strength and ability to fight Russian aggression. Ultimately, Ukraine is on a path to become a full security partner of the United States within NATO. Similar to von Steuben training colonials at Valley Forge, US and NATO allied trainers develop the skills of Ukrainian units at Yavoriv, near the Polish border and elsewhere.

George Kent: (06:52)

They help rewrite military education for Ukraine's next generation, as von Steuben did for America's first. In supporting Ukraine's brave resistance to Russian aggression we have a front row seat to the Russian way of war in the 21st century, gaining priceless insights that contribute to our own security. This year, in 2019, Ukrainian citizens passed the political torch to a new generation, one that came of age not in the final years of the Soviet Union, but in an independent Ukraine. Presidential and parliamentary elections swept out much of Ukraine's previous governing elite and seated 41-year-old President Zelensky, a cabinet with an average age of 39, and a parliament with the average age of 41.

George Kent: (07:39)

At the heart of that change mandate, five years after Ukraine's revolution of dignity, is a thirst for justice, because there cannot be dignity without justice. Without a reformed

judicial sector that delivers justice with integrity for all, Ukrainian society will remain unsettled. Foreign investors, including American investors, will not bring the great investment needed to ensure that Ukraine's long-term prosperity is secured. This is why the principled promotion of the rule of law and institutional integrity is so necessary to our strategy for a successful Ukraine. It is also true for other former captive nations still recovering from the ashes of Soviet and communist misrule. It is why acting inconsistently with the core principle of the rule of law comes at great peril. I am grateful to all of the members of Congress and staffers, including many of you sitting here today, who have traveled to Ukraine over the past five years and appropriated billions of dollars of assistance and support of our primary policy goals.

George Kent: [\(08:42\)](#)

Those funds increase Ukraine's ability to fight Russian aggression in the defense, energy, cyber, and information spheres. They also empower state institutions and civil society to undertake systemic reforms and tackle corruption. I believe all of us can be proud of our efforts in Ukraine over the past five years, even though much remains to be done. By all of us, I mean those of us in the legislative and the executive branches in both parties, the interagency community working out of our embassy in Kiev, with Ukrainians in government, the military, and civil society, and our transatlantic allies and partners. We cannot allow our resolve to waver, since too much is at stake, not just for Ukraine and the future of European security, but for the national interests of the United States broadly defined. My prior deposition covered a lot of ground over 10 hours. Here are the main 10 themes from my testimony.

George Kent: [\(09:37\)](#)

I outlined my experience with longstanding US interest in supporting anti-corruption efforts in Ukraine. This work gave me a front row seat to problematic activities by successive prosecutors general in Ukraine. For many of the issues this committee is investigating, my knowledge and understanding is sometimes firsthand and sometimes comes from others involved in specific conversations and meetings. This is no different than how anyone learns and carries out his or her job responsibilities. I have been and remain willing to share my factual observations with the committee and will make clear when those are based on personal knowledge or from information gleaned from others. US efforts to counter corruption in Ukraine focus on building institutional capacity so that the Ukrainian government has the ability to go after corruption and effectively investigate, prosecute, and judge alleged criminal activities using appropriate institutional mechanisms; that is, to create and follow the rule of law.

George Kent: [\(10:38\)](#)

That means that if there are criminal nexuses for activity in the United States, US law enforcement should pursue the case. If we think there's been a criminal act overseas that violates US law, we have the institutional mechanisms to address that. It could be through

the justice department and FBI agents assigned overseas, or through treaty mechanisms such as the mutual legal assistance treaty. As a general principle, I do not believe the United States should ask other countries to engage in selective, politically-associated investigations or prosecutions against opponents of those in power, because such selective actions undermine the rule of law, regardless of the country. The pervasive and longstanding problem of corruption in Ukraine included exposure to a situation involving the energy company Burisma. The primary concern of the US government since 2014 was Burisma's owner, Mykola Zlochevsky, whose frozen assets abroad we had attempted to recover on Ukraine's behalf. In early 2015 I raised questions with the deputy prosecutor general about why the investigation of Mr. Zlochevsky had been terminated, based on our belief that prosecutors had accepted bribes to close the case.

George Kent: [\(11:51\)](#)

Later, I became aware that Hunter Biden was on the board of Burisma. Soon after that, in a briefing call with the national security staff of the office of the vice president in February of 2015, I raised my concern that Hunter Biden's status as a board member could create the perception of a conflict of interest. Let me be clear, however: I did not witness any effort by any US official to shield Burisma from scrutiny. In fact, I and other US officials consistently advocated re-instituting a scuttled investigation of Zlochevsky, Burisma's founder, as well as holding the corrupt prosecutors who closed the case to account. Over the course of 2018 and 2019 I became increasingly aware of an effort by Rudy Giuliani and others, including his associates, Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman, to run a campaign to smear Ambassador Yovanovitch and other officials at the US embassy in Kiev.

George Kent: [\(12:42\)](#)

The chief agitators on the Ukrainian side of this effort were some of those same corrupt former prosecutors I had encountered, particularly [inaudible 00:12:50] and Viktor Shoken. They were now peddling false information in order to extract revenge against those who had exposed their misconduct, including US diplomats, Ukrainian anti-corruption officials, and reform-minded civil society groups in Ukraine. During the late spring and summer of 2019 I became alarmed as those efforts bore fruit. They led to the ouster of Ambassador Yovanovitch and hampered US efforts to establish rapport with the new Zelensky administration in Ukraine. In mid-August it became clear to me that Giuliani's efforts to gin up politically-motivated investigations were now infecting US engagement with Ukraine, leveraging President Zelensky's desire for a White House meeting. There are and always have been conditionality placed on our sovereign loan guarantees for Ukraine. Conditions include anti-corruption reforms, as well as meeting larger stability goals and social safety nets.

George Kent: [\(13:44\)](#)

The International Monetary Fund does the same thing. Congress and the executive branch work together to put conditionality on some security assistance in the Ukraine Security

Assistance Initiative. Regarding my testimony today I will do my best to answer your questions; questions that will involve issues, conversations, and documents that span a number of years. I may be limited by three considerations. First, the state department has collected all materials in response to the September 27th subpoena that may contain facts relevant to my testimony. I have no such documents or materials with me today. I will thus do my best to answer as accurately, completely, and truthfully as I can to the best of my recollection. Second, as this committee knows from deposition testimony, throughout this process there have been concerns that questions may be asked about classified information.

George Kent: (14:34)

We have asked the State Department for guidance about classification concerns related to the public release of my deposition, and the State Department has declined to provide any. So, if I'm asked a question today that I believe may implicate classified information, I will respectfully decline to answer in this public forum. Third, there may be questions focusing on the identity of people in the intelligence community. These questions were redacted from my deposition's transcript. If such a question arises today, I will follow my council's advice and decline to answer. I would like to conclude my opening remarks with an observation about some of my fellow public servants who have come under personal attacks: Ambassador Yovanovitch, Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, and Dr. Hill, at least one of whom is going to appear before this body in the coming days. Masha, Alex, and Fiona were born abroad before their families or they, themselves, personally chose to immigrate to the United States. They all made the professional choice to serve the United States as public officials, helping shape our national security policy towards Russia in particular, and we and our national security are the better for it.

George Kent: (15:44)

In this sense, they are the 21st century heirs of two giants of 20th century US national security policy, who also were born abroad: my former professors Zbigniew Brzezinski and his fellow immigrant Henry Kissinger. Like the Brzezinskis and Kissingers, the Yovanovitches and Vindmans fled Nazi and communist oppression to contribute to a stronger, more secure America. That honorable tradition of transatlantic ties goes back to the very founding of our republic. Our 18th century independence would not have been secured without the choice of European officers: the French-born Lafayette and Rochambeau, the German-born von Steuben, and the Poles Pulaski and Kosciuszko to come to the New World and fight for our cause of freedom and the birth of a new country free from imperial dominion. It is my privilege to sit next to my former boss, Ambassador Taylor, today, and it is my honor to serve with all of these patriotic Americans. Thank you.

Adam Schiff Questioning Bill Taylor

Adam Schiff: (00:00)

[crosstalk 00:00:00] Ambassador Taylor, I'd like to begin by following up on something that you have disclosed today, and you disclosed earlier to both majority and minority, but it is some new information for the committee. You said in your testimony that one of your staff was present with Ambassador Sondland on the day after the July 25th phone call. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (00:26)

That's correct, Mr. Chairman.

Adam Schiff: (00:28)

And as your staff related the event to you, your staff member could overhear Mr. Sondland on the phone ... well, could overhear the President on the phone with Mr. Sondland, is that right?

Bill Taylor: (00:39)

That's correct.

Adam Schiff: (00:41)

So the President must've been speaking loud enough on the phone ... this was a cellphone, I take it?

Bill Taylor: (00:46)

It was a cellphone.

Adam Schiff: (00:47)

The President must've been speaking loud enough for your staff member to be able to overhear this?

Bill Taylor: (00:53)

It was.

Adam Schiff: (00:55)

And what your staff member could overhear was President Trump asking Ambassador Sondland about, "The investigations." Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (01:04)

That's correct.

Adam Schiff: (01:05)

I think you testified also that you had come to understand that the term investigations was a term that Ambassador Sondland, as well as Volker used to mean matters related to the 2016 elections and to the investigations of Burisma and the Bidens. Is that correct?

Bill Taylor: (01:23)

That is correct. Mr. Chairman.

Adam Schiff: (01:25)

So your staff member overhears the President asking about the investigations, meaning Burisma and the Bidens in 2016, and Ambassador Sondland told President Trump that the Ukrainians were ready to move forward?

Bill Taylor: (01:37)

He did.

Adam Schiff: (01:40)

And I think you said that after the call when your staff asked Ambassador Sondland what President Trump thought of Ukraine, his response was that President Trump cares more about the investigations of Biden. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (01:53)

And Burisma, yes sir.

Adam Schiff: (01:58)

And I take it the end part of that is he cares more about that than he does about Ukraine.

Bill Taylor: (02:03)

Yes sir.

Adam Schiff: (02:12)

During your testimony, Ambassador Taylor, you also said that more Ukrainians would undoubtedly die without US assistance. Why is that?

Bill Taylor: (02:22)

Mr. Chairman, the security assistance that we provide takes many forms. One of the components of that assistance is counter-battery radar. Another component are sniper weapons. These weapons and this assistance allows the Ukrainian military to deter further incursions by the Russians against Ukrainian territory. If that further incursion, further aggression were to take place, more Ukrainians would die. So it is a deterrent effect that these weapons provide. It's also the ability ... it gives the Ukrainians the ability to negotiate from a position of a little more strength when they negotiate an end to the war in Donbass, negotiating with the Russians. This also is a way that would reduce the number of Ukrainians who would die.

Adam Schiff: (03:32)

I take it if the provision of US military assistance would save Ukrainian lives, lives that any delay in that assistance may also cost Ukrainian lives. Is that true?

Bill Taylor: (03:44)

Mr. Chairman, of course it's hard to draw any direct lines between any particular element of security systems and any particular death on the battlefield, but it is certainly true that that assistance had enabled Ukrainian armed forces to be effective and deter and to be able to take countermeasures to the attacks that the Russians had [crosstalk 00:04:08]-

Adam Schiff: (04:08)

I think you said that a Ukrainian soldier lost their life while you were visiting Donbass.

Bill Taylor: (04:13)

We keep very careful track of the casualties and I noticed on the next day, information that we got that one was killed, four soldiers were wounded on that day.

Adam Schiff: (04:26)

And indeed Ukrainians lose their lives every week?

Bill Taylor: (04:30)

Every week.

Adam Schiff: (04:34)

I think you also testified that Russia was watching closely to gauge the level of American support for the Ukrainian government. Why is that significant?

Bill Taylor: (04:43)

This is significant, Mr. Chairman, because the Ukrainians in particular under this new administration are eager to end this war and they are eager to end it in a way that the Russians leave their territory. These negotiations, like all negotiations, are difficult. Ukrainians would like to be able to negotiate from a position of strength or at least more strength than they now have.

Bill Taylor: (05:14)

Part of that strength, part of the ability of the Ukrainians to negotiate against the Russians with the Russians for an end to the war in Donbass depends on the United States and other international support. If we withdraw, or suspend, or threatened to withdraw our security systems, that's a message to the Ukrainians. But it's at least as important as your question indicates, Mr. Chairman, to the Russians who are looking for any sign of weakness or any sign that we are withdrawing our support for Ukraine.

Adam Schiff: (05:48)

And so when the Ukrainians learned of the suspension of the military aid, either privately or when others learned publicly, the Russians would be learning also and they would take that as a lack of robust US support for Ukraine. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (06:07)

That's correct, sir.

Adam Schiff: (06:08)

And that would weaken Ukraine in negotiating an end to the war in Donbass?

Bill Taylor: (06:14)

It would.

Adam Schiff: (06:16)

People watching I'm sure are interested in how military assistance and diplomatic support for Ukraine affects Ukraine, but even more so interested in how does this affect our national security. Now, I think you said that if we believe in a principle of sovereignty of nations where countries get to determine their own economic political and security alliances, we have to support Ukraine and its fight, that the kind of aggression we see by Russia can't stand. How is it important to American national security that we provide for a robust defense of Ukraine sovereign?

Bill Taylor: (06:59)

Mr. Chairman, as my colleague, Deputy Secretary George Kent described, we have a national security policy, a national defense policy that identifies Russia and China as adversaries. The Russians are violating all of the rules, treaties, understandings that they committed to that actually kept the peace in Europe for nearly 70 years. Until they invaded Ukraine in 2014, they had abided by sovereignty of nations, of inviolability of borders.

Bill Taylor: (07:43)

That rule of law, that order that kept the peace in Europe and allowed for prosperity as well as peace in Europe was violated by the Russians. And if we don't push back on that, on those violations, then that will continue. And that, Mr. Chairman, affects us. It affects the world that we live in, that our children will grow up in, that our grandchildren ... this affects the kind of world that we want to see overall. So that affects our national interest very directly. Ukraine is on the front line of that conflict.

Adam Schiff: (08:25)

I want to thank you both for your decades of service to the country and I'll now recognize Mr. Goldman for questioning.

Devin Nunes Questioning Bill Taylor

Devin Nunes: (00:00)

The call summary for which the Democrats want to impeach President Trump is dramatically different from their nefarious depiction of it. What it actually shows is a pleasant exchange between two leaders who discuss mutual cooperation over a range of

issues. The Democrats claim this call demonstrates extortion, bribery, and a host of other monstrous crimes being committed against President Zelensky. Yet President Zelensky himself insists there was nothing improper whatsoever about the conversation.

Devin Nunes: (00:34)

Indeed, the routine nature of the call helps to explain why in this committee's last public hearing, Democrats recited a fictitious version of the call. Instead of reading the actual transcript, the Democrats depicted the President saying, quote, "I want you to make up dirt on my political opponent, understand? Lots of it. On this and on that," unquote. The transcript did not show President Trump saying anything remotely like that. The President did not ask Ukraine to make up dirt on anyone. But the Democrats are not trying to discover facts, they're trying to invent a narrative. And if the facts they need do not exist, then they'll just make it up.

Devin Nunes: (01:23)

Not only does President Zelensky deny the Democrats' characterization of the call, but as Ambassador Taylor testified to this committee, the Ukrainians did not even know at the time of the call that a temporary delay was put on the security assistance for them. Furthermore, as the Ambassador testified, these holds occur from time to time. Both he and Ambassador Volker were confident the delay would be lifted. In fact, military aid to Ukraine has actually substantially improved since President Trump took office.

Devin Nunes: (02:00)

Ambassador Taylor testified that President Trump was the first president to see that Ukraine was afforded Javelin anti-tank weapons. This was a very strong message that Americans are willing to provide more than blankets. This was the Obama Administration's approach.

Devin Nunes: (02:17)

Note this important fact, the security assistance was provided to Ukraine without the Ukrainians having done any of the things they were supposedly being blackmailed to do. So we're supposed to believe that President Trump committed a terrible crime that never actually occurred, and which the supposed victim denies ever happened.

Devin Nunes: (02:42)

I'd like to briefly speak about the core mistruth at the heart of the Democrats' impeachment drive. They claim the President tried to get the Ukrainians to quote, "manufacture dirt against his political rivals." This is supported by precisely zero evidence. Once again, the Democrats simply made it up.

Devin Nunes: (03:04)

But let's consider the broader question about why President Trump may have wanted answers to questions about Ukraine meddling in 2016. The Democrats downplay, ignore,

outright deny the many indications that Ukrainians actually did meddle in the election. A shocking about-face for people who for three years argued that foreign election meddling was an intolerable crime that threatened the heart of our democracy.

Devin Nunes: (03:33)

While the brazen suddenness of this U-turn is jarring, this denial is a necessary part of their argument. After all, if there actually were indications of Ukraine election meddling and if foreign election meddling is a dire threat, then President Trump would have a perfectly good reason for wanting to find out what happened. And since the meddling was aimed against his campaign, he'd have good reason for sending his personal attorney to make inquiries about it.

Devin Nunes: (04:05)

What's strange is that some of the witnesses at these hearings and previous depositions, who express alarm about these inquiries, were remarkably uninformed about these indications of Ukrainian election meddling, and why the President may have been concerned by them. For example, I noted previously, Alexandra Chalupa, former staffer for the Democratic National Committee, admitted to Politico that she worked with officials at the Ukrainian embassy in Washington, DC to dig up dirt on the Trump campaign, which she passed on to the DNC and the Hillary Clinton campaign. Chalupa revealed that Ukrainian embassy officials themselves were also working directly with reporters to trade information and leads about the Trump campaign.

Devin Nunes: (04:54)

Ambassador Kent, you didn't seem to be too concerned about it in the last round of questioning, so I'll just skip you because we know that wasn't a concern. But Ambassador Taylor, you testified to this committee that you only recently became aware of reports of this cooperation between Ukrainian embassy officials and Chalupa to undermine the Trump campaign from your last deposition. Is that correct?

Bill Taylor: (05:21)

Mr. Nunes, it is correct that I had not known about this before.

Devin Nunes: (05:25)

Yes. I'm just going over your last deposition-

Bill Taylor: (05:27)

Exactly right.

Devin Nunes: (05:27)

... Ambassador.

Bill Taylor: (05:28)

Yeah.

Devin Nunes: (05:29)

The Politico article cites three named Ukrainian officials asserting that the Ukrainian embassy supported the Hillary Clinton campaign. It quotes Ukrainian parliamentarian, Andrey Artemenko, saying quote, "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 that they simply didn't meet with the Trump campaign because they thought Hillary would win," unquote.

Devin Nunes: (05:59)

Ambassador Taylor, you testified you were unfamiliar with that statement. Is that correct?

Bill Taylor: (06:03)

That is correct.

Devin Nunes: (06:05)

You also said you were unaware that then Ukrainian ambassador to the US, Valeriy Chaly, wrote an op-ed in The Hill during the 2016 presidential campaign criticizing then candidate Trump. Is that correct?

Bill Taylor: (06:20)

That is correct.

Devin Nunes: (06:22)

You said you did not know that Serhiy Leshchenko, then a Ukrainian parliamentarian, had admitted that part of his motivation and spreading information about the so-called "black ledger," a disputed document purporting to reveal corruption by a former Trump campaign official, was to undermine the Trump's candidacy. This was in your deposition. Is that still correct?

Bill Taylor: (06:45)

That is still correct, sir.

Devin Nunes: (06:46)

Thank you, Mr. Taylor.

Devin Nunes: (06:48)

Fusion GPS contractor, Nellie Ohr, testified to Congress that Leshchenko was a source for Fusion GPS's operation to dirty up the Trump campaign. Including the compilation of the Steele dossier, on behalf of the DNC and the Clinton campaign.

Devin Nunes: (07:05)

You testified you were unaware that Leshchenko served as a source for that project. Ambassador Taylor, is this still correct?

Bill Taylor: (07:13)

It is, sir.

Devin Nunes: (07:17)

You said you did not know that Ukrainian Internal Affairs minister, Arsen Avakov, mocked and disparaged then candidate Trump on Facebook and Twitter. Is that still correct?

Bill Taylor: (07:30)

That is correct.

Devin Nunes: (07:32)

Ambassador Taylor, in your testimony to this committee, you said you were never briefed on these reports and statements. That you did not do due diligence before taking your post to discover the President's and Mayor Giuliani's concerns, what they may have been, and that you did not discuss them with Ambassador Yovanovitch. Is that still correct?

Bill Taylor: (07:55)

Yes, sir.

Devin Nunes: (07:57)

Furthermore, you said it upset you to hear about the many indications of Ukrainian election meddling. Your precise words were, I'm going to read them back to you, "Based on this Politico article, which again, surprises me, disappoints me because I think it's a mistake for any diplomat or government official in one country to interfere in the political life of another. That's disappointing," unquote. Ambassador Taylor, is that still your testimony?

Bill Taylor: (08:25)

Mr. Nunes, it is. Subsequent to that, I looked into the circumstances for several of the things that you just mentioned. In 2016, candidate Trump had made a statement saying that it was possible that he would allow Crimea to go back to Russia. He expressed the sentiment or the opinion that it's possible that Crimea wanted to go back to Russia. What I can tell you, Mr. Nunes, is that that sentiment is amazingly inflammatory to all Ukrainians. So-

Devin Nunes: (09:26)

So I can understand that. Are you aware during the... I believe it was the 2012 election when, at the time, President Obama leaned over on a hot mic to the then Russian president and said that he'd have to wait until after the election. Was that inflammatory to the Ukrainians also?

Bill Taylor: (09:51)

I don't know, sir.

Devin Nunes: (09:57)

I just want to be clear that some government officials opposed President Trump's approach to Ukraine, but many had no idea what concerned him. In this case, it was numerous indications of Ukrainian interference in the 2016 election to oppose his campaign and support Hillary Clinton. Once you know that, it's easy to understand the President's desire to get to the bottom of this corruption and to discover exactly what happened in the 2016 election.

Adam Schiff Questioning George Kent and Bill Taylor Part 2

Adam Schiff: (00:00)

I will now move to five minute member rounds. I recognize myself for five minutes. Mr. Kent, I want to follow up on my colleague's questions regarding Burisma. You testified about a time when an oligarch named Zlochevsky, I think it was, was self-dealing awarding himself contracts. When was that?

George Kent: (00:23)

To the best of my knowledge, he was minister of energy, sorry, minister of ecology under President Yanukovich, from 2010 to 2012. And at the time, licenses to have substrata exploration of gas were awarded by subdivision of the ministry of ecology.

Adam Schiff: (00:41)

So this corrupt self-dealing then was approximately seven years, at least seven years before the events that bring us here today, the phone call on the 25th and the events around it?

George Kent: (00:53)

Correct. His time as minister was 2010 to 2012. Hunter Biden joined the board of Burisma in 2014.

Adam Schiff: (01:01)

And you've read the call transcript, have you not?

George Kent: (01:04)

I have and I have it in front of me, but I haven't read it for about a month.

Adam Schiff: (01:08)

Is there any mention in the discussion with President Trump and President Zelensky of this oligarch, Zlochevsky, who seven years earlier had been self-dealing?

George Kent: (01:18)

To the best of my knowledge, no.

Adam Schiff: (01:20)

Is there a discussion of awarding contracts to oneself or the corrupt acts in the 2012 to 2014

timeframe?

George Kent: (01:31)

To the best of my knowledge, no.

Adam Schiff: (01:34)

What the President brings up is CrowdStrike, the server, and the Bidens? Am I right?

George Kent: (01:40)

I see that here, yes.

Adam Schiff: (01:43)

There was no discussion on that call of setting up an anti-corruption court or looking into corruption among oligarchs or companies in general. The President's comments were focused on two things, 2016 and the Bidens, am I right?

George Kent: (01:59)

I believe so, yes.

Adam Schiff: (02:01)

Now, you testified in your opening statement, "I do not believe the United States should ask other countries to engage in selective politically associated investigations or prosecutions against the opponents of those in power. Because such selective actions undermine the rule of law regardless of the country." The selective politically associated investigations or prosecutions against opponents of those in power are you referring to the Bidens, there?

George Kent: (02:26)

I'm referring as a general principle about the promotion of the rule of law.

Adam Schiff: (02:30)

But that would apply to the President of United States seeking an investigation of his political opponent, would it not?

George Kent: (02:35)

It could be interpreted that way, yes sir.

Adam Schiff: (02:38)

And I take it in your discussions, Ambassador Taylor, with Ambassador Sondland or others, what was communicated to you was that the President wanted investigations into 2016 and the Bidens, not into an oligarch named Zlochevsky or self-dealing, but 2016 and the Bidens, was that your understanding?

Bill Taylor: (03:04)

That was my understanding.

Adam Schiff: (03:06)

And in fact, when you said your staff overheard this call between Ambassador Sondland and the President, in that call, the President brings up investigation, does he not?

Bill Taylor: (03:20)

He did.

Adam Schiff: (03:21)

And immediately after the President gets off the phone with Sondland, Sondland is asked by your staff, "What does the President think about Ukraine?" And his answer is, "He's just interested in the Bidens." Am I right?

Bill Taylor: (03:34)

He said he was more interested in the Bidens.

Adam Schiff: (03:37)

More interested in the Bidens. No discussion of Zlochevsky or Chalupa or things that happened seven years ago. He was interested in the Bidens?

Bill Taylor: (03:49)

Yes sir.

Adam Schiff: (03:50)

Now I think you also testified that Ambassador Sondland told you that President Trump wanted Zelensky in a public box. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (04:02)

Yes sir.

Adam Schiff: (04:03)

And by public box did that mean that private statements, private promises to do this investigation of 2016 or the Bidens were not enough, he had to go on T.V., he had to go public in some way because the President wanted him in that box. Is that your understanding?

Bill Taylor: (04:19)

Mr. Chairman, I don't know exactly what he had in mind and I'm not sure what Ambassador Sondland had in mind, who was the one who mentioned that to me, that's the implication. The implication was it needed to be public as opposed to being a private assurance.

Adam Schiff: (04:37)

And I think you said in that same call you asked Ambassador Sondland to push back on President Trump's demand, is that right?

Bill Taylor: (04:48)

That's correct, sir.

Adam Schiff: (04:49)

So you understood from your conversation with Sondland, this was the President's demand, not Sondland's demand, the President's demand, and you wanted Sondland to push back, am I right?

Bill Taylor: (04:59)

So Ambassador Sondland was clearly able to have conversations with the President. And I thought that the pressure on a another president, on President Zelensky, was not a good idea from either president's standpoint. So I suggested in that phone call with Ambassador Sondland that he, since he regularly or frequently had conversations with the President could make that point.

Adam Schiff: (05:32)

Well, and I think the way you expressed yourself is, you wanted Sondland to push back on President Trump's demand, right?

Bill Taylor: (05:38)

Yes sir.

Adam Schiff: (05:38)

So it was your understand from talking to Sondland, this is what the President wanted him to do and you wanted Sondland to push back?

Bill Taylor: (05:45)

I asked Ambassador Sondland to push back, that's correct.

Adam Schiff: (05:49)

And in fact, even after the aide was ultimately released, even after the White House learns of the whistleblower complaint and the congressional investigation, the aid is released. Even after those events, you are still worried that Zelensky was going to feel it necessary to go on CNN and announce these investigations, were you not?

Bill Taylor: (06:10)

Mr. Chairman, I was still worried that he might do that. So yes, I thought that would be a bad idea. And so when there was some indication that there might still be a plan for the CNN interview in New York, which was upcoming, at the United Nations general assembly meeting, I was worried ... I wanted to be sure that that didn't happen so I addressed it with Zelensky's staff.

Adam Schiff: (06:34)

And I think you said earlier that Danylyuk, the national security advisor then for Zelensky, was concerned Zelensky didn't want to be used as some tool in American politics, is that right?

Bill Taylor: (06:45)

That's correct, sir.

Adam Schiff: (06:47)

So Zelenksy didn't want to go on T.V. to announce political investigations that he thought would mire him in U.S. politics, right?

Bill Taylor: (06:54)

He and his advisors knew that it's a bad idea to interject, to interfere in other nation's elections, yes, sir.

Adam Schiff: (07:04)

But nonetheless, it appeared until the aid was lifted, the hold was lifted, that he felt compelled to do it.

Bill Taylor: (07:11)

He was making plans, his staff was making plans to have him make some kind of announcement. I don't know what it would have been, on CNN, in public.

Adam Schiff: (07:21)

Even though he didn't want to be mired in U.S. politics?

Bill Taylor: (07:24)

Even though he knew it was a bad idea to interfere in other people's elections.

Democratic Counsel Daniel Goldman's Questioning of George Kent and Bill Taylor

Daniel Goldman: (00:01)

Ambassador Taylor, on the heels of you discussing the importance of the security assistance to Ukraine, I want to go to the end of the timeline where you learned that security assistance was conditioned on Ukraine announcing the investigations that the president wanted. And in particular on September 9th of this year, you texted Ambassador Sondland and Volker. And the text message should be on the screen in front of you. And if you could read what you wrote.

Bill Taylor: (00:35)

As I said on the phone, I think it's crazy to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign.

Daniel Goldman: (00:44)

What did you mean when you said you thought it was crazy?

Bill Taylor: (00:48)

Mr. Goldman, I meant that because of the importance of security assistance that we had just described and had a conversation with the chairman, because that was so important. That security system was so important for Ukraine, as well as our own national interest, to withhold that assistance for no good reason other than help with the political campaign made no sense. It was counterproductive to all of what we had been trying to do. It was illogical. It could not be explained. It was crazy.

Daniel Goldman: (01:29)

When you say all of what we were trying to do, what do you mean by we?

Bill Taylor: (01:33)

I mean that the United States was trying to support Ukraine as a frontline state against Russian attack. And again, the whole notion of a rules based order was being threatened by the Russians in Ukraine. So our security assistance was designed to support Ukraine. It was not just the United States, it was all of our allies.

Daniel Goldman: (01:58)

When you reference help with a political campaign and it's in this text message, what did you mean?

Bill Taylor: (02:04)

I meant that the investigation of Burisma and the Bidens was clearly identified by Mr. Giuliani in public four months as a way to get information on the two Bidens.

Daniel Goldman: (02:25)

And that investigation at the very least was mentioned by president Trump in the July 25th phone call with President Zelensky, is that right?

Bill Taylor: (02:34)

As we now know? Yes. On September 25th, that transcript was released.

Daniel Goldman: (02:40)

Ambassador Taylor, in your decades of military service and diplomatic service representing the United States around the world, have you ever seen another example of foreign aid conditioned on the personal or political interests of the president of the United States?

Bill Taylor: (02:59)

No. Mr Goldman, I've not.

Daniel Goldman: (03:02)

Mr. Kent, that vital military assistance that was not the only thing that President Trump was withholding from Ukraine. What else was contingent on Ukraine initiating these investigations?

Mr. Kent: (03:16)

Well, as we've talked earlier today, the possibility of a White House meeting was being held contingent to an announcement.

Daniel Goldman: (03:25)

How important to President Zelensky was a White House meeting?

Mr. Kent: (03:30)

New leaders, particularly countries that are trying to have good footing in the international arena, see a meeting with the US president in the oval office at the White House as the ultimate sign of endorsement and support from the United States.

Daniel Goldman: (03:49)

And President Zelensky was a relatively new president, is that right?

Mr. Kent: (03:53)

That's correct. He was elected on April 21st and his government was formed after parliamentary elections in July.

Daniel Goldman: (04:01)

Would a White House meeting for President Zelensky boost his legitimacy as a new president in Ukraine?

Mr. Kent: (04:07)

It would primarily boost his leverage to negotiate with Vladimir Putin about the Russian occupation of 7% of Ukrainian territory.

Daniel Goldman: (04:16)

Mr. Ken, is pressuring Ukraine to conduct what I believe you've called political investigations, a part of US foreign policy to promote the rule of law in Ukraine and around the world?

Mr. Kent: (04:29)

It is not.

Daniel Goldman: (04:31)

Is it in the national interest of the United States?

Mr. Kent: (04:34)

In my opinion, it is not.

Daniel Goldman: (04:36)

Why not?

Mr. Kent: (04:37)

Because our policies, particularly in promoting the rule of law, are designed to help countries, and in Eastern Europe and central Europe, that is overcoming the legacy of communism. In the communist system in particular, the prosecutor general office was used to suppress and persecute citizens, not promote the rule of law. So in helping these countries reach their own aspirations to join the Western community of nations and live lives of dignity, helping them have the rule of law with strong institutions is the purpose of our policy.

Daniel Goldman: (05:13)

So in other words, it is a purpose of our foreign policy to encourage foreign nations to refrain from conducting political investigations. Is that right?

Mr. Kent: (05:24)

Correct. And in fact, as a matter of policy not of programming, we oftentimes raise our concerns usually in private with countries that we feel are engaged in selective political prosecution and persecution of their opponents.

Daniel Goldman: (05:39)

Ambassador Taylor, now that we've established that you ultimately did understand that President Trump was withholding the security assistance in a White House meeting from Ukraine until they announced these investigations to benefit his reelection campaign. Let's go back a little bit in time to when you first learned about this conditionality. And on September 1st, so a little more than a week before that text we just read, you sent another text to Ambassadors Sondland and Volker, which should also be on the screen in front of you. And if you could read what you wrote to them.

Bill Taylor: (06:19)

Are we now saying that security assistance and White House meeting are conditioned on investigations?

Daniel Goldman: (06:27)

And Ambassador Sondland responded, "Call me." Now, what information had you learned that prompted you to write this text message?

Bill Taylor: (06:43)

I had learned that in Warsaw after the meeting Vice President Pence had with President Zelensky, Ambassador Sondland, I had had meetings there. And had described to Mr.

Yamak, the assistant to President Zelensky, that the security assistance was also held pending announcement by President Zelensky in public of these investigations. Before that, I had only understood from Ambassador Sondland that the White House meeting was conditioned. And at this time, after I heard of this conversation, it struck me. It was clear to me that security systems was also being held.

Daniel Goldman: [\(07:45\)](#)

You said previously that you were alarmed to learn this. Why were you alarmed?

Bill Taylor: [\(07:53\)](#)

It's one thing to try to leverage a meeting in the White House. It's another thing I thought to leverage security assistance, security assistance to a country at war, dependent on both the security assistance and the demonstration of support. It was much more alarming. The White House meeting was one thing. Security assistance was much more alarming.

Daniel Goldman: [\(08:31\)](#)

Now Ambassador Taylor, you in your opening statement, you outlined a very detailed timeline and in fact we have a written copy here and you included some phrases and words in quotations. Did you take notes of this conversation on September 1st with Ambassador Sondland?

Bill Taylor: [\(08:50\)](#)

I did.

Daniel Goldman: [\(08:51\)](#)

Did you take notes related to most of the conversations, if not all of them, that you recited in your opening statement?

Bill Taylor: [\(08:57\)](#)

All of them, Mr. Goldman

Daniel Goldman: [\(09:00\)](#)

What are those quotations that you include in your opening statement reflect?

Bill Taylor: [\(09:05\)](#)

They reflect my notes on the exact words that I heard on that call, so it was... If I put those in quotes, that meant that those are the words used on that phone call or in that conversation.

Daniel Goldman: [\(09:21\)](#)

Did you review those notes before you drafted your opening statement and came here to testify again?

Bill Taylor: [\(09:26\)](#)

I did.

Daniel Goldman: (09:27)

Now is that how, for example, you remember that Ambassador Sondland was on a train from Paris to London during a call in July?

Bill Taylor: (09:37)

That's correct.

Daniel Goldman: (09:38)

And you are aware, I presume, that the state department has not provided those notes to the committee, is that right?

Bill Taylor: (09:45)

I am aware.

Daniel Goldman: (09:46)

So we don't have the benefit of reviewing them to ask you these questions.

Bill Taylor: (09:50)

Correct. I understand that they may be coming sooner or later.

Daniel Goldman: (09:54)

Well, we would welcome that.

Daniel Goldman: (09:56)

You also testified earlier Ambassador Taylor, that President Trump had delegated some matters overseeing Ukraine policy to Ambassador Sondland, who was a big inaugural supporter of President Trump, even though Ukraine is not in his domain of the European Union. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (10:23)

Several participants in the meeting, in the oval office with President Trump, with the delegation to the inauguration of President Zelensky, told me of that conversation. And it was at that meeting, as I understand it from several participants, that President Trump asked the participants to work with Mr. Giuliani on Ukraine policy.

Daniel Goldman: (10:52)

Did you come to understand that Ambassador Sondland had a direct line of communication into President Trump?

Bill Taylor: (10:59)

I did.

Daniel Goldman: (11:01)

And you testified, or rather in that text message, Ambassador Sondland says to call him after you wrote that. Did you in fact call him?

Bill Taylor: (11:11)

I did.

Daniel Goldman: (11:12)

And what did he say to you?

Bill Taylor: (11:14)

He said that I was wrong about President Trump's intent. That there was no quid pro quo.

Daniel Goldman: (11:27)

But did he say anything after that? Did he describe to you? I believe you said, I'll refresh your memory, that you mentioned something in your opening statement, you said that he said that everything, and you had that in quotes, was actually contingent on the initiation of these investigations. What did he mean by everything?

Bill Taylor: (11:49)

Mr. Goldman, what he meant by everything was the security assistance and the White House meeting.

Daniel Goldman: (12:00)

And I believe you also testified that he said he had made a mistake in relaying a message to the Ukrainians. What was that mistake?

Bill Taylor: (12:09)

Mistake, he told me, was earlier he had told presumably President Zelensky and Mr. Yamak that what was necessary for the White House meeting was the pursuit of these investigations and he said he recognized that that was a mistake. It was not just the White House meeting that was dependent on the investigations. He said it was now everything, it included the security assistance.

Daniel Goldman: (12:42)

So it was not just the White House meeting, it was also the security assistance.

Bill Taylor: (12:45)

Yes sir.

Daniel Goldman: (12:46)

And so even though President Trump was saying repeatedly that there is no quid pro quo, Ambassador Sondland relayed to you that the facts of the matter were that the White

House meeting and the security assistance were conditioned on the announcement of these investigations.

Daniel Goldman: (13:03)

Assistants were conditioned on the announcement of these investigations. Is that your understanding?

Bill Taylor: (13:05)

That's my understanding.

Daniel Goldman: (13:08)

Now, you reference a television interview and a desire for President Trump to put Zelensky in a public box, which you also have in quotes. Was that in your notes?

Bill Taylor: (13:24)

It was in my notes.

Daniel Goldman: (13:25)

What did you understand that to mean, to put Zelensky in a public box?

Bill Taylor: (13:31)

I understood that to mean that President Trump through Ambassador Sondland was asking for President Zelensky to very publicly commit to these investigations, that it was not sufficient to do this in private, that this needed to be a very public statement.

Daniel Goldman: (13:53)

And did you understand why it was needed to be in public? As opposed to a private confirmation?

Bill Taylor: (13:59)

No further information on that.

Daniel Goldman: (14:02)

Now, during this time period in early September, did you come to understand that from your conversations with the Ukrainians or other individuals that Ukraine felt pressure to initiate these investigations because of the conditionality of the White House meeting and the security assistance?

Bill Taylor: (14:23)

Mr. Goldman here's what I know. I got several questions. Other officials got several questions as well from Ukrainians asking about the security assistance. So what I know is the security assistance was very important to the Ukrainians. They had begun to hear from Ambassador Sondland that the security systems was not going to come until the investigations were pursued. What I heard from the defense minister, what the senators,

what Senator Johnson and Senator Murphy heard in their conversation with President Zelensky was the clear concern, the urgent concern that the Ukrainians had about the security assistance.

Daniel Goldman: [\(15:11\)](#)

Now you also described a conversation that you had with Ambassador Sondland, a week later on September 8th, and in that conversation, in your opening statement, you described how Ambassador Sondland used the term stalemate. What did you understand the concern about a stalemate to be?

Bill Taylor: [\(15:43\)](#)

Ambassador Sondland said that if President Zelensky did not clear things up in public, we would be at a stalemate. He began that again by repeating, this is not a quid pro quo, but if President Zelensky did not clear things up in public, we would be at a stalemate. And what I understood for in that meeting, the meaning of stalemate was the security assistance would not come.

Daniel Goldman: [\(16:15\)](#)

So even though he said the words, there were no quid pro quo, he then went on to say, "But the security assistance will not come unless these investigations are done." Is that what you're saying?

Bill Taylor: [\(16:27\)](#)

My understanding that's what was meant by stalemate.

Daniel Goldman: [\(16:29\)](#)

You also described in your opening statement a discussion you had about President Trump being a businessman who wanted to have people pay up before signing the check and what did you understand that to mean?

Bill Taylor: [\(16:50\)](#)

This was an explanation that Ambassador Sondland gave me about his understanding of President Trump's thought process. Ambassador Sondland is a businessman. President Trump's a businessman. He was explaining to me the relationship, the, the understanding that a businessman would have when he's about to sign a check. And by that he clearly meant that President Trump was thinking about or had in front of him the possibility of providing security assistance to Ukraine.

Bill Taylor: [\(17:32\)](#)

It was similar to writing a check to someone who you were about to send. He used that analogy very clearly to indicate that this would require something if that person owed him

something before he signed the check, he wanted to get whatever he was owed, paid back to him. Ambassador Volker used very similar language about a week later, which indicates to me that they had that conversation as well.

Daniel Goldman: [\(18:05\)](#)

Did Ukraine owe anything to the United States?

Bill Taylor: [\(18:09\)](#)

Mr. Goldman, they didn't. They owed appreciation for the support and they were getting support and they appreciated that, but there was nothing owed to president Trump on that.

Daniel Goldman: [\(18:25\)](#)

But you understood the upshot of this comment made by both Ambassador Sondland and Ambassador Volker to be that President Trump believed that Ukraine owed him something personally. Is that accurate?

Bill Taylor: [\(18:39\)](#)

It's hard to understand, but there was a feeling by President Trump that he, and this came out in the transcript, I'm sorry, this came out in the discussion with the inaugural delegation when they came back to have a conversation with President Trump on May 23rd. That he had a feeling of having been wronged by the Ukrainians, and so this was something that he thought they owed him to fix that wrong.

Daniel Goldman: [\(19:19\)](#)

Right. But what he was talking about as you understood it, because in the context of the conversation is that what he owed him were these investigations that he won, is that right?

Bill Taylor: [\(19:28\)](#)

That would have been to fix the wrong. Exactly.

Daniel Goldman: [\(19:31\)](#)

And those investigations into the 2016 election and Biden and Burisma.

Bill Taylor: [\(19:35\)](#)

That's correct.

Daniel Goldman: [\(19:37\)](#)

Now, during this early period in September, we've talked a little bit about the fact that you continually heard that the President was repeatedly saying that there was no quid pro quo. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: [\(19:49\)](#)

That's correct.

Daniel Goldman: (19:50)

And he still says that repeatedly today, but regardless of what you call it, whether it's a quid pro quo, bribery, extortion, abuse power of the office of the presidency, the fact of the matter, as you understood it, is that security assistance and the White House meeting, were not going to be provided unless Ukraine initiated these two investigations that would benefit Donald Trump's reelection. Is that what you understood the facts to be?

Bill Taylor: (20:20)

Mr. Goldman, what I can do here for you today is tell you what I heard from people. And in this case it was what I heard from Ambassador Sondland. He described the conditions for the security assistance and the White House meeting in those terms that were dependent upon, conditioned on, pursuing these investigations.

Daniel Goldman: (20:47)

And you heard that from Ambassador Sondland himself, correct?

Bill Taylor: (20:50)

Correct.

Daniel Goldman: (20:51)

And you also heard a similar story from Mr. Morrison as well. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (20:55)

Who also talked to Ambassador Sondland about the conversations that he had had in Warsaw with Ukrainians.

Daniel Goldman: (21:02)

And what Mr. Morrison recounted to you was substantially similar to what Mr. Sondland recounted to you, right?

Bill Taylor: (21:08)

Yes.

Daniel Goldman: (21:10)

And so regardless of what Ukrainians may say now, now that everything is out in the public and we're here in this public hearing that they felt no pressure from President Trump. It was your clear understanding, was it not? That in early September when the pressure campaign was still secret that the Ukrainians believed that they needed to announce these public investigations? Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (21:36)

Mr. Goldman I know that the Ukrainians were very concerned about the security assistance. And I know that they were prepared or preparing to make a public statement that is with a CNN interview, that was being planned. Those are the two pieces that I know.

Daniel Goldman: (22:02)

And that CNN interview was to announce these investigations as you understood it. Right?

Bill Taylor: (22:07)

That was the implication. That was certainly the implication.

Daniel Goldman: (22:12)

We've been focused a lot on the September timeframe, but I want to go back two months to July before the July 25th call, and you testified Ambassador Taylor in your opening statement that it was in the middle of July when you understood that the White House meeting was first a condition on these investigations. Is that accurate?

Bill Taylor: (22:35)

Yes. We were preparing, and I agreed that the White House meeting was going to be an important step in US Ukrainian relations. So in June and in early July, attempts to work out a way to get that meeting included a phone call. And so there were several conversations about how to have this phone call that eventually happened on July 25th.

Daniel Goldman: (23:02)

And you described in your opening statement a July 10th white house meeting with a number of officials where Ambassador Bolton used the term that something was a drug deal. What did you understand him to mean in hearing that he said that, use this term drug deal?

Bill Taylor: (23:19)

Mr. Goldman, I don't know. I don't know what Ambassador Bolton had in mind.

Daniel Goldman: (23:24)

And was that in reference to a discussion in that meeting related to the white house meeting that President Zelensky wanted and in connection to the investigations?

Bill Taylor: (23:36)

The context of that comment was the discussion that Mr. Danylyuk, who was Mr. Bolton's counterpart, Ukrainian counterpart, the national security advisor had had with Mr. Bolton. And that conversation was very substantive. Up until the point where the White House meeting was raised and Mr Ambassador Sondland intervened to talk about the investigations. It was at that point that Ambassador Bolton ceased the meeting, closed the meeting, finished the meeting, and told his staff to report this meeting to the lawyers. And he also later then indicated to Fiona Hill, who was also a participant on NSC staff, that he, Ambassador Bolton didn't want to be associated with this drug deal. So it was in the implication was it was the domestic politics that was being cooked up.

Daniel Goldman: (24:50)

And did Ambassador Sondland say this in front of the Ukrainian officials to your

understanding?

Bill Taylor: (24:57)

Ambassador Sondland in the meeting where Ambassador Bolton was having a conversation with his counterpart, raised the issue of investigations being important to come before the white house meeting that had just been raised.

Daniel Goldman: (25:16)

And Ukrainian officials were there?

Bill Taylor: (25:18)

And Ukrainian officials were in that meeting, yes sir.

Daniel Goldman: (25:20)

Now, around this same time in mid July, did you have any discussions with Ukrainian officials about these investigations?

Bill Taylor: (25:33)

I don't recall.

Daniel Goldman: (25:35)

Well, let me show you a text message that you wrote on July 21st where you wrote it again to Ambassadors Sondland and Volker. And if you could just read what you wrote here on July 21st.

Bill Taylor: (25:49)

Gordon, one thing Kurt and I talked about yesterday was Sasha Donylyuks point that President Zelensky is sensitive about Ukraine being taken seriously, not merely as an instrument in Washington domestic reelection politics.

Bill Taylor: (26:03)

... early as an instrument in Washington domestic reelection politics.

Daniel Goldman: (26:04)

And Sasha Danyliuk, I think you just said is Ambassador Bolton's counterpart, right?

Bill Taylor: (26:08)

He's the national security advisor to the ... He was. He's no longer, but was at the time.

Daniel Goldman: (26:12)

What did you understand it to mean that Zelensky had concerns about being an instrument in Washington domestic reelection politics.

Bill Taylor: (26:22)

Mr. Danyliuk understood that these investigations were pursuant to Mr. Giuliani's request to develop information to find information about Burisma and the Bidens. This was very well-known in public. Mr. Giuliani had made this point clear in several instances in the beginning, in the springtime. And Mr. Danyliuk was aware that that was a problem.

Daniel Goldman: (26:56)

And would you agree that because President Zelensky is worried about this, they understood at least that there was some pressure for them to pursue these investigations? Is that fair?

Bill Taylor: (27:09)

Mr. Danyliuk indicated that President Zelensky certainly understood it, that he did not want to get involved in these type of activities.

Daniel Goldman: (27:21)

Now, I'm going to move ahead now to July 25th, which was when President Trump and President Zelensky had the phone call. But before we get to the phone call, I want to show both of you a text message. Neither of you is on this text message. It is between Ambassador Volker and Andriy Yermak, a top aid to President Zelensky. I will read it because neither of you is on it.

Daniel Goldman: (27:43)

Ambassador Volker says, "Good lunch. Thanks. Heard from White House. Assuming President Z convinces Trump he will investigate/get to the bottom of what happened in 2016, we will nail down date for visit to Washington. Good luck. See you tomorrow. Kurt." And this was less than a half hour before the call actually occurred.

Daniel Goldman: (28:07)

Now Ambassador Taylor, was Ambassador Volker with you in Ukraine at this time?

Bill Taylor: (28:13)

He was.

Daniel Goldman: (28:13)

Did you know that he was prepping President Zelensky for this phone call with President Trump in this way?

Bill Taylor: (28:19)

Not in this way, Mr. Colvin. But I knew that Ambassador Volker was prepping Ukrainians for the phone call earlier on. That is, at a meeting in Toronto on July 2nd Ambassador Volker had a conversation with President Zelensky and had indicated in a phone call that he at that time was going to talk Mr. Zelensky, President Zelensky through the the steps that need to be taken in order to get to the phone call.

Daniel Goldman: (28:57)

Understood. And you testified earlier that the security assistance had already been frozen to your knowledge, at least by July 18th. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (29:07)

That's correct.

Daniel Goldman: (29:08)

So that was just a week earlier than this?

Bill Taylor: (29:10)

That's correct.

Daniel Goldman: (29:10)

So just so we're clear, Ambassador Taylor, before this July 25th call, President Trump had frozen the security assistance that Ukraine needed and that the White House meeting was conditioned on Ukraine initiating this investigation and that had been relayed to the Ukrainians. Is that an accurate state of play at this time?

Bill Taylor: (29:33)

That's an accurate state of play that I, at that point, had no indication that any discussion of the security assistance being subject to conditioned on investigations had taken place.

Daniel Goldman: (29:48)

Right. But you understood that the White House meeting?

Bill Taylor: (29:50)

That's correct.

Daniel Goldman: (29:52)

All right. Let's move ahead to this July 25th call between the Presidents. Now, am I correct that neither of you were on this call? Is that right, Mr. Kent?

Mr. Kent: (30:03)

That's correct.

Bill Taylor: (30:03)

That's correct.

Daniel Goldman: (30:03)

And you were neither as well?

Bill Taylor: (30:05)

Right.

Daniel Goldman: (30:05)

So you both read it after it was released publicly at the end of September?

Bill Taylor: (30:10)

Yes.

Mr. Kent: (30:10)

Yes.

Daniel Goldman: (30:12)

I want to spend just a little time reading the transcript as we've been encouraged to do. And I want to particularly note four excerpts of the transcript. One that relates to the security assistance we've been talking about, another that discusses a favor that President Trump asked of President Zelensky, a third where President Trump asks the Ukrainian President to investigate his political opponent, former Vice President Biden, and then a final one where the Ukrainian President directly links the desired White House visit to the political investigations that President Trump wanted.

Daniel Goldman: (30:50)

So let's look at the first excerpt, which is near the beginning of the call when President Zelensky discusses the military aid that the US provides to Ukraine. He says, "I would also like to thank you for your great support in the area of defense. We are ready to continue to cooperate for the next steps. Specifically, we are almost ready to buy more javelins from the United States for defense purposes."

Daniel Goldman: (31:16)

Now, at the time of this phone call, Ambassador Taylor and Mr. Kent, you both knew that the aid had been frozen. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (31:24)

That's correct.

Mr. Kent: (31:25)

Yes.

Daniel Goldman: (31:26)

And Ambassador Taylor, you testified that President Trump obviously also knew that the aid had been frozen as well since he was responsible for doing that. Is that correct?

Bill Taylor: (31:36)

That's what I had been told. That's what we heard on that conference call, yes.

Daniel Goldman: (31:41)

But to neither of your knowledge, the Ukrainians were not aware of that at that point?

Bill Taylor: (31:46)

Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Kent: (31:47)

Not to my knowledge.

Daniel Goldman: (31:48)

But right after President Zelensky thanks President Trump for his great support in the area of defense, president Trump then says ... And we'll go to the next excerpt, " I want you to do us a favor though because our country has been through a lot and Ukraine knows a lot about it. I would like you to find out what happened with this whole situation with Ukraine. They say CrowdStrike. I guess you have one of your wealthy people. The server, they say Ukraine has it."

Daniel Goldman: (32:19)

And then at the end of the paragraph he says, "Whatever you can do, it's very important that you do it if that's possible." Now, Mr. Kent, you've testified a little bit about how important this White House meeting was to Presidents Zelensky. How would you expect a new Ukrainian President to interpret a request for a favor from the President of the United States?

Mr. Kent: (32:43)

I cannot interpret the mind of President Zelensky, other than to say that it was very clear that what they were hoping to get out of this meeting was a date and a confirmation that he could come to Washington.

Daniel Goldman: (32:58)

Obviously you can't put yourself in the mind, but if the Ukrainian President for a country that's so dependent on the United States for all things, including military assistance, is requested to do a favor, how do you think the Ukrainians would interpret that?

Mr. Kent: (33:14)

Well, if you go further into the call record as part of this, and we don't have it on screen, but to the best of my recollection reading it after it was released in September 25th, President Zelensky went into having ... " Whatever your problems were, that was the old team. I've got a new team and we will do whatever's appropriate and be transparent and honest about it."

Mr. Kent: (33:38)

I don't remember the exact words, but he was trying to be, in his own words and response, be responsive to conduct the business of Ukrainian government in a transparent and honest manner.

Daniel Goldman: (33:53)

Now when he talks about this CrowdStrike in a server, what do you understand this to be a

reference to?

Mr. Kent: (34:01)

To be honest, I had not heard of CrowdStrike until I read this transcript on September 25th.

Daniel Goldman: (34:06)

Do you now understand what it relates to?

Mr. Kent: (34:08)

I understand it has to do with the story that there's a server with missing emails. I also understand that one of the owners of CrowdStrike is a Russian-American. I am not aware of any Ukrainian connection to the company.

Daniel Goldman: (34:28)

Now, are you aware that this is all part of a larger allegation that Ukraine interfered in the 2016 election?

Mr. Kent: (34:37)

Yes. That is my understanding.

Daniel Goldman: (34:38)

And to your knowledge, is there any factual basis to support the allegation that Ukraine interfered in the 2016 election?

Mr. Kent: (34:47)

To my knowledge, there is no factual basis. No.

Daniel Goldman: (34:50)

And in fact, who did interfere in the 2016 election?

Mr. Kent: (34:53)

I think it's amply clear that Russian interference was at the heart of the interference in the 2016 election cycle.

Daniel Goldman: (35:00)

Let's move to the third excerpt that I mentioned related to Vice President Biden and it says, "The other thing, there's a lot of talk about Biden's son." This is President Trump speaking, "That Biden stopped the prosecution and a lot of people want to find out about that. So whatever you can do with the attorney general would be great. Biden went around bragging that he stopped the prosecution, so if you can look into it, it sounds horrible."

Daniel Goldman: (35:25)

Now at the time of this call, Vice President Biden was the front runner for the Democratic nomination in the 2020 election. And Mr. Kent, are you familiar as you indicate in your

opening statement about these allegations related to Vice President Biden?

Mr. Kent: (35:39)

I am.

Daniel Goldman: (35:40)

And to your knowledge, is there any factual basis to support those allegations?

Mr. Kent: (35:44)

None whatsoever.

Daniel Goldman: (35:46)

When Vice President Biden acted in Ukraine, did he act in accordance with official US policy?

Mr. Kent: (35:53)

He did.

Daniel Goldman: (35:55)

Now let's go to then the last excerpts that I wanted to highlight, which is President Zelensky speaking. And he says, "I also wanted to thank you for your invitation to visit the United States, specifically Washington DC. On the other hand, I also want to ensure you that we will be very serious about the case and we will work on the investigation."

Daniel Goldman: (36:21)

Now Ambassador Taylor, right after President Zelensky mentions is much desired Washington visit he says, "On the other hand." And then says that Ukraine will be very serious about the investigation. Is this the same link between the White House visit and the investigations that Ambassador Volker had texted to Andriy Yermak just a few minutes before this conversation?

Bill Taylor: (36:45)

That's my assumption.

Daniel Goldman: (36:47)

Now, just to summarize what we've just read in this July 25th call between the Presidents, the Ukrainian President thanked President Trump for security assistance that President Trump had just frozen. To which President Trump responded that he wanted President Zelensky to do him a favor though by investigating the 2016 US election and the Bidens.

Daniel Goldman: (37:08)

Then President Zelensky says that he will pursue these investigations right after he mentions the White House visit. Is that your understanding Ambassador Taylor, of what we just read?

Bill Taylor: (37:18)

Yes.

Daniel Goldman: (37:18)

And Mr. Kent, is that yours?

Mr. Kent: (37:20)

Yes.

Daniel Goldman: (37:21)

All right. I yield back.

Republican Counsel Steve Castor's Questioning of George Kent and Bill Taylor

Steve Castor: (00:01)

Ambassador Taylor, Mr. Kent, President Trump's concerns about Ukraine's role in the 2016 election. You believe he genuinely believed they were working against him, right?

Ambassador Taylor?

Bill Taylor: (00:14)

Mr. Castor, I don't know what President or candidate Trump was thinking about the Ukrainians.

Steve Castor: (00:20)

Didn't he in this Oval Office meeting on May 23rd after the Zelensky inauguration, didn't he lament that the Ukrainians were out to get them?

Bill Taylor: (00:32)

I heard that his response to the suggestion that Mr. Zelensky visit president Trump in the Oval Office was not well received and that he had concerns about Ukrainians, yes.

Steve Castor: (00:49)

But from the president's perspective if the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States, one of the most influential diplomats, is penning an op ed certainly with the okay of President Poroshenko, the DNC consultants are conferring with Ukrainian officials at the embassy. Former Prime Minister Yatsenyuk is saying things on social media, Interior Minister Avakov, who has a spanned both the Poroshenko and the Zelensky realm, is also saying some very unkind things on social media about the president. You certainly can appreciate that President Trump was very concerned that some elements of the Ukrainian establishment were not in favor of him, did not support him, and were out to get him.

Adam Schiff: (01:45)

I'll allow the question, but-

Steve Castor: (01:51)

Parliamentary inquiry, are you seriously interrupting our time here?

Adam Schiff: (01:53)

I've will allow the question. I won't dock this from the time. I just want to be clear Ambassador, if you're able to verify the things that council has asked you in the prerequisite of the question, that's fine. Otherwise, in questions from the majority or the minority, that may assume facts not in evidence before you, you should be cautioned about that.

John Ratcliffe: (02:17)

Mr. chairman, point of order.

Adam Schiff: (02:21)

The time is with minority council. Mr. Ratcliffe.

John Ratcliffe: (02:27)

Chairman, I sat here through the first 45 minutes and literally had an objection to almost the foundation of every question that Mr. Goldman asked regarding facts not in evidence, leading, but House Resolution 660 does not say that we are under the federal rules of evidence. If it is your position that I should be asserting objections to questions that violate the federal rules of evidence, let me know now, because this hearing's going to change significantly.

Adam Schiff: (03:00)

As I said, Mr. Ratcliffe, I will allow the question.

Devin Nunes: (03:05)

I think the gentleman has a different question about the rules, so what are the rules that are going to govern this?

Adam Schiff: (03:13)

Does the ranking member seek recognition?

Devin Nunes: (03:15)

I'm yielding to you to the question I just asked you.

Adam Schiff: (03:19)

For what purpose to seek recognition?

Devin Nunes: (03:21)

To answer Mr. Ratcliffe's question.

Adam Schiff: (03:23)

I have answered it. You may resume your question.

John Ratcliffe: (03:25)

Respectfully, Mr. Chairman, you haven't answered my question whether or not I should be asserting assumes facts not in evidence or leading objections to questions that are posed from this point forward. That's my question.

Adam Schiff: (03:40)

Mr Ratcliffe. I'll say once again, I'm not objecting to the question, but I am instructing the witness that they should not presume questions, from the majority or the minority, that may represent facts not in evidence, are correct. I have answered your question. We will resume the questioning and resume the clock. Mr. Castor.

Steve Castor: (04:05)

So you certainly can appreciate president Trump's concerns.

Bill Taylor: (04:11)

Mr. Caster. I don't know the exact nature of President Trump's concerns. In my deposition, I recall, you handed me the political article, which listed at least three of the elements that you have described earlier and you've recognized and I have confirmed with the ranking minority member that it's first I'd heard of those and was surprised by those. I don't know President Trump's reaction to those.

Steve Castor: (04:44)

In the information published by Serhiy Leshchenko, former Ukrainian investigative journalist, and then he was a member of the parliament about the Manafort black ledgers in August of 2016, the very day that was published, Mr. Manafort resigned from the campaign, correct?

Bill Taylor: (05:04)

I don't know, Mr. Castor.

Steve Castor: (05:08)

Certainly that gives rise to some concern that there are elements of the Ukrainian establishment that were out to get the president. That's a very reasonable belief of his. Correct?

Bill Taylor: (05:19)

I don't know.

Steve Castor: (05:24)

The run up to the 2016 election, there's many facts that remain unresolved. Agreed?

Bill Taylor: (05:32)

I'm sorry. What's the question?

Steve Castor: (05:33)

There are many facts relating to the run-up of the 2016 election that remain unresolved.

Bill Taylor: (05:40)

Any further?

Steve Castor: (05:41)

Well, Attorney General Barr, in May of 2019 tasked the U.S. Attorney for Connecticut, John Durham, to broadly examine the government's collection of intelligence involving the president's campaign. That effort, initially it was an administrative review, has turned into a criminal probe. And U.S. Attorney Durham is casting a wide net, and is following the facts where they may lead. Are you aware of that?

Bill Taylor: (06:09)

I'm aware that there is an investigation. That's as much as I'm aware.

Steve Castor: (06:12)

And so to the extent any information resides in Ukraine, it's perfectly appropriate for the Ukrainians to try to get to the bottom of that, for the Ukrainians to cooperate with the United States through official channels to share that information. Correct?

Bill Taylor: (06:24)

Mr. Caster, can you say that one again? I'd appreciate it if you would restate the question.

Steve Castor: (06:30)

To the extent Ukraine has facts related to the run-up of the 2016 election that are under the U.S. Attorney Durham's probe, Ukraine should cooperate with the United States. And to the extent there are Ukrainians doing improper things, the Ukrainians ought to investigate that themselves. Correct?

Bill Taylor: (06:49)

Mr. Castor, The Ukrainian/American relations are very supportive. The Ukrainians will certainly be responsive to requests.

Steve Castor: (07:00)

So when the president on the call transcript of July 25th, raises this with President Zelensky, and he urges that there be a connection between the Ukrainian government and the Justice Department, officially, I mean that's the appropriate way to raise an issue with the Ukrainian president. Correct?

Bill Taylor: (07:18)

It's appropriate for the justice department and the prosecutor general to cooperate and to exchange information, yes.

Steve Castor: (07:27)

But to the extent the president has concerns, and to the extent the attorney general is having U.S. Attorney Durham look into that, isn't it entirely appropriate for the president to flag this for President Zelensky, and say that you should be in touch with our official channels?

Bill Taylor: (07:43)

Mr. Castor, I don't know the precise appropriateness of these kinds of relations.

Steve Castor: (07:49)

Now, were either of you involved with the preparation for the 7/25 call?

Bill Taylor: (07:55)

I was not.

George Kent: (07:56)

I was not.

Steve Castor: (07:57)

And how do you account for that? I mean, you are two of the key officials with responsibility for Ukrainian policy. If the president of the United States is going to have a call with the leader of Ukraine, why wouldn't you ordinarily be involved with the preparation?

George Kent: (08:16)

Sir, we work for the Department of State in an Embassy overseas, and in preparation for a presidential phone call, that responsibility lies within the staff of the National Security Council. Normally, if there is enough sufficient time, national security staff can solicit information, usually from the state department, and we can draw on the embassy. But that's only background information. And my understanding, having never worked at the National Security Council, is that national security staff write a memo to the president. And none of us see that outside of the national security staff.

Steve Castor: (08:47)

Okay. So the Chargé, or the U.S. Ambassador to the country wouldn't ordinarily be on a call with a foreign leader?

Bill Taylor: (08:54)

That's correct. Would not.

Steve Castor: (08:58)

And did Colonel Vindman or anyone at the National Security Council staff reach out to you, Mr. Kent, in preparation for the call?

George Kent: (09:06)

I was given notification the day before, on July 24th, and to the extent I had any role, it was to reach out to the embassy, give them a heads up, and ask them to ensure that the secure communications link, and the office of the president of Ukraine was functional, so the call could be patched through from the White House Situation Room.

Steve Castor: (09:25)

Did you provide any substantive advice to Colonel Vindman about the call and what ought to be the official position?

George Kent: (09:35)

I was not asked and I did not provide.

Steve Castor: (09:37)

Okay. Same with you, Ambassador?

Bill Taylor: (09:40)

The same.

Steve Castor: (09:44)

You testified earlier that the call was on again, off again, and after the July 10th meeting with Ambassador Bolton, the consensus was the call was not going to happen. Is that correct?

George Kent: (09:58)

I would not say that was a consensus. The State Department's position was that a call between the two presidents would be useful, and once Zelensky's party won the first ever absolute majority in parliamentary elections on July 21st, the idea of a congratulatory call made eminent sense from our perspective.

Steve Castor: (10:15)

Okay. And the call was scheduled. And did you get a readout, Ambassador Taylor, initially from the call?

Bill Taylor: (10:25)

I didn't, Mr. Castor. We all read the statement that the Ukrainians put out. I got a read out several days later from Mr. Morrison, National Security Council.

Steve Castor: (10:39)

Okay. And how about you, Mr. Kent?

George Kent: (10:43)

I, likewise, first saw the Ukrainian statement and I believe the next day, July 26th, which would have been a Friday, I did get a partial readout from Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, yes.

Steve Castor: (10:56)

Ambassador Taylor, you said that the Ukrainian readout was cryptic. Is that just because it's initially written in Ukrainian and translated to the U.S.?

Bill Taylor: (11:05)

No, as a general rule, both United States and other countries, including Ukraine, will put out very short summaries that kind of hit the highlights of the discussion, but without going into detail.

Steve Castor: (11:20)

Okay. And you mentioned it was cryptic. Why did you think it was cryptic?

Bill Taylor: (11:30)

Having read the transcript and looking back at their summary, as I recall, and I don't recall the exact words, but they said that there were issues to be pursued in order to improve relations between the two countries or something like that.

Steve Castor: (11:50)

That seems pretty ordinary.

Bill Taylor: (11:51)

It seems pretty ordinary.

Steve Castor: (11:52)

You were with president Zelensky the very next day?

Bill Taylor: (11:55)

We were. We had a meeting within the very next day.

Steve Castor: (11:58)

And did president Zelensky raise any concerns about his views of the call?

Bill Taylor: (12:10)

So I, Mr. Volker, Mr. Sondland were in his office, and we asked him, I think, how the call. He said, "The call was fine, I was happy with the call."

Steve Castor: (12:24)

Okay. And did you get any additional readouts subsequently about the call? When did you first learn that the call contained things that concerned you? Was that not until September 25th?

Bill Taylor: (12:41)

Mr. Morrison, as I say, briefed me several days later, before the end of July. I think is where I said in my testimony that he said it could have gone better. And he said that the call mentioned Mr. Giuliani. He also said that the call mentioned

Bill Taylor: (13:02)

... Mr. Giuliani. He also said that the call mentioned the former ambassador. Both of those were concerning.

Steve Castor: (13:09)

Giuliani was heard [phrased 00:13:11] on the call by President Zelensky, correct?

Bill Taylor: (13:12)

I don't recall. It could have been. Well, I have it hear of you like.

Steve Castor: (13:19)

Yeah, it's on page three. The first mention of Giuliani was from President Zelensky, it's on page three. And President Zelensky says, "I will personally tell you that one of my assistants spoke with Mr. Giuliani just recently, and we were hoping very much that Mr. Giuliani will be able to travel to Ukraine, and we will meet once he comes to Ukraine." Did that surprise you?

Bill Taylor: (13:43)

Again, I didn't have the transcript at the time. All I heard was that Giuliani was mentioned; Mr. Morrison said that Giuliani was mentioned in the call.

Steve Castor: (13:52)

But the way Zelensky states it here, it sounds like he is very much looking forward to speaking with America's Mayor.

Bill Taylor: (14:01)

That's what I found out when I read the transcript on the 25th of September or so.

Steve Castor: (14:06)

Okay. Now Mr. Kent, corruption in Ukraine's endemic, correct?

George Kent: (14:14)

That's correct.

Steve Castor: (14:14)

And it affects the courts, the prosecutors, and there have historically been problems with all the prosecutors in Ukraine. Correct?

George Kent: (14:26)

I would say up until the new set of prosecutors appointed by President Zelensky in the last two months, correct.

Steve Castor: (14:33)

Okay. And so the U.S. government, the consensus though at the State Department and the National Security Council, and the White House is that Zelensky's the real deal. He's a real reformer; he's genuinely interested in rooting out corruption, prosecuting the bad guys, correct?

George Kent: (14:49)

I would say we are cautiously optimistic and we will work wherever there is the political will to do the right thing, and put forward genuine reform.

Steve Castor: (15:00)

And at the heart of the corruption is the oligarchical system, correct? Where the oligarchs take control often by virtual theft of ... for example, the right to certain energy licenses. Correct?

George Kent: (15:19)

That is one element, yes sir.

Steve Castor: (15:20)

And the company, Barisma, it's leader, Zlochevsky, he has a little bit of a storied history of corruption, doesn't he?

George Kent: (15:32)

Mr. Zlochevsky was Minister of Energy from 2010 to 2012 under the pro-Russian government, and he used his regulatory authority to award gas exploration licenses to companies that he, himself, controlled. That would be considered an act of corruption in my view, yes.

Steve Castor: (15:50)

Certainly self-dealing.

George Kent: (15:51)

Certainly self-dealing and self-enriching.

Steve Castor: (15:53)

And how did the Ukrainian government ultimately pursue that?

George Kent: (15:58)

In the spring of 2014, the Ukrainian government, the new government after the Revolution of Dignity, turned to partners, particularly the U.S. and the U.K., to try to recover tens of

billions of dollars of stolen assets. The first case that we tried to recover that money came from Mr. Zlochevsky. The Serious Crimes Office in the U.K. had already opened up an investigation. They worked with us and the Ukrainian authorities to develop more information. The \$23 million was frozen until somebody in the General Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine shut the case, issued a letter to his lawyer, and that money went poof.

Steve Castor: [\(16:32\)](#)

He essentially paid a bribe to make the case go away.

George Kent: [\(16:36\)](#)

That is our strong assumption, yes sir.

Steve Castor: [\(16:38\)](#)

Okay. Now at any point in time, has anyone in the Ukrainian government tried to reinvestigate that, or did those crimes just go unpunished and was he free to go?

George Kent: [\(16:50\)](#)

Mr. Zlochevsky spent time as far as I understand in Moscow and Monaco after he fled Ukraine. We continued to raise as a point of order that because U.S. taxpayer dollars had been used to try to recover frozen assets that we have a fiduciary responsibility, and we continued to press Ukrainian officials to answer for why alleged corrupt prosecutors had closed a case, and have until now not gotten an satisfactory answer.

George Kent: [\(17:19\)](#)

So to summarize, we thought that Mykola Zlochevsky had stolen money; we thought a prosecutor had taken a bribe to shut the case, and those were our main concerns.

Steve Castor: [\(17:28\)](#)

And are you in favor of that matter being fully investigated and prosecuted?

George Kent: [\(17:35\)](#)

I think since U.S. taxpayer dollars were wasted, I would love to see the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's office find who the corrupt prosecutor was that took the bribe and who much he was paid. And that's what I said to the Deputy Prosecutor General on February 3rd, 2015.

Steve Castor: [\(17:50\)](#)

But in addition to prosecuting the person that took the bribe, shouldn't the organization or individual that sponsored the bribes be prosecuted?

George Kent: [\(18:00\)](#)

I would agree that the Ukrainian law authorities should uphold the rule of law and hold people to account for breaking Ukrainian law.

Steve Castor: (18:08)

So this company, Barisma, involved in lots of criminal activity, correct? Over the years?

George Kent: (18:14)

I do not know that.

Steve Castor: (18:16)

But over the years, it's been involved in a number of questionable dealings, correct?

George Kent: (18:21)

I would say that it's the largest private gas producer in the country, and its business reputation is mixed.

Steve Castor: (18:29)

So to the extent a new regime was coming in under President Zelensky, it certainly would be fair for the new prosecutor, a genuine prosecutor, to reexamine old crimes that hadn't sufficiently been brought to justice, right?

George Kent: (18:44)

I believe that the new Prosecutor General, [name 00:18:46], made a statement to that end, that they would be reviewing past cases. But keep in mind, this is a country where those that commit crimes generally never get held to account, so there's a lot to review.

Steve Castor: (18:58)

Okay. Now this, the bribe was paid in what year?

George Kent: (19:04)

To the best of my knowledge, the case against Zlochevsky, the former Minister, was shut down December of 2014.

Steve Castor: (19:09)

Okay. And right around that time, Barisma starts adding officials to its board, is that correct?

George Kent: (19:17)

My understanding is yes, that Mykola Zlochevsky invited a series of new individuals to join the board in 2014.

Steve Castor: (19:24)

And do you know what his strategy was in adding officials to his board?

George Kent: (19:28)

I have never met Mr. Zlochevsky.

Steve Castor: (19:30)

Okay. And who are some of the folks he added to the board?

George Kent: (19:34)

The most prominent person he added to the board was the former President of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski.

Steve Castor: (19:39)

And anyone else?

George Kent: (19:40)

There were a number of others, including some Americans, and the most prominent one in this context is Hunter Biden.

Steve Castor: (19:46)

Okay. So Hunter Biden's added to the board of Barisma. Now, do you think that creates a problem that Barisma may be adding people to its board for protection purposes?

George Kent: (19:57)

Sir, I work for the government. I don't work in the corporate sector, and so I believe that companies build their boards with a variety of reasons, not only to promote their business plans.

Steve Castor: (20:09)

Was Hunter Biden a corporation governance expert?

George Kent: (20:12)

I have no idea what Hunter Biden studied at university or what his CV says.

Steve Castor: (20:16)

Like, is he the Jeffrey Sonnenfeld of the Ukraine?

George Kent: (20:20)

I have no awareness or knowledge of what his background was and what he may have done on the board of Barisma.

Steve Castor: (20:28)

So you don't know whether he has any business experience in Ukraine prior to joining Barisma's board?

George Kent: (20:34)

I've heard nothing about prior experience, no.

Steve Castor: (20:37)

Okay. Do you know if he speaks Ukrainian?

George Kent: (20:38)

I do not.

Steve Castor: (20:38)

Do you know if he possesses any other element other than the fact that he is the son of, at the time, the sitting Vice-President?

George Kent: (20:46)

I do not.

Steve Castor: (20:47)

Okay. Ambassador Taylor, do you know whether Hunter Biden offers anything other than the fact that his dad's the former Vice-President?

Bill Taylor: (20:54)

I don't.

Steve Castor: (20:55)

Or at the time, was the Vice-President?

Bill Taylor: (20:57)

I have no knowledge of Hunter Biden.

Steve Castor: (20:59)

But you would agree it raises questions, right? He was getting paid, I think, \$50,000 a month to sit on the board? Do you know if he relocated to Ukraine?

Bill Taylor: (21:12)

I'm sorry, Mr. Castor. Say again.

Steve Castor: (21:14)

Do you know if Hunter Biden relocated to Ukraine?

Bill Taylor: (21:16)

No knowledge.

Steve Castor: (21:17)

Do you know, Mr. Kent?

George Kent: (21:19)

Again, no knowledge.

Steve Castor: (21:20)

Okay. So he's getting paid \$50,000 a month, but we don't know whether he had any experience, he had any, spoke the language, or whether he moved to Ukraine, correct?

George Kent: (21:33)

Correct.

Steve Castor: (21:34)

Now at this time, Vice-President was taking a specific interest in Ukraine, wasn't he?

George Kent: (21:39)

He was.

Steve Castor: (21:40)

And could you tell us about that?

George Kent: (21:41)

I believe while he was Vice-President, he made a total of six visits to Ukraine. One may have been during the old regime, Yanokovich, and that would make five visits after the Revolution of Dignity, which started February of 2014.

Steve Castor: (21:54)

Okay. And you were the DCM, the Deputy Chief of Mission, at the time, correct?

George Kent: (21:59)

Starting in 2015, yes.

Steve Castor: (22:00)

Okay. And did Vice-President Biden come when you were at post?

George Kent: (22:04)

He did not. I came back for Ukrainian language training, and so I missed several visits.

Steve Castor: (22:09)

Okay. Now you've seen Vice-President Biden's, he's sort of given a speech, and he's a little folksy about how he went into Ukraine and he told the Ukrainians that if they don't fire the prosecutor, they're going to lose their \$1 billion in loan guarantees. You've seen that, correct?

George Kent: (22:30)

I have. I think it was a speech at the Council of Foreign Relations in January, 2018.

Steve Castor: (22:34)

Right. And he also said that he's been there, Ukraine, 13 times. Do you know if that's accurate?

George Kent: (22:40)

To the best of my knowledge, when he was Vice-President he made six visits.

Steve Castor: (22:44)

And did the State Department ever express any concerns to the Vice-President's office that the Vice-President's role at the time in engaging on Ukraine presented any issues?

George Kent: (22:55)

No. The Vice-President's role was critically important. It was top cover to help us pursue our policy agenda.

Steve Castor: (23:02)

Okay. But given Hunter Biden's role on Barisma's board of directors, at some point you testified in your deposition that you expressed some concern to the Vice-President's office. Is that correct?

George Kent: (23:12)

That is correct.

Steve Castor: (23:13)

And what did they do about that concern that you expressed?

George Kent: (23:16)

I have no idea. I reported my concern to the office of the Vice-President.

Steve Castor: (23:20)

Okay. And that was the end of it? Nobody ...

George Kent: (23:23)

Sir, you would have to ask people who worked in the office of the Vice-President during 2015.

Steve Castor: (23:28)

But after you expressed the concern of a perceived conflict of interest in the least, the Vice-President's engagement in Ukraine didn't decrease, did it?

George Kent: (23:39)

Correct, because the Vice-President was promoting U.S. policy objectives in Ukraine.

Steve Castor: (23:43)

And Hunter Biden's role on the board of Barisma didn't cease, did it?

George Kent: (23:49)

To the best of my knowledge, it didn't. And my concern was that there was the possibility of a perception of a conflict of interest.

Steve Castor: (23:56)

Now Ambassador Taylor, I want to turn to the discussion of the irregular channel you described. And in fairness, this irregular channel of diplomacy, it's not as outlandish as it could be. Is that correct?

George Kent: (24:20)

It's not as outlandish as it could be. I agree with that.

Steve Castor: (24:23)

Okay. We have Ambassador Volker, who's a former Senate-confirmed Ambassador to NATO; long-time State Department diplomat; and you've known Ambassador Volker for years, correct?

George Kent: (24:32)

That's correct.

Steve Castor: (24:33)

A man of unquestioned integrity, correct?

George Kent: (24:36)

That's correct.

Steve Castor: (24:37)

And somebody with incredible knowledge of the region.

George Kent: (24:40)

With very good knowledge of the region, yes sir.

Steve Castor: (24:43)

And the best interests of the United States?

George Kent: (24:45)

I'm sure that's right.

Steve Castor: (24:45)

And the best interest of Ukraine.

George Kent: (24:48)

His first priority is clearly the United States, and to the extent that Ukraine has an implication for that, yes; Ukraine as well.

Steve Castor: (25:00)

Okay. And the second member of the irregular channel is Ambassador Sondland, who is Senate-confirmed Ambassador to the E.U., so his involvement here, while not necessarily part of his official duties as the Ambassador to the E.U., it certainly is not outlandish for him to be interested and engaged pursuant to the President or Secretary Pompeo's direction, correct?

George Kent: (25:25)

It's a little unusual for the U.S. Ambassador to the E.U. to play a role in Ukraine policy.

Steve Castor: (25:32)

Okay. And you know, it might be irregular, but it's certainly not outlandish. And then Secretary Perry is the third member of the irregular channel. He's certainly a Senate-confirmed official; somebody with deep experience in energy markets, and he was pursuing some liquified national, natural gas projects in Ukraine

George Kent: (26:01)

That's correct, Mr. Castor.

Steve Castor: (26:02)

So his involvement, Secretary

Steve Castor: (26:03)

-in Ukraine.

Bill Taylor: (26:03)

That's correct, Mr. Castor.

Steve Castor: (26:03)

So his involvement, Secretary Perry's involvement is perfectly acceptable?

Bill Taylor: (26:06)

It is.

Steve Castor: (26:06)

Okay. Now this irregular channel, as it developed, when did you determine that it became problematic? I mean, in your opening statement identified yourself appropriately as the leader of the regular channel.

Bill Taylor: (26:27)

At least a participant. There's another leader of the regular channel.

Steve Castor: (26:33)

When did you first develop concerns that the irregular channel was being problematic?

Bill Taylor: (26:41)

So I arrived in Kyiv in mid September. By late September, a couple of phone calls with-

Steve Castor: (26:50)

You arrived in Kyiv in June, right?

Bill Taylor: (26:51)

June, sorry.

Steve Castor: (26:53)

June 17th.

Bill Taylor: (26:55)

Mid-June. June 17th thank you. And so by the end of June, I had begun to hear references to investigations as something that would have to happen prior to the meeting that president Trump had offered to presidents Zelensky. And That began to raise questions for me.

Steve Castor: (27:19)

Okay. Now, you've known Ambassador Volker, and you've certainly have a reason to know Ambassador Sondland. What did you do at this point, or did you ever try to wrest control of the irregular channel?

Bill Taylor: (27:35)

I didn't try to wrest control of the irregular channel, do that. At the time when I-

Steve Castor: (27:43)

Well why not though? If you had these concerns.

Bill Taylor: (27:45)

Because Ms. Castor, at the time as Deputy Assistant Secretary Kent testified both channels, both of those, both channels were interested in having a meeting between President Zelensky and President Trump. So there's no reason to kind of wrest control if we're going in the same direction.

Steve Castor: (28:10)

But at some point you developed concerns. I mean, your opening statement is here. I mean, you're the impeachment witness number one, and you're number two, Mr. Kent. For the case impeaching the president of the United States because of the concerns you've testified about the irregular channel. Correct.

Bill Taylor: (28:31)

I was concerned when the irregular channel appeared to be going against the overall... The irregular channel was going against the overall direction of and purpose of the regular channels.

Steve Castor: (28:44)

As I understand the record, however, when you arrived in Ukraine, you had the support of the secretary and the secretary's top advisor counselor, Ulrich Brechbuhl, correct?

Bill Taylor: (28:55)

That is correct.

Steve Castor: (28:56)

And they assured you that if you had any, you would be able to contact them and they would have your back.

Bill Taylor: (29:03)

That is correct.

Steve Castor: (29:04)

And you knew going in that the Rudy Giuliani element presented some complexities, correct?

Bill Taylor: (29:11)

I was concerned about Rudy Giuliani's statements and involvement in the Ukraine policy. Yes.

Steve Castor: (29:22)

So when it genuinely became a concern for you, what did you do to either engage Sondland and Volker and Perry and Giuliani... By the way, have you ever met Rudy Giuliani during these times relevant?

Bill Taylor: (29:39)

Not during the times relevant. Mr. Giuliani visited Ukraine one time when I was there, I think in 2007 or '08. That's the only time I've met him.

Steve Castor: (29:48)

Okay. So you've never had any communications with Rudy Giuliani as part of these irregular channel business?

Bill Taylor: (29:58)

That's correct. That's correct.

Steve Castor: (30:02)

And anyway, getting back to my question, did you try to engage a Brechbuhl or the secretary during this time period? I know you said that you had I believe a August 21st or 22nd telephone call with Brechbuhl. You had a July 10th telephone call with Brechbuhl and then you sent a first-person cable to the secretary on August 29th.

Bill Taylor: (30:25)

That's correct.

Steve Castor: (30:27)

Is that sort of the universe of initiatives you took inside the State Department to raise your concerns about the irregular channel?

Bill Taylor: (30:36)

I also raised my concerns with Deputy Secretary George Kent, in particular early on when, I think I may have mentioned this phone call that was odd in that it did not include the normal staff, indeed Ambassador Sondland's staff. And that struck me as unusual. I consulted with Mr. Kent, and at his suggestion made a note of this and also had, I think at that point I had a conversation with Mr. Brechbuhl.

Steve Castor: (31:13)

That was a June 28th call, I believe.

Bill Taylor: (31:14)

That's correct.

Steve Castor: (31:17)

And in your opening statement you expressed some concerns about what Ambassador Sondland had said, but then once Zelensky got on the phone it proceeded in a very regular channel way, correct?

Bill Taylor: (31:29)

That's correct.

Steve Castor: (31:31)

The June 28th call, at least in and of itself, didn't ultimately as it played out, present any problems for you?

Bill Taylor: (31:38)

The call with President Zelensky did not. The preparation for that call and the preparation included maybe 15 minutes of just the Americans that would stay on the call. And that, again, that was a little irregular in that it didn't have the staff. It was also in that pre-call, in that 15 minutes before President Zelensky got on the phone where Ambassador Volker told the rest of the participants that he was planning to have a conversation with President Zelensky in Toronto in three days, four days, where he would outline for President Zelensky the important components of the phone call that we were trying to establish.

Steve Castor: (32:30)

Okay, and you didn't have any issue with that, did you?

Bill Taylor: (32:34)

The only issue I had with that Mr. Castor was there was reference to investigations in, I believe, I'll have to check my notes on that, but that there was... raised issues for me that I didn't understand what Ambassador Volker had in mind that he was specifically going to raise with Mr. Zelensky. That was a little bit of a concern.

Steve Castor: (33:01)

Okay. I mean the president's expressed his interest in certain investigations, certainly relating to the 2016 election and relating to this corrupt Burisma outfit. So that wasn't inconsistent with the president's message, right?

Bill Taylor: (33:23)

I'm not sure Ms. Castor, can ask you to repeat the question.

Steve Castor: (33:27)

The president's concerns about the 2016 election and needing to get to the bottom of it and the president's concerns as it ultimately related to the Burisma company. I mean, if Ambassador Volker is raising that with Zelensky that's consistent with the direction of the president, correct?

Bill Taylor: (33:54)

The president's interest, or I would say Mr. Giuliani's interest, because that's what was very clear at the time. Mr. Giuliani's interest in pursuing these investigations was of concern, but...

Steve Castor: (34:13)

By the way, do you know how many times Volker met with Giuliani?

Bill Taylor: (34:16)

I don't.

Steve Castor: (34:16)

How many would you guess? Was he talking to him all the time or meeting with them all the time?

Bill Taylor: (34:21)

Mr Castor, I don't know.

Steve Castor: (34:22)

Okay. At his deposition, he told us just once, and he texted back and forth with the mayor, had a call or two, but it wasn't a pervasive engagement for ambassador Volker. Were you aware of that?

Bill Taylor: (34:40)

I was not aware. I was aware of one breakfast, I think, but that's the only one that I was aware of.

Steve Castor: (34:45)

Mr. Kent, before my time expires, I want to circle back to the company of Burisma. You testified at your deposition that there was an instance you USAID had engaged with

Burisma, possibly sponsoring a program, and you took issue with that and recommended USAID to pull back from that. Could you tell us about that?

George Kent: [\(35:10\)](#)

So I became aware in the summer, I believe, of 2016 that as a part of what I recall was a clean energy awareness campaign, the part of the USAID mission that worked on economics and governance, including energy, had sponsored some sort of contest for young Ukrainians to come up with a theme and there was a prize. I believe it may have been a camera. And they had co-sponsored with public private partnership being a buzzword, having a co-sponsorship with Burisma.

George Kent: [\(35:43\)](#)

Given the past history of our interest in recovering stolen assets from Zlochevsky, it was my view that it was inappropriate for the embassy to be co-sponsoring a contest with Burisma. I raised that with the mission director at the embassy. She agreed, and the USAID mission kept the contest, but dropped the public private partnership sponsorship.

Adan Schiff: [\(36:14\)](#)

The time of the gentleman has expired.

Representative Questioning

Dr. Wenstrup: [\(00:00\)](#)

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Mr. Taylor, this should be easy because I'm going to use a lot of your words from the previous deposition as we go forward. In your deposition, you spoke of support for Ukraine and its relationship to the United States and how much you support that. In 2014 you, and I'm quoting this, "Urged Obama administration to provide lethal defensive weapons in order to deter further Russian aggression." Did the Obama administration provide lethal weapons?

Bill Taylor: [\(00:27\)](#)

No sir.

Dr. Wenstrup: [\(00:28\)](#)

They provided MREs and blankets and things like that. In your deposition, you also said President Obama's objection was because it might provoke the Russians and in fact you testified in your deposition that the Obama administration didn't have a good argument since Russia had already provoked and they have invaded Ukraine. Is that correct?

Bill Taylor: [\(00:49\)](#)

That's correct sir.

Dr. Wenstrup: (00:52)

It's a shame he didn't take the advice of a combat veteran like you sir. Someone who understands what deterrence provides because a lot of Ukrainian lives could've been saved if he had taken your advice. In your deposition, you said, and I quote happy, you were "Happy with Trump administration's assistance." And it provided both lethal and financial aid. Did it not?

Bill Taylor: (01:14)

It did sir.

Dr. Wenstrup: (01:16)

And you also stated that it was a substantial improvement. Is that correct?

Bill Taylor: (01:21)

That's correct, sir.

Dr. Wenstrup: (01:22)

So now we're providing Javelins which kill Russian tanks. MREs and blankets do not do that. Today you said, "I was beginning to fear that the longstanding U.S. policy of strong support for Ukraine was shifting." I have a little trouble with longstanding based on what we just talked about, because it wasn't really longstanding strong support. It seems to me the strong support came with this administration. Would you agree with that, sir? Unless you consider MREs and blankets strong support. I wouldn't call it longstanding.

Bill Taylor: (01:57)

The longstanding that I'm referring to there, Dr. Wenstrup, is the longstanding political support, economic support, and increasing military support.

Dr. Wenstrup: (02:07)

Well certainly that strong support came from Congress.

Bill Taylor: (02:10)

It did.

Dr. Wenstrup: (02:10)

But it didn't come from the previous administration as compared to what this administration has decided to do. The strong support came with this administration, not the Obama administration. And maybe now we understand what President Obama meant when he told Russian president Medvedev that he'd have more flexibility after his election. Maybe that flexibility was to deny lethal aid to the Ukraine, allowing Russia to March right in and kill Ukrainians. Again in your deposition, you urged the Obama administration officials to provide lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine in order to deter further Russian aggression. And now they have that under this administration, don't they, Mr. Ambassador?

Bill Taylor: (02:53)

They have the Javelins. Yes, sir.

Dr. Wenstrup: (02:55)

Thank you-

Jackie Speier: (00:00)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your true heroic efforts, both tonight, today, and also throughout your careers. I'd like to start with you, Mr. Kent. In your testimony, you said that you had, "In mid-August, it became clear to me that Giuliani's efforts to gin up politically motivated investigations were now infecting US engagement with Ukraine, leveraging President's Zelensky's desire for a White House meeting." Mr. Kent, did you actually write a memo documenting your concerns that there was an effort underway to pressure Ukraine to open an investigation to benefit President Trump?

George Kent: (00:46)

Yes, ma'am. I wrote a memo to the file on August 16th.

Jackie Speier: (00:49)

But we don't have access to that memo, do we?

George Kent: (00:52)

I submitted it to the State Department, subject to the September 27th subpoena.

Jackie Speier: (00:56)

And we have not received one piece of paper from the State Department relative to this investigation. Both of you have made compelling cases of the importance of Ukraine to Europe, to the 70 years of peace, the benefit that it has to the United States national security, and our goal to continue to support sovereignty of nations. Meanwhile, Russia is violently attacking people in Ukraine in the Donbass area. So withholding military aid, does that weaken Ukraine?

George Kent: (01:39)

Well, I think it sends the wrong signal and it did for a short period of time. Again, the assistance from the FYI 19 was released and is in the process of heading towards Ukraine.

Jackie Speier: (01:52)

Does it embolden Russia when there was no aid being sent to Ukraine?

George Kent: (01:59)

I think the signal that there is controversy and question about the US support of Ukraine sends the signal to Vladimir Putin that he can leverage that as he seeks to negotiate with not only Ukraine, but other countries.

Jackie Speier: (02:12)

Thank you. Ambassador Taylor, I think you mentioned that a White House meeting for Zelensky would boost his ability to negotiate for a peaceful settlement with Vladimir Putin and Russia in general. Is that true?

Bill Taylor: (02:28)

Ms. Speier, it is certainly true that US support for Mr. Zelensky, President Zelensky, and his negotiations with the Russians is very important. And will enable him to get a better agreement with that support from the United States, both from the military assistance, but also just from the political assistance that we can provide.

Jackie Speier: (02:50)

But he has not yet had that White House meeting has he?

Bill Taylor: (02:53)

He has not.

Jackie Speier: (02:55)

I think it's ironic that Soviet born Lev Parnas, who has now been indicted, had a meeting with the President in the White House after participating in a number of campaign events for the President, and contributing \$325,000 to the President's PAC. So maybe it's actually the requirement that you give money to the President's PAC in order to get that meeting at the White House.

Jackie Speier: (03:24)

Ambassador Taylor, is it true that the prosecutor general now has opened an investigation in Ukraine?

Bill Taylor: (03:36)

Ms. Speier, the new prosecutor general that President Zelensky has appointed, is indeed investigating crimes in general. Is that your question?

Jackie Speier: (03:48)

Yes. But is he-

Bill Taylor: (03:50)

Yes, he is in office and is investigating criminal activity.

Jackie Speier: (03:56)

Has he specified what investigations he's undertaken?

Bill Taylor: (04:00)

No.

Jackie Speier: (04:01)

He has not. All right. I yield the rest of my time to Chairman Schiff.

Jim Himes: (00:00)

Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony today. One of the things I find startling about these proceedings is that faced with very serious allegations of presidential misconduct, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle don't engage or defend that conduct. Rather they spin theories about black ledgers, and Steele dossiers and the startling revelation that Ukrainians might have been upset when a presidential candidate suggested that perhaps he would let the Russians keep Crimea. Or of course we get the attacks so epitomized by Mr. Nunez's opening statement when he attacked Democrats, he attacked the media and most disgustingly attack the extraordinary men and women of the State Department and the FBI. When a defense does emerge it looks a little like this, Ukraine is a corrupt country and the President was just acting in a long line, a long tradition of actually trying to address corruption in Ukraine. Mr. Kent, you've worked on anti-corruption and rule of law efforts for much of your 27 year career, is that correct?

George Kent: (01:05)

I have specialized in anti-corruption and rule of law issues since 2012, correct.

Jim Himes: (01:10)

So like most of us up here, I don't have a good sense of what a real anti-corruption effort that we must engage in all over the world all the time, what that looks like. So let me ask you to just take a minute and just characterize for us what a real initiative, what a real program of anti-corruption might look like.

George Kent: (01:31)

If we're doing a systemic holistic program, you need institutions with integrity. That starts with investigators, it goes to prosecutors, it goes to courts and eventually it goes to the corrections system. In countries like Ukraine, we generally start with law enforcement and that's what we did in 2014, 15 with the new patrol police. There also as oftentimes needed a specialized anti-corruption agency in Ukraine that was called the National Anti-corruption Bureau or NABU.

George Kent: (01:59)

There was a different body that reviewed asset declarations for unusual wealth called National Anti-corruption Prevention Council. And eventually we got to helping them establish a special anti-corruption prosecutor and eventually a high court on anti-corruption. And that was to try to create investigators, prosecutors and courts with integrity that couldn't be bought and would be focused on high level corruption.

Jim Himes: (02:26)

So what I'm hearing there, Mr. Kent, is a very comprehensive effort. So let me read you President Trump's own words to the Ukrainian President in their July 25th phone call. And I quote, "There's a lot of talk about Biden's son that Biden stopped the prosecution and a lot of people want to find out about that. So whatever you can do with the Attorney General would be great. Biden went around bragging that he stopped the prosecution. So if you can look into it, it sounds horrible to me." Mr. Kent, when you hear those words, do you hear the President participating in or requesting a thoughtful and well calibrated anti-corruption program?

George Kent: (02:59)

I do not.

Jim Himes: (03:00)

And Mr. Kent and Mr. Taylor, the defenders of the President's behavior have made a big deal out of the fact that Vice President Biden encouraged the Ukrainians to remove a corrupt former Ukrainian prosecutor, 2016 Mr. Shokin. And in fact, Senator Rand Paul on Sunday said, and I quote him, "They're impeaching the President Trump for exactly the same thing that Joe Biden did." Is that correct? Is what the President did in his phone call and what Joe Biden did in terms of Mr. Shokin, are those exactly the same things? And if not, how are they different?

George Kent: (03:41)

I do not think they are the same things. What former Vice President Biden requested of former President of Ukraine, Poroshenko, was the removal of a corrupt Prosecutor General, Victor Shokin, who had undermined a program of assistance that we had spent, again, US taxpayer money to try to build an independent investigator unit to go after corrupt prosecutors. And there was a case called the Diamond Prosecutor Case in which Shokin destroyed the entire ecosystem that we were trying to help create, the investigators, the judges who issued the warrants, the law enforcement that had warrants to do the wire tapping, everybody to protect his former driver who he'd made a prosecutor. That's what Joe Biden was asking, remove the corrupt prosecutor so-

Jim Himes: (04:31)

So Joe Biden was participating in an open effort, establish whole of government effort to address corruption in Ukraine?

George Kent: (04:38)

That is correct.

Jim Himes: (04:39)

Great. So, Mr. Kent, as you look at this whole mess, Rudy Giuliani, President Trump, in your opinion, was this a comprehensive and whole of government effort to end corruption in

Ukraine?

George Kent: (04:51)

Referring to the requests in July?

Jim Himes: (04:53)

Exactly.

George Kent: (04:54)

I would not say so. No, sir.

Jim Himes: (04:56)

Yeah, I don't think President Trump was trying to end corruption in Ukraine. I think he was trying to aim corruption in Ukraine at Vice President Biden and at the 2020 election. And I yield back the balance of my time.

Andre Carson: (00:00)

Thank you, chairman. My colleague touched briefly on the campaign to remove career diplomat, Ambassador Yovanovitch. Mr. Kent, you stated in previous testimony that you were aware of the "campaign of slander" against the ambassador in real time, which basically unfolded in the media. Where do you understand this misinformation campaign was coming from and who was essentially perpetuating it?

George Kent: (00:24)

To my understanding, the then prosecutor general of Ukraine, now ex, Yuriy Lutsenko, met Rudy Giuliani in New York on a private visit in January. They had a second meeting in February. And through the good offices of the former mayor of New York, Yuriy Lutsenko gave an interview to John Solomon, then of The Hill, in early March, and the campaign was launched on March 20th.

Andre Carson: (00:55)

A corrupt Ukrainian prosecutor gave an interview to a reporter in the United States and made claims that the ambassador provided officials with a "do not prosecute" list. Sir, do you have any reason to believe this is true?

George Kent: (01:10)

I have every reason to believe it is not true.

Andre Carson: (01:12)

What was the reputation of the man who made these allegations, sir?

George Kent: (01:16)

Yuriy Lutsenko was a politician of longstanding. He had been Minister of Interior after the Orange Revolution. The U.S. Embassy had good relations with him for years. He was

imprisoned by President Yanukovich, came out, was elected majority leader of Poroshenko, the then president's party, and then became prosecutor general in the spring of 2016.

Andre Carson: [\(01:37\)](#)

What was your experience with Ambassador Yovanovitch? Was she working hard to combat corruption in Ukraine, sir?

George Kent: [\(01:43\)](#)

She was dedicated, as is every U.S. government official in Ukraine, to help Ukrainians to overcome the legacy of corruption, which they actually have made a number of important steps since 2014.

Andre Carson: [\(01:55\)](#)

So, in fact, before all of this happened, you and your superiors at the State Department asked the ambassador to extend her time in the Ukraine, correct, sir?

George Kent: [\(02:04\)](#)

That is correct.

Andre Carson: [\(02:05\)](#)

Did you support her extension?

George Kent: [\(02:07\)](#)

I asked her to extend until the end of this year to get through the election cycle in Ukraine, and then Under Secretary Hale, in March, asked her to stay until 2020.

Andre Carson: [\(02:16\)](#)

Now some in Ukraine probably disliked her efforts to help Ukraine root out corruption. Is that correct?

George Kent: [\(02:21\)](#)

As I mentioned in my testimony, you can't promote a principled anti-corruption action without pissing off corrupt people.

Andre Carson: [\(02:29\)](#)

Fair enough. Now, some of those people helped Giuliani smear her, did they not?

George Kent: [\(02:37\)](#)

They did.

Andre Carson: [\(02:38\)](#)

Ultimately that smear campaign pushed President Trump to remove her, correct, sir?

George Kent: (02:43)

I cannot judge that. What I can say is that Rudy Giuliani's smear campaign was ubiquitous in the spring of 2019 on Fox News and on the Internet and Twittersphere.

Andre Carson: (02:52)

So Ambassador Taylor and Mr. Kent, in all of your combined decades at the State Department, have you ever before seen an instance where an ambassador was forced out by the president following a smear campaign of misinformation orchestrated by the president's allies?

George Kent: (03:09)

I have not.

Bill Taylor: (03:10)

Nor I.

Andre Carson: (03:11)

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Michael Turner: (00:00)

Mr. Kent, Ambassador Taylor. Thank you for your service. I have a great deal of appreciation for your profession. You have very little direct contact with decision makers, a tremendous amount of responsibility. And not a lot of authority to affect U.S. policy, bilateral engagements or multilateral engagements, you're trying to shepherd through issues with our allies.

Michael Turner: (00:22)

One example of that, Ambassador Taylor, is that you who testified in your prior testimony that you have not had any contact with the President of the United States. Is that correct?

Bill Taylor: (00:30)

That's correct, sir.

Michael Turner: (00:31)

Mr. Taylor, Mr. Kent, have you had any contact with President of the United States?

George Kent: (00:34)

I have not.

Michael Turner: (00:35)

So not only, no conversations with the President of the United States about Ukraine. You've not had any contact with the President of the United States, correct?

Bill Taylor: (00:43)

That's correct.

Michael Turner: (00:43)

Okay, so you both know that this impeachment inquiry is about the President of the United States, don't you? I mean, the man that neither one of you have had any contact with, you're the first up witnesses. I just find that a little amazing, that the first up, would be two people who have never had any contact with the President himself.

Michael Turner: (01:02)

Now, Kurt Volker did have contact with the President, and contact with President on Ukraine. Mr., Ambassador Taylor, you said that he's a man of highest integrity. Well, I know Kurt Volker, and I know he served as the NATO ambassador. He served as the Director of the McCain Institute. He's of the highest professional ethics, one of the most knowledgeable people about Europe. He's absolutely a truthful man. Mr. Kent, would you agree with Ambassador Taylor, that he's of the highest integrity?

George Kent: (01:28)

I believe Kurt Volker has served the U.S. as a public servant, very well.

Michael Turner: (01:33)

Do either of you have any evidence that Mr. Volker committed perjury, or lied to this Committee in his testimony to this committee? Do either of you have any evidence that Kurt Volker perjured himself, or lied to this Committee, in his testimony? Ambassador Taylor, any evidence?

Bill Taylor: (01:49)

Mr. Turner, I have no evidence.

Michael Turner: (01:53)

Mr. Kent?

George Kent: (01:54)

I believe Ambassador Volker's deposition was over 400 pages, and I don't have it in front of me, so I can't [crosstalk 00:02:01]-

Michael Turner: (02:01)

But you have no evidence that he lied or perjured himself, correct, Mr. Kent?

George Kent: (02:03)

I have no basis to make that judgment, no sir.

Michael Turner: (02:06)

Great. Well, we're not in a court, gentlemen, and if we were, the Sixth Amendment would apply, and so would rules on hearsay and opinion. And most of your two testimonies would not be admissible, whatsoever. But I understand, in your profession, you deal in words of understanding. Words of beliefs and feelings, because in your profession, that's what you work with to try to pull together policy, and to go in and out of meetings to try to formulate opinions that affect other people's decision making.

Michael Turner: (02:33)

Ambassador Taylor, have you ever prepared for a meeting with a President or a Prime Minister of a country, where you were told one thing before you went into the meeting as to what it was to be about, and the meeting be about another thing? Or you get in there, and the beliefs or opinions of the President or the Prime Minister, were other than you believed?

Bill Taylor: (02:52)

Mr. Turner, you're asking if I ever learned something new in a meeting-

Michael Turner: (02:55)

Right, have you ever walked in with a belief that you thought about the country that you were serving in, and find out that they were wrong?

Bill Taylor: (03:02)

... I learn something in every meeting, Mr. Turner. But I, you know [crosstalk 00:03:09]-

Michael Turner: (03:06)

Well, Ambassador Taylor, the reason why the Sixth Amendment doesn't allow hearsay, is because it's unreliable. It's unreliable because frequently, it's untruthful. It is not factual. It might be beliefs or understandings. Ambassador, you testified about a number of things that you heard. Isn't it true, possible, that the things that you heard were not true? That some of the beliefs and understandings that you had, are not accurate? That in fact, you're mistaken about some of the things that you testified today, on a factual basis, versus a professional assessment?

Bill Taylor: (03:35)

Mr. Turner, I am here to tell you what I know. I'm not going to tell you anything I don't know. I'm going to tell you everything that I do know, and that's-

Michael Turner: (03:43)

But since you learned it from others, you could-

Bill Taylor: (03:43)

... that's exactly. That's exactly-

Michael Turner: (03:44)

... you could be right, you could be wrong, right-

Bill Taylor: (03:44)

... That's exactly why I'm here.

Michael Turner: (03:46)

... Mr. Taylor?

Michael Turner: (03:47)

But since you learned it from others, you could be wrong. Correct?

Bill Taylor: (03:51)

I am telling you what I heard them tell me.

Michael Turner: (03:53)

And they could be wrong, or they could be mistaken, or they could have heard it incorrectly. Right, Ambassador Taylor?

Bill Taylor: (04:01)

People make mistakes, [crosstalk 00:00:04:01].

Michael Turner: (04:02)

Right. So you could be wrong.

Rep. M. Quigley: (00:01)

That certification that took place in May, is that correct, Mr. Kent?

George Kent: (00:04)

Do not believe it was certified by May. I would defer to my colleague, Laura Cooper, who has testified [crosstalk 00:00:11] unclosed door, [crosstalk 00:00:12] but-

Rep. M. Quigley: (00:11)

It was an earlier time-

George Kent: (00:12)

It had not been done by May, because when I was visiting in May, I was asked by Laura to raise a specific issue that would meet the conditionality.

Rep. M. Quigley: (00:19)

But the DOD did meet, say that they met the certification?

George Kent: (00:23)

Yes, sir. I think it may have been in the July timeframe.

Rep. M. Quigley: (00:25)

Thank you. It's interesting, and curious, that we're talking about hearsay evidence. And it is extraordinary to me that the committee has been able to get as much information as they had, direct or hearsay, given the obstruction. You gentlemen were both asked, by the state department, not to appear for your depositions, is that correct?

George Kent: (00:46)

We both received, I believe, I received initially a letter directing me not to appear. And once the committees issued a subpoena, I was under legal obligation to appear, and I am here today under subpoena.

Rep. M. Quigley: (01:02)

Ambassador, were you also asked not to be part of the deposition?

Bill Taylor: (01:08)

[inaudible 00:01:08] I was told, by the state department, don't appear under these circumstances, that was in the letter to me, and when I got the subpoena, exactly is as Mr. Kent said, that was different circumstances and a beta legal subpoena, so, yes sir, I'm here for that reason.

Rep. M. Quigley: (01:25)

Absolutely, but we were not able to hear testimony by Chief of Staff Mulvaney, John Eisenberg, Michael Ellis, John Bolton, more than a dozen witnesses, so I suspect if you have a problem with hearsay you'd have a lot more direct testimony and direct evidence if you weren't blocking that ability. You would have a lot more documents, documents that you referred to with my colleagues' questions that have not yet been turned over by state or any other agency. Is that correct, to your knowledge, gentlemen?

George Kent: (01:59)

We're both here under subpoena. I don't think either of us is going to comment why others have not shown up.

Rep. M. Quigley: (02:03)

But has any of the documents that you turned over, to your knowledge, been turned over to the committee?

Bill Taylor: (02:10)

No.

Rep. M. Quigley: (02:10)

Mr. Kent, following the July 25 call, and through the first two weeks of August, were you involved in any efforts to arrange for President Zelensky to make a statement announcing the two investigations that the president, President Trump had talked about in the July 25 call?

George Kent: (02:27)

I was not, and I would never participate in an arrangement to have them announce investigations.

Rep. M. Quigley: (02:31)

Ambassador Taylor, were you involved in any such efforts?

Bill Taylor: (02:34)

No, sir.

Rep. M. Quigley: (02:35)

I want to show you a text of the exchange. This one is between Ambassador Volker and Andrea Yermack, the same day that Volker texted, before the July 25 call. You weren't involved with it, so I'll read it.

Rep. M. Quigley: (02:49)

The first text is from August 10, Ambassador Volker text, "I agree with your approach. Let's iron out the statement and use that to get date and PreZ can go forward with it? Then at 5:42, Mr. Yermack responds, "Once we have a date, we'll call for a press briefing announcing upcoming visit and outlining vision for a reboot of US-UKRAINE relationship, including among other things Burisma and election meddling investigations."

Rep. M. Quigley: (03:12)

Andrea Yermack says that "Once we have a date, they will announce the investigations and Barisma and election meddling." Mr Kent, are these the same two investigations President Trump asked the Ukrainian President to initiate in the July 25 call?

George Kent: (03:27)

Those appear to be the same issues that were mentioned in the call as well as the media campaign that started in March, led by Rudy Giuliani.

Rep. M. Quigley: (03:33)

Mr Kent, as the day-to-day state department point person in Washington on Ukraine policy, were you aware of this effort to persuade President Zelensky to issue a statement in order to get a White House meeting while they were happening?

George Kent: (03:46)

When this exchange happened on August 10, I was not.

Rep. M. Quigley: (03:49)

When did you learn about them?

George Kent: (03:52)

As Ambassador Taylor referenced earlier, in his testimony in oral answering, he heard on August 16. He then called me and we had a conversation, and at that point, I memorialized my concerns in a note to the file.

Rep. M. Quigley: (04:05)

Ambassador Taylor, as the point person on the ground in Ukraine, were you aware of this effort to get Ukraine to issue this written statement in early August?

Bill Taylor: (04:14)

Not the written statement, no sir.

Rep. M. Quigley: (04:16)

The entire discussion about a public statement about the two investigation President Trump wanted was done in what you have described as an irregular channel involving Ambassadors Sondland and Volker. And they tasked to take on Ukraine Policy by the President. Isn't that correct, Mr. Kent?

George Kent: (04:34)

That would be my understanding

Rep. M. Quigley: (04:36)

Ambassador?

Bill Taylor: (04:37)

The same.

Rep. M. Quigley: (04:40)

And, I guess to close, a primer on hearsay, I think the American public needs reminded that countless people have been convicted on hearsay, because the courts have routinely allowed and created needed exceptions to hearsay. Hearsay can be much better evidence than direct as we have learned in painful instances. And it's certainly valid in this instance-

Peter Welch: (00:00)

Thank you. I say to my colleague, I'd be glad to have the person who started it all come in and testify. President Trump is welcome to take a seat right there.

Bill Taylor: (00:10)

So true.

Peter Welch: (00:10)

The question here is not a dispute about the enormous power that a president has. The question is whether in this case there was an abuse of that power. The President can fire an ambassador for any reason whatsoever. A President can change his policy as he did when

he opened the door for Turkey to go in and invade Kurdistan despite opposition from many of his senior advisors. A President could change his position and our position on Ukraine, but is there a limit? There is, because our Constitution says no one is above the law.

Peter Welch: [\(01:02\)](#)

That limit is that one cannot, even as President, use the public trust of high office for personal gain. The law prohibits any one of us here on the dais from seeking foreign assistance in our campaigns. The question for us is whether the use of power by the President was for the benefit of advancing his political interest in the 2020 campaign.

Peter Welch: [\(01:38\)](#)

By the way, to my colleagues, if the President wants to attack Joe Biden and his son, he's free to do it. All fair and square in campaigns. He's just not free to change our foreign policy unless he gets his way to assist him in that campaign. That's a line he can't cross. Now, you all have been very clear about what our continuous foreign policy was. Ambassador Taylor, just very quickly describe why us withholding aid interfered with achieving our national security goals.

Bill Taylor: [\(02:19\)](#)

Mr. Welch, one of our national security goals is to resolve conflicts in Europe. There is one major conflict in Europe. It's a fighting war. Our national security goals in support of Ukraine, in support of a broader strategic approach to Europe is to facilitate that negotiation.

Peter Welch: [\(02:46\)](#)

Right.

Bill Taylor: [\(02:46\)](#)

Is to try to support Ukraine when it negotiates with the Russians.

Peter Welch: [\(02:50\)](#)

Right. I want to go back, because in the historical context, Mister Kent, that you and Ambassador Taylor provided, we had 70 years of peace after the war in which we lost over 400,000 American lives. That took care. That was in jeopardy, as you described it, Ambassador Taylor, and that threatened each and every one of us up here and the constituents we represent. Is that a fair statement?

Bill Taylor: [\(03:19\)](#)

That's a fair statement.

Peter Welch: [\(03:22\)](#)

I want to do three dates too. I only have a little time, but July 24, July 25 and July 26. July 24th, Director Mueller testified about his investigation and he established beyond doubt that it was the Russians who interfered in our election. He expressed a fear that would be the new normal. On July 25th, according to the readout of the President's campaign, he asked the

Ukrainians to investigate Ukrainian interference in our election that had been repudiated. Then in July 26th, as I understand it, this person who reported to you heard the President saying he wanted investigations again in Ukraine.

Peter Welch: [\(04:17\)](#)

So, this is the question. The new normal that Director Mueller feared, is there a new normal that you fear that a president, any president, can use congressionally approved foreign aid as a lever to get personal advantage in something that is in his interest but not the public interest?

Bill Taylor: [\(04:43\)](#)

That should not be the case, Mr. Welch.

Denny Heck: [\(00:00\)](#)

Mr Kent. Some people have suggested that the real reason that president Trump's pressure campaign on the Ukraine was to root out corruption in Ukraine. I've gone back and read the memorandum of call two or three times actually, and I don't recall a single instance where the president ever used the word corruption, nor the word corrupt.

Denny Heck: [\(00:29\)](#)

I know in answer to the chairman's opening questions, you'd indicated you had gone back and read it about a month ago. Do you recall the president in that July 25th phone call with President Zelensky ever uttering the word corrupt or corruption?

George Kent: [\(00:43\)](#)

I don't recall, but it would be a matter of record now that it's been released.

Denny Heck: [\(00:46\)](#)

And as a matter of record he didn't, but he did manage to find time to mention his potential political rival in 2020.

Denny Heck: [\(00:54\)](#)

You also answered, in response to the question from Mr Himes, that you've been working on the issue of corruption, literally for decades. I thank you for that on behalf of the american people. And indeed, on October 15th you testified about longstanding US policy meant to combat corruption in the Ukraine, championed by people such as former ambassador Maria Ivanovich. But Mr Kent, is it not true that, rather than fighting corruption in general and Ukraine, that what President Trump actually did was unceremoniously recall and remove Ambassador Ivanovich from her post in Ukraine?

George Kent: [\(01:37\)](#)

I would, say first of all as I repeated before, a president has the right to recall ambassadors. It remains a matter of policy of the United States towards Ukraine to help them overcome a legacy of corruption in creating new institutions. And much of what we've been discussing

today, which involved in a regular channel, was a request that went against US policy that would have undermined the rule of law and our longstanding policy goals in Ukraine, as in other countries in the post-Soviet space.

Denny Heck: [\(02:08\)](#)

Those policies, which were indeed championed by ambassador Ivanovich.

Denny Heck: [\(02:11\)](#)

You also testified on October 15th in the deposition about fundamental reforms necessary for Ukraine to fight corruption and to transform the country. And you cited the importance of reforming certain institutions, notably the security service in the Prosecutor General's office. Was investigating President Trump's political opponents a part of those necessary reforms? Was it on that list of yours, sir, or indeed, was it on any list?

George Kent: [\(02:45\)](#)

No, they weren't.

Denny Heck: [\(02:47\)](#)

In fact, historically, is it not true that a major problem in the Ukraine has been it's misuse of prosecutors, precisely to conduct investigation of political opponents? That's a legacy I dare suggest from the Soviet era when, as you stated in your testimony, prosecutors like the KGB were, and I quote you now, "Instruments of oppression." Is that true?

George Kent: [\(03:11\)](#)

I said that, and I believe it's true.

Denny Heck: [\(03:13\)](#)

So finally, Mr. Kent, for as long as I can remember, US foreign policy has been predicated on advancing principled entrance and democratic values, notably freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, free fair and open elections, and the rule of law. Mr. Kent, when American leaders ask foreign governments to investigate their potential rivals, doesn't that make it harder for us to advocate on behalf of those democratic values?

George Kent: [\(03:54\)](#)

I believe it makes it more difficult for our diplomatic representatives overseas to carry out those policy goals, yes.

Denny Heck: [\(04:00\)](#)

How is that, sir?

George Kent: [\(04:02\)](#)

Well, there's a issue of credibility. They hear diplomats on the ground saying one thing, and they hear other US leaders saying something else.

Denny Heck: (04:10)

Ambassador Taylor, would you agree with that, sir?

Bill Taylor: (04:12)

I would.

Denny Heck: (04:13)

Is there anything you'd like to add about how it might make it more difficult for you to do your job, sir?

Bill Taylor: (04:20)

Our credibility is based on a respect for the United States, and if we damage that respect, then it hurts our credibility and makes it more difficult for us to do our jobs.

Denny Heck: (04:33)

Anyone looking at the facts can see what happened was an abuse of power. Anyone looking at the facts can see that what happened was unethical. Anyone looking at the facts can see, anyone looking at the facts can see that what went on was just plain wrong.

John Ratcliffe: (00:00)

Thank you both for being here. It's obvious from your testimony today that you both care a great deal about U.S, Ukraine relations. It's also very clear that you're optimistic about president Zelensky. Ambassador Taylor, you relayed one of his first acts in office was to remove immunity from deputies, which had long been a source of corruption. I know you had a number of personal dealings with him. Has he given you any reason to question his honesty or his integrity?

Bill Taylor: (00:24)

No sir.

John Ratcliffe: (00:25)

In your prior deposition, I asked you, and I'll read it directly, "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. And to your knowledge, nobody in the Ukrainian government was aware of the hold." And your answer was, that is correct. Is that still your testimony?

Bill Taylor: (00:51)

Mr. Ratcliffe at some point in September ...

John Ratcliffe: (00:56)

I'm talking about on July 25th.

Bill Taylor: (00:58)

July 25th sorry. Yes, that's correct. That's correct. They did not know this.

John Ratcliffe: (01:02)

All right. And as it turns out, president Zelensky agreed with you. On October 10th president Zelensky held a press marathon with over 300 reporters where he said repeatedly and consistently over hours and hours that he was not aware of a military hold during the July 25th call. In fact, in his official press release from the Ukrainian government, available on his website that I'll be introducing into the record, he said, "Our phone conversation bears no relations to arms. They blocked the provision of military assistance prior to our telephone conversation, but the issue had not been discussed during our conversation. I mean, I didn't even know." Now, in addition to confirming that because he had no knowledge of it, there was no quid pro quo involving military aid during that call. President Zelensky went on to confirm a number of things that there was no pressure, that there were no conditions, that there were no threats on military aid. There were no conditions or pressure to investigate Burisma or the 2016 election. That there was no blackmail. That there was no corruption of any kind during the July 25th call, again, from his official press release.

John Ratcliffe: (02:20)

Therefore, there was no blackmail because it was not the subject of our conversation with the president of the United States. There were no conditions on the investigation, either because of arms or the situation around Burisma company. He told [inaudible 00:02:35] there was no blackmail. He told the L.A. Times there was no pressure or blackmail from the United States. He told Japan's Kyoto news, "I was never pressured and there were no conditions being imposed." He told ABC news and the BBC, "I'm against corruption. This is not corruption. It was just a call."

John Ratcliffe: (02:57)

The Ukrainian president stood in front of the world press and repeatedly, consistently over and over again, interview after interview said he had no knowledge of military aid being withheld. Meaning no quid pro quo, no pressure, no demands, no threats, no blackmail, nothing corrupt. And unlike the first 45 minutes that we heard from the Democrats today, that's not secondhand information. It's not hearsay, it's not what someone overheard ambassador Sandlin say, that was his direct testimony. Ambassador Taylor, do you have any evidence to assert that president Zelensky was lying to the world press when he said those things? Yes or no?

Bill Taylor: (03:34)

Mr. Ratcliffe if I can respond ...

John Ratcliffe: (03:36)

My time is short, yes or no.

Bill Taylor: (03:38)

That's right. I have no reason to doubt what the president said in his press conference.

John Ratcliffe: (03:44)

Okay, very good. In this impeachment hearing today where we impeach presidents for treason or bribery or other high crimes, where is the impeachable offense in that call? Are either of you here today to assert there was an impeachable offense in that call? Shout it out. Anyone?

Bill Taylor: (04:05)

Mr. Ratcliffe if I can just respond. Let me just reiterate that I'm not here ...

John Ratcliffe: (04:13)

I've got one minute left.

Bill Taylor: (04:13)

I know you only got a minute left.

John Ratcliffe: (04:13)

Let me just make this point.

Speaker 3: (04:14)

You asked the witness a question.

John Ratcliffe: (04:14)

I withdraw the question. Let me just make this point ...

Bill Taylor: (04:16)

I'm not here to take one side or the other, that's your [crosstalk 00:04:20].

John Ratcliffe: (04:16)

Let me ask this question ...

Speaker 3: (04:21)

The general will suspend.

John Ratcliffe: (04:22)

Suspend the time please.

Speaker 3: (04:24)

Ambassador Taylor, would you like to answer the question?

John Ratcliffe: (04:27)

Suspend the time please. I withdrew the question.

Speaker 3: (04:28)

The general will suspend. We will suspend the clock.

John Ratcliffe: (04:31)

Suspend the clock in one minute please.

Speaker 3: (04:33)

Ambassador Taylor, would you like to respond to the question?

Bill Taylor: (04:36)

Mr. Ratcliffe, I would just like to say that I am not here to do anything having to do with having to decide about impeachment. That is not what either of us are here to do. This is your job. Thank you Mr. General.

John Ratcliffe: (04:48)

Will you restore time to the clock to one minute?

Speaker 3: (04:50)

No, but you may continue with 22 seconds.

John Ratcliffe: (04:55)

Fine. Mr. Ambassador, I think everyone knows that house Democrats have made up their mind to impeach one president. The question that we've just learned is whether or not they're prepared to impeach two. Because to be clear, if house Democrats impeach president Trump for a quid pro quo involving military aid, they have to call president Zelensky a liar. If they impeach him for abusing his power, or pressuring, or making threats or demands, they have to call president Zelensky a liar to do it. If they impeach president Trump for blackmail or extortion, or making threats or demands, they have to call president Trump a liar to do it.

Joaquin Castro: (00:00)

Thank you chairman. Thank you gentlemen for your testimony today and for your service to our country. Listening to all the evidence, everything I've heard and read in this investigation, it seems to me that the President of the United States either committed extortion and bribery of a foreign official or attempted extortion and bribery of a foreign official. When President Trump got President Zelensky on the phone on July 25th, he was talking to a desperate man, wasn't he? President Zelensky was desperate to protect his country and make sure that he had foreign assistance from the United States. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (00:38)

President Zelensky is very interested in U.S. support, both assistance and political support.

Joaquin Castro: (00:44)

What would have happened if the aid had gotten cut off, ambassador? What would have happened to President Zelensky's career, and what would've happened to the Ukraine?

Bill Taylor: (00:51)

If the assistance had been cut off, he would have been much weaker in his negotiations with the Russians. He would have been much weaker on the battlefield.

Joaquin Castro: (01:07)

The Russians may have taken it as an invitation to actually take military action against Ukraine, is that right?

Bill Taylor: (01:13)

The Russians always look for vulnerabilities and they know that the United States has supported Ukraine. If the Russians determine or suspect that that support is lessened or not there, they will likely take advantage.

Joaquin Castro: (01:30)

They could have pounced.

Bill Taylor: (01:31)

They could have taken advantage.

Joaquin Castro: (01:33)

So he had a desperate man on the phone and he asked a desperate man for a favor. And based on your testimony, it sounds like begrudgingly President's Zelensky may have actually agreed to do that favor and investigate the Bidens and Burisma. Is that right?

Bill Taylor: (01:50)

President's Zelensky does say in the transcript that he will pursue the investigations.

Joaquin Castro: (01:55)

So we know that President Trump asked for a favor to help his political career, and it appears as though the president of the Ukraine agreed to that favor. Do we know why it didn't actually happen?

Joaquin Castro: (02:09)

Do we know why there was no announcement in front of CNN or to CNN about an investigation?

Bill Taylor: (02:20)

Mr. Castro, as we've determined, as we've discussed here, on September 11th, just before any CNN discussion or interview, the hold was released. The hold on the security systems was released.

Joaquin Castro: (02:39)

So the hold was released. Is it possible that the White House released that hold because they knew that a whistle blower had basically turned this in?

Bill Taylor: (02:49)

I don't know, sir.

Joaquin Castro: (02:51)

Do you think that's possible?

Bill Taylor: (02:53)

I'm not in a position to judge.

Joaquin Castro: (02:55)

So we have a president who the other side claimed or has defended the president saying that the aid went through, that there was never any investigation, but the president attempted to get those things done, and it looks like there was an initial agreement by the President of the Ukraine to actually do those things.

Joaquin Castro: (03:16)

So, ambassadors, is attempted murder a crime? Is attempted murder a crime?

Bill Taylor: (03:27)

Attempted murder is a crime.

Joaquin Castro: (03:28)

Is attempted robbery a crime?

Bill Taylor: (03:31)

Neither of us is a lawyer, but I-

Joaquin Castro: (03:34)

I think anybody in this room could answer that question.

Bill Taylor: (03:36)

I think that's right, and I'll go out on a limb and say yes it is.

Joaquin Castro: (03:39)

Is attempted extortion and bribery a crime?

Bill Taylor: (03:43)

I don't know, sir.

Joaquin Castro: (03:49)

In the minute that I have left, I want you to speak to the nation about what's at stake, Ambassador Kent. You said in your opening statement, you warned about selective prosecutions and a president of the United States going after specific Americans abroad. If this Congress clears President Trump, does it mean that he can go ask another foreign country to investigate another presidential candidate, a member of Congress, a governor, a Senator, or any private American citizen doing business overseas? If there's no consequence for a president who does that, then it means there's a green light, doesn't it? For any president to ask any country to go prosecute or investigate an American citizen for political and personal gain of that president, doesn't it?

George Kent: (04:46)

Thank you for the question. First of all, I'm not an ambassador.

Joaquin Castro: (04:49)

I'm sorry, Deputy-

George Kent: (04:50)

I will repeat, I think on principle, regardless of the country, whether it's Ukraine, the U.S. or any country, the facts of law, criminal nexus should drive investigations by law enforcement officials and it is not the role of politicians to be involved in directing the judicial systems of their own country or other countries.

Bill Taylor: (05:11)

[inaudible 00:05:13].

Rep. Demings: (00:00)

Mr. Kent, you said that a president has the right to remove an ambassador because the ambassadors serve at the pleasure of the president. Is that correct?

George Kent: (00:09)

That is correct, ma'am.

Rep. Demings: (00:10)

Does that removal usually come with a smear campaign of that ambassador by the president?

George Kent: (00:18)

I think the right of the president to make a decision about the president's personal representative as confirmed by the senate is separate from whatever happens outside the confines of U.S. government processes.

Rep. Demings: (00:29)

You have any idea why it was important to discredit Ambassador Yovanovitch, what she was not willing to do or to do? Why that was important?

George Kent: (00:39)

Well, I guess it probably depends on the motivation of other people and I am not one of them.

Rep. Demings: (00:45)

The committee's investigation has uncovered a web of shadow diplomacy, engaged in and executed by several State Department officials and the president's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, and ultimately directed by President Trump. We have heard several ways of describing this shady shadow operation, shadow diplomacy, rogue back channel.

Rep. Demings: (01:09)

Ambassador Taylor, you have described what you encountered as the top diplomat on the ground in Ukraine, as a, and I quote, "highly irregular informal channel of U.S. policy making." You testified that the channel included Ambassador Volker, Sondland, Secretary Perry, and, as you later learned, the president's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani. Is that correct?

Bill Taylor: (01:33)

Yes, ma'am.

Rep. Demings: (01:34)

Both of you have explained that you grew seriously concerned when you realized that the interests of this irregular channel diverge from official U.S. policy and interests. Was Mr. Giuliani promoting U.S. national interests or policy in Ukraine, Ambassador?

Bill Taylor: (01:52)

I don't think so ma'am.

Rep. Demings: (01:54)

Mr. Kent?

George Kent: (01:55)

No, he was not.

Rep. Demings: (01:57)

What interests do you believe he was promoting, Mr. Kent?

George Kent: (02:01)

I believe he was looking to dig up political dirt against a potential rival in the next election cycle.

Rep. Demings: (02:08)

Ambassador Taylor? What interests do you believe he was promoting?

Bill Taylor: (02:13)

I agree with Mr. Kent.

Rep. Demings: (02:16)

The State Department's role is to promote U.S. policies overseas, not to help the current president win reelection. Is that correct, Mr. Kent?

George Kent: (02:26)

All federal government employees are subject to the Hatch Act and our actions are supposed to be promoting policy and not involved in partisan politics.

Rep. Demings: (02:33)

Ambassador Taylor?

Bill Taylor: (02:34)

I agree.

Rep. Demings: (02:36)

What is the risk of running a separate channel of diplomacy that is completely outside of normal channels and does not further U.S. policy goals, Ambassador Taylor?

Bill Taylor: (02:48)

That means it's possible to do one but not the other. That is, if it's completely against U.S. policy goals, then that's a mistake, then it's not helpful. You can go, you can get advice and even have conversations outside of the normal channels, but then they need to be part of U.S. foreign policy and approaching those goals.

Rep. Demings: (03:12)

Mr. Kent?

George Kent: (03:14)

Agree.

Rep. Demings: (03:15)

Ambassador Taylor, you have described in your previous testimony, one instance shortly after you arrived in Ukraine, in which Ambassador Sondland asked State Department officials not to listen to a July 28th call he had planned to hold with President Zelinsky. Did you find that unusual?

Bill Taylor: (03:32)

I did.

Rep. Demings: (03:33)

What was the impact of Ambassador Sondland making that request? You found it unusual, what did you believe the impact was?

Bill Taylor: (03:43)

Ms. Demings, I'm not sure there was an immediate impact.

Rep. Demings: (03:46)

Was there a recording or transcription?

Bill Taylor: (03:49)

There was not. That was the impact, it was not recorded.

Rep. Demings: (03:51)

Do you think that's why the request was made? So there would not be normal State Department employees from the operations center would have been there transcribing and taking notes.

Bill Taylor: (04:04)

That is the norm, but it is not unusual to not have it recorded.

Rep. Demings: (04:12)

So you know that the State Department is holding your notes and refuses to provide them to Congress despite a duly authorized subpoena, and we know that, in some instances, your notes may be the only documentary record of what happened. You are aware of that, correct?

Bill Taylor: (04:31)

Yes, ma'am.

Rep. Demings: (04:31)

And Mr. Kent, you are aware that your notes have not been turned over to Congress.

George Kent: (04:36)

I have turned all records that I had in my possession to the State Department, because whatever we do is considered a federal record, not a personal record.

Terri Sewell: (00:00)

I'd like to refer you to the discussion of the May 23rd meeting in the Oval Office when the president met with those who had gone to the Ukraine for the inauguration. You briefly testified that you helped propose names for individuals to go to that inauguration. Was ambassador Sunderland, who was ambassador to the European Union, one of the names that you submitted?

George Kent: (00:26)

No, it was not.

Terri Sewell: (00:27)

But he ultimately attended that inauguration. Is that not right?

George Kent: (00:31)

That is correct.

Terri Sewell: (00:32)

And do you know how he ended up as a part of that official delegation?

George Kent: (00:36)

I do not know for sure, but my understanding is, once the list left the NSC staff, it went through review through the part of the White House that determines presidential delegations.

Terri Sewell: (00:46)

You also testified that upon returning, Ambassador Sunderland used his "connections with Mulvaney" in order to secure this meeting in the Oval Office. Is that correct?

George Kent: (00:57)

That is my understanding, yes.

Terri Sewell: (00:58)

It seems that this Oval Office meeting was a pivotal turning point in the Ukraine policy. Coming out of that meeting, who was given responsibility to your recollection? Who was given responsibility for the Ukraine policy?

George Kent: (01:13)

I never saw any document that changed the nature of policy determination. In the US government, under the Trump Administration, there's the National Security Presidential-

Terri Sewell: (01:22)

But didn't you also say,

George Kent: (01:24)

Yes please.

Terri Sewell: (01:24)

Have a little time. You did say in your testimony that you felt that that... You testified that Secretary Perry, Ambassador Sunderland and Ambassador Volker "felt that they had a mandate to take the lead" on Ukraine policy. Did you not?

George Kent: (01:42)

That was an accurate statement. Their feeling doesn't mean that they actually got delegated responsibility.

Terri Sewell: (01:47)

Have you ever heard the term Three Amigos?

George Kent: (01:50)

I referenced that after watching Gordon Sunderland say that on Ukrainian TV on July 26.

Terri Sewell: (01:55)

And what do you come to mean by Three Amigos?

George Kent: (01:58)

My understanding of Ambassador Sunderland's use of that term is that the three people that were in charge of Ukraine policy during the summer were he, Gordon Sunderland, Ambassador Volker and Secretary Perry.

Terri Sewell: (02:12)

When did you come to learn about Mr. Giuliani's role and what do you consider his role to have been?

George Kent: (02:19)

I first heard about former mayor Giuliani's interest in Ukraine in January of this year. That was a different phase than what happened during the summertime.

Terri Sewell: (02:32)

Was it normal to have a person who is a private citizen take an active role in foreign diplomacy?

George Kent: (02:38)

I did not find his particular engagement normal, no.

Terri Sewell: (02:42)

Now, Mr. Ambassador Taylor, you testified that there are two channels, a regular and irregular. What did you see as Rudy Giuliani's role in Ukraine policy?

Bill Taylor: (02:56)

I came to see that Mr. Giuliani had a large influence on the irregular channel.

Terri Sewell: (03:03)

And was that normal? Is that normal? To have a private citizen of the United States take an active role in diplomacy?

Bill Taylor: (03:11)

It is not normal. It is not unusual to ask for people outside the government to give opinions to help form the policies of the US government. It is unusual to have a person input into the channel that goes contrary to US policy.

Terri Sewell: (03:29)

Thank you. I'll hear back.

Patrick Maloney: (00:00)

Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you for being here today. Ambassador Taylor, what year did you graduate from West Point?

Bill Taylor: (00:07)

1969, sir.

Patrick Maloney: (00:09)

It was the height of the Vietnam War, wasn't it, sir?

Bill Taylor: (00:12)

The height was about that time.

Patrick Maloney: (00:15)

What was your class rank at West Point, sir?

Bill Taylor: (00:18)

I was number five.

Patrick Maloney: (00:19)

How many people were you in your class?

Bill Taylor: (00:21)

800.

Patrick Maloney: (00:22)

800 cadets, you were number five?

Bill Taylor: (00:24)

Yes, sir.

Patrick Maloney: (00:25)

So when you're top 1% of your class at West Point, you probably get your pick of assignments, but you picked the infantry didn't you, sir?

Bill Taylor: (00:35)

I did, sir. Yes, sir.

Patrick Maloney: (00:36)

You were a rifle company commander?

Bill Taylor: (00:38)

Sir.

Patrick Maloney: (00:39)

Where'd you serve?

Bill Taylor: (00:41)

In Vietnam.

Patrick Maloney: (00:41)

Did you see combat in Vietnam, sir?

Bill Taylor: (00:44)

I did.

Patrick Maloney: (00:44)

Did you earn any accommodations for that service?

Bill Taylor: (00:49)

I was awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge, which is my highest I'm proudest of. There was a Bronze Star. There was a Air Medal with V.

Patrick Maloney: (01:01)

That's for Valor, isn't it, sir?

Bill Taylor: (01:03)

It is.

Patrick Maloney: (01:05)

Let's talk about July 26th, a lot of years later. You go to the front, you're go to Donbas with Ambassador Volker, I believe, and you're on the bridge and you're looking over on the front line at the Russian soldiers. Is that what you recall?

Bill Taylor: (01:22)

Yes, sir.

Patrick Maloney: (01:24)

And you said the commander there, the Ukrainian commander thanked you for the American military assistance that you knew was being withheld at that moment.

Bill Taylor: (01:34)

That's correct.

Patrick Maloney: (01:35)

How'd that make you feel, sir?

Bill Taylor: (01:36)

Badly.

Patrick Maloney: (01:37)

Why?

Bill Taylor: (01:38)

Because it was clear that that commander counted on us. It was clear that that commander had confidence in us. It was clear that that commander had... was appreciative of the capabilities that he was given by that assistance, but also the reassurance that we were supporting him.

Patrick Maloney: (01:57)

You don't strike me as a quitter ambassador, but you threatened to resign or you mentioned it in your statement. Before I ask you about that, let's just talk about a couple of days later on July, excuse me, one month later on August 28th. You find yourself in Ukraine with the national security advisor, Mr. Bolton, right?

Bill Taylor: (02:17)

Yes, sir.

Patrick Maloney: (02:18)

And you conveyed to him your concerns. You've testified to this previously about the withholding of military assistance. What does he say to you?

Bill Taylor: (02:26)

He says that he shares my concern and he advises me to express that in a very special way to the secretary of state.

Patrick Maloney: (02:36)

Now, he's the national security advisor, works to directly with the president, but he tells you that you should bring it up with the secretary of state.

Bill Taylor: (02:43)

Yes, sir.

Patrick Maloney: (02:43)

Have you ever sent a cable like that? How many times in your career of 40, 50 years have you sent a cable directly to the secretary of state?

Bill Taylor: (02:50)

Once.

Patrick Maloney: (02:51)

This time?

Bill Taylor: (02:52)

Yes, sir.

Patrick Maloney: (02:53)

In 50 years?

Bill Taylor: (02:55)

Rifle company commanders don't send cables, but yes, sir.

Patrick Maloney: (02:58)

So the national security advisor who can tell it to the president himself and who shares your concern says you the ambassador serving Ukraine should cable the secretary of state directly and you do so, don't you?

Bill Taylor: (03:11)

Yes, sir.

Patrick Maloney: (03:11)

What did the cable say, sir?

Bill Taylor: (03:15)

It's a classified cable.

Patrick Maloney: (03:17)

Without going into classified information.

Bill Taylor: (03:18)

Without going into classified it says security assistance. It's what we've been talking about today. Security assistance to Ukraine at this particular time, as in previous time, is very important. I also make the point that we've also talked about here today. Ukraine is important for our national security and we should support it. Not to provide that would be folly.

Patrick Maloney: (03:44)

Did you get an answer to your cable?

Bill Taylor: (03:46)

Not directly, no sir.

Patrick Maloney: (03:48)

Do you know what happened to it?

Bill Taylor: (03:51)

Secretary Kent-

Patrick Maloney: (03:52)

Secretary Kent, do you know what happened to it?

Bill Taylor: (03:54)

... tells me that-

George Kent: (03:55)

I was on vacation. I was on vacation when his cable came in, but my understanding is it made it to its recipient, intended recipient, Secretary Pompeo.

Patrick Maloney: (04:03)

And we know Secretary Pompeo was on the call a month early on July 25th. It's not like he's in the dark about any of this. What did he do with it?

George Kent: (04:12)

I honestly can't say for sure what happened with the cable once the message was brought in at the highest level.

Patrick Maloney: (04:18)

One other question, gentlemen. On September 1st you would call a meeting between the vice president and the president of Ukraine, Mr. Zelensky, in which right off the bat, the president of Ukraine raises security assistance. And the vice president, according to your telling says, "I'll talk to the president tonight about that. I'll make a call." Do you know whether the vice president made that call?

Bill Taylor: (04:40)

I don't know, sir.

Patrick Maloney: (04:41)

Do you know what, if anything, the vice president had to do with any of this? What more can you tell us about the vice president's role in this? Do you know if he ever raised this issue with anyone in the administration, whether he ever pushed for the release of that security assistance?

Bill Taylor: (04:57)

I can't, sir.

George Kent: (05:00)

I believe, to be the best of my understanding, the vice president was an advocate for the release of the assistance.

Patrick Maloney: (05:08)

Thank you. [inaudible 00:05:08].

Chris Stewart: (00:01)

Thank you. To the witnesses, thank you. Time is precious, so I'm going to go very, very quickly.

Chris Stewart: (00:06)

Welcome, I think, to year four of the ongoing impeachment of President Trump. I'm sorry that you have been dragged into this. I think the sign behind me says it very well, by the whistleblower's attorney: "The coup has started and impeachment will follow."

Chris Stewart: (00:19)

But after listening for what is going on now four hours and 21 minutes, after all of the secret hearings, after all of the leaks, after hearing witnesses such as yourselves give your opinions, it really comes down to this one thing. One thing it comes down to. This is the transcript that the President has released of this phone call. There is one sentence, one phone call. That is what this entire impeachment proceeding is based upon. And I've got to tell you, if your impeachment case is so weak that you have to lie and exaggerate about it to convince the American people that they need to remove this President, then you've got a problem.

Chris Stewart: (00:59)

The American people have been lied to again and again on this. We first heard a lot about quid pro quo. And then many people realized that was meaningless. So, they said, "Let's go for defenses then. Let's talk about extortion. Let's talk about bribery. Let's talk about cover up and obstruction," for which there is zero evidence of any of that. We heard a characterization of the President's phone call that was so outrageously inaccurate it had to be described as a parody. And none of those things matter. None of it matters. It comes down to this.

Chris Stewart: (01:28)

We appreciate your insight, we appreciate your opinion; but all you can do is give your opinion of this. This one phone call.

Chris Stewart: (01:36)

Let me ask you, gentlemen: both of you have said here today, you have testified, "Corruption in the Ukraine is endemic." Would we agree on that?

Chris Stewart: (01:46)

Simple question. The problem is ... Isn't it?

George Kent: [\(01:48\)](#)

It's a problem, and they're taking steps to address it.

Chris Stewart: [\(01:51\)](#)

Okay. Earlier in the hearing, both of you said ... Used the word "endemic" or agreed to it. It's in the courts, it's oligarchs, it's prosecutors, it's everywhere. And I think we can also agree that that's not the only place in the world where we experience and see corruption. There's dozens and dozens of nations around the world that are steeped in corruption. Would you agree with that?

Speaker 3: [\(02:12\)](#)

Mister, I would say that there's corruption in every country, including ours.

Chris Stewart: [\(02:15\)](#)

Okay, thank you. And some we're clearly more concerned about than others.

Chris Stewart: [\(02:19\)](#)

So, in these corrupt nations, of which there are probably hundreds of corrupt individuals, hundreds of corrupt government officials, can you give me an example of any time where the Vice President of the United States shows up and demands that a specific prosecutor be fired and gives them a six hour time limit to do that? Are you aware of that ever happening in any other place?

Chris Stewart: [\(02:46\)](#)

I guess the answer is "no". And I just think it's interesting that out of hundreds of corrupt individuals, dozens of corrupt nations, that happened one time. And it happened with the individual whose son was being paid by the organization that was under investigation.

Chris Stewart: [\(03:03\)](#)

One other thing very quickly: if someone was a candidate for a political office, even for President of the United States, should they be immune from investigation?

George Kent: [\(03:16\)](#)

No one is above the law, sir.

Chris Stewart: [\(03:18\)](#)

Thank you. I agree with that. I think we all would agree with that. And yet I think some presume that because some of the individuals we're talking here were candidates that they are immune from any questions or any investigation. I think it's absurd. For heaven's sakes, if those of us in public office, those of us who find ourselves up for reelection or all the time as a candidate, I think we have a higher standard, not immunity from asking these types of questions.

Chris Stewart: (03:43)

And last thing, then I'm going to yield my time: "Availability of funds ..." I'm quoting from the NDAA in 2019. The language is specific. "Availability of funds under assistance to the Ukraine, it has to be certified." And what has to be certified? Quote, "For the purposes of decreasing corruption."

Chris Stewart: (04:03)

Are you surprised that there would be questions about corruption in the Ukraine and that it would be discussed withholding some of this aid that's actually required by law that it be withheld if they can't certify that corruption has been eliminated or is being addressed?

Speaker 3: (04:19)

They did certify it.

George Kent: (04:21)

The certification in that case is done by the Secretary of Defense upon advice of his staff, in consultation with the interagency community. We were fully supportive of that conditionality, and the Secretary of Defense had already certified that that conditionality had been met.

Chris Stewart: (04:35)

And so we agree that we should withhold funds if there's questions about corruption that have not been addressed.

Chris Stewart: (04:41)

I'm going to yield my rest of my time to Mr. Jordan.

Jim Jordan: (00:00)

-aids held up on July 18th, is that right?

Bill Taylor: (00:02)

That's when I first heard about it.

Jim Jordan: (00:04)

Then it's then it's released, Ambassador Taylor on September 11th, and we know that from your deposition, in those 55 days that aid is delayed you met with president Zelensky three times. The first one was July 26th, the day after the famous call now between president Trump and President Zelensky. President Zelensky meets with you, Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Sondland and again according to your deposition and your testimony, there was no linkage of security assistance dollars to investigating Burisma or the Biden's. Second meeting's August 27th. Again in this 55 day timeframe. Second meeting is August 27th, President Zelensky meets with you and Ambassador Bolton and others and again, there's no linkage of dollars, security assistant dollars to an investigation of the Bidens.

Jim Jordan: (00:48)

Then of course the third meeting is September 5th. President Zelensky meets with you and Senators Johnson and Murphy, and once again there is no linkage of security assistance dollars to an investigation of Burisma or the Bidens. Three meetings with the president of Ukraine, the new president and no linkage. That's accurate.

Bill Taylor: (01:11)

Mr. Jordan it's certainly accurate on the first two meetings because to my knowledge, the Ukrainians were not aware of the hold on assistance until the 29th of August.

Jim Jordan: (01:27)

The Politico article.

Bill Taylor: (01:28)

The Politico article. The third meeting that you mentioned with the senators, Senator Murphy and Senator Johnson, there was discussion of the security assistance, but-

Jim Jordan: (01:39)

No linkage.

Bill Taylor: (01:42)

There was not discussion of linkage.

Jim Jordan: (01:45)

Three meetings face to face with President Zelensky no linkage. Yet in your deposition, you said this and you said it again the first hour of the majority. "My clear understanding was security assistance money would not come until President Zelensky committed to pursue the investigation. My clear understanding was they weren't going to get the money until President Zelensky committed to pursue the investigations."

Jim Jordan: (02:09)

Now, with all due respect, ambassador, your clear understanding was obviously wrong because it didn't happen. President Zelensky didn't announce he was going to investigate Burisma or the Bidens. He didn't do a press conference and say, "I'm going to investigate the Bidens. We're going to investigate Burisma. He didn't tweet about it and you just told the ranking member he didn't do the CNN interview and announce he's going to investigate Burisma or the Bidens.

Jim Jordan: (02:35)

So three face to face meetings, it doesn't come up. No linkage whatsoever. President Zelensky does it announce it before the aid is released on the 11th. And yet you said you have a clear understanding that those two things were going to happen. The money was going to get released, but not until there was an investigation, and that in fact didn't happen. So what I'm wondering is where'd you get this clear understanding?

Bill Taylor: (03:00)

As I testified, Mr. Jordan, this came from Ambassador Sondland.

Jim Jordan: (03:07)

Can you hold one second, ambassador? I'm going to bring you a piece of paper from Ambassador Sondland's statement. And you can take a look at this. Go ahead though. I'm going to let you finish.

Bill Taylor: (03:19)

So, Mr. Jordan, Should I read this?

Jim Jordan: (03:21)

No. I just want you to have it because I'm going to read it.

Bill Taylor: (03:23)

Oh, very good. Very good.

Jim Jordan: (03:24)

But I want you to go on and finish. You said ambassador, you got this from Ambassador Sondland.

Bill Taylor: (03:28)

That is correct. That Ambassador Sondland also said that he'd talked to President Zelensky and Mr. Yermak, and he 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. That was one point. It was also the case-

Jim Jordan: (03:50)

Mr. Morrison talked to you, right?

Bill Taylor: (03:53)

No, what I was going to say was Ambassador Sondland also told me that he recognized that it was a mistake to have told the Ukrainians that only the meeting with the president in the oval office was held up in order to get these investigations. No, it was not just the meeting, it was also the security assistance. That is everything was. So those two discussions-

Jim Jordan: (04:20)

I understand. All right. So again, just to recap, you had three meetings with President Zelensky, no linkage in those three meetings came up. Ambassador Zelensky didn't announce that he was going to do any investigation of the Bidens or Burisma before the aid was released. He didn't do a tweet, didn't do anything on CNN. Didn't do any of that. President Zelensky, excuse me.

Jim Jordan: (04:38)

And then what you have in front of you is an addendum that Mr. Sondland made to his testimony that we got a couple of weeks ago. It says "Declaration of Ambassador Gordon Sondland, I Gordon Sondland do hereby swear and affirm as follows." I want you to look at point number two ,bullet point number two, second sentence. "Ambassador Taylor recalls that Mr. Morrison told Ambassador Taylor that I told Mr. Morrison that I conveyed this message to Mr. Yermak on September 1st, 2019 in connection with Vice President Pence's visit to Warsaw and a meeting with President Zelensky."

Jim Jordan: (05:07)

This is his clarification. Let me read it one more time. "Ambassador Taylor recalls that Mr. Morrison told Ambassador Taylor that I told Mr. Morrison that I conveyed this message to Mr. Yermak on September 1st, 2019 in connection with Vice President Pence's visit to Warsaw and a meeting with President Zelensky."

Jim Jordan: (05:21)

We've got six people having four conversations in one sentence and you just told me this is where you got your clear understanding. Even though you had three opportunities with President Zelensky, for him to tell you, "You know what, we're going to do these investigations to get the aid." Didn't tell you three different times. Never makes an announcement, never tweets about it. Never does a CNN interview. Ambassador, you weren't on the call, were you? You didn't listen in on President Trump's call and President Zelensky's call.

Bill Taylor: (05:46)

I did not.

Jim Jordan: (05:47)

You never talked with chief of staff Mulvaney.

Bill Taylor: (05:49)

I never did.

Jim Jordan: (05:49)

You never met the president.

Bill Taylor: (05:51)

That's correct.

Jim Jordan: (05:51)

You had three meetings again with Zelensky that didn't come up.

Bill Taylor: (05:53)

And two of those they had never heard about it as far as I know. So there was no reason for it to come up.

Jim Jordan: (05:58)

And President Zelensky never made an announcement. This is what I can't believe. And you're their star witness. You're their first witness, but you're the guy, based on this, based on... I mean, I've seen church prayer change that are easier to understand than this. Ambassador Taylor recalls, and Mr. Morrison told. Now again, this is, I hereby swear and affirm from Gordon Sondland. "Ambassador Taylor recalls that Mr. Morrison told Ambassador Taylor that I told Mr. Morrison that I conveyed this message to Mr. Yermak on September 1st 20 ... this all happens by the way, this all happens by the way, in Warsaw when Vice President Pence meets with President Zelensky and guess what? They didn't talk about any linkage either.

Adam Schiff: (06:38)

The time of the gentleman's expired. Ambassador Taylor, would you like to respond?

Bill Taylor: (06:41)

The only response... I have two responses. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and Mr. Jordan. Glad to take those questions. Let me just say that I don't consider myself a star witness for anything.

Jim Jordan: (06:53)

They do.

Bill Taylor: (06:54)

I don't. I'm responding to your questions.

Adam Schiff: (06:58)

Please don't interrupt the witness.

Bill Taylor: (07:00)

As I think I was clear about, I'm not here to take one side or the other or to advocate any particular outcomes. Let me just restate that. Second thing is that my understanding is only coming from people that I talked to.

Jim Jordan: (07:15)

We got that.

Bill Taylor: (07:15)

We got that, and I think this clarification from Ambassador Sondland was because he said he didn't remember this in his first deposition. So he wanted to kind of clarify. But I think Mr. Jordan, the way I read this, he remembers it the same way I do.

Jim Jordan: (07:35)

And it's real clear, right?

Bill Taylor: (07:37)

It's very clear to me.

Adam Schiff: (07:38)

Thank you, Ambassador Taylor.

Jim Jordan: (00:00)

Turn to Mr. Jordan.

Jim Jordan: (00:01)

Mr. Ambassador, thank you. Thank you gentleman for yielding. Ambassador Taylor, the gentleman asked if you could be wrong, were you wrong when you said you had a clear understanding that President Zolinsky had to commit to an investigation of Biden's before the aid got released and the aid got released and he didn't commit to an investigation?

Bill Taylor: (00:21)

Mr., I was not wrong about what I told you, which is what I heard. That's all I've said. I've told you what I heard...

Jim Jordan: (00:27)

And that's the point. What you heard did not happen. It didn't happen. You had three meetings with the guy. He could have told you. He didn't announce he was going to do an investigation before the aid happen. It's not just, could it have been wrong? The fact is it was wrong because it didn't happen. The whole point was you had a clear understanding that aid will not get released unless there's a commitment. Not maybe, not I think the aid might happen, and it's my hunch is going to get released. You used clear language, clear understanding and commitment and those two things didn't happen. So you had to be wrong.

Bill Taylor: (01:03)

Mr. Jordan, the other thing that went on when that assistance who was on hold is we shook the confidence of a close partner in our reliability and that...

Jim Jordan: (01:17)

That's not what this proceedings about Ambassador Taylor. [crosstalk 00:01:20] That's not what this whole thing started on.

Adam Schiff: (01:23)

Time of the gentleman has expired. Ambassador Taylor, did you want to finish your answer?

Jim Jordan: (01:26)

No, that's good, Mr. Chairman.

Adam Schiff: (01:29)

I now recognize Mr. Carson for five minutes.

Mr. Carson: (01:31)

Thank you chairman. I yield to the chairman.

Adam Schiff: (01:32)

I thank the gentleman for yielding. I just want to follow up on some of the earlier questions about Ambassador, sorry about President Zolinsky's statements after the scandal came to light. When he was asked were you pressured, how'd the phone call go, et cetera. Ukrainians, Mr. Kent, are pretty sophisticated about US politics, are they not?

Mr. Kent: (01:54)

Perhaps.

Adam Schiff: (01:56)

You would agree that if President Zolinsky contradicted President Trump and said, "Of course I felt pressured. They were holding up 400 million in military assistance. We have people dying every day." If he were to contradict President Trump directly, they would be sophisticated enough to know they may pay a very heavy price with this president, were they not?

Mr. Kent: (02:18)

That's a fair assessment.

Adam Schiff: (02:20)

And President Zolinsky not only had to worry about retribution from Donald Trump, should he contradict Donald Trump publicly, he also has to worry about how he's perceived domestically, doesn't he, ambassador Taylor?

Bill Taylor: (02:33)

President Zolinsky's very sensitive to the views of Ukrainian people, who indeed are very attentive to Ukrainian, US politics. Yes.

Adam Schiff: (02:44)

And so if President Zolinsky were to say, "I had to capitulate and agree to these investigations, I was ready to go on CNN until the aid got restored." That would obviously be hurtful to him back home, would it not?

Bill Taylor: (03:03)

He cannot afford to be seen to be deferring to any foreign leader. He is very confident in his own abilities and he knows that the Ukrainian people expect him to be clear and defend Ukrainian interests.

Rep. Will Hurd: (00:00)

Gentlemen, I appreciate you all's decade of service as the fabled foreign service officer, Ambassador Ryan Crocker says, because we have pumps and wingtips on the ground, meaning diplomats that prevents us from having the need to have boots on the ground, the military. You all are an important role in our national security and thank you and your colleagues. Mr. Taylor, my first questions are to you, and these are questions that are on years prior to your time in the Ukraine, but I'm pretty sure you can answer them. Did the Ukrainians get aid in FY '17?

Bill Taylor: (00:38)

Did they get any aid in FY '17?

Rep. Will Hurd: (00:41)

Yeah.

Bill Taylor: (00:41)

Yes, sir. They did get assistance.

Rep. Will Hurd: (00:43)

And they got security assistance as well?

Bill Taylor: (00:45)

They did.

Rep. Will Hurd: (00:46)

And if I said that number was circa, in military assistance around 270 million, would that probably be accurate?

Bill Taylor: (00:54)

Close.

Rep. Will Hurd: (00:55)

About right?

Bill Taylor: (00:55)

Yeah.

Rep. Will Hurd: (00:56)

Did they get aid in FY '18?

Bill Taylor: (01:00)

Yes, sir.

Rep. Will Hurd: (01:01)

Including security assistance?

Bill Taylor: (01:01)

Including security assistance.

Rep. Will Hurd: (01:04)

We've already talked about the javelins, the anti-tank missiles that they were not able to purchase in previous administrations. Have they gotten security assistance in FY '19?

Bill Taylor: (01:15)

Yes, sir.

Rep. Will Hurd: (01:16)

Prior to the 400 million or so that we're discussing or been discussing a lot here today?

Bill Taylor: (01:23)

They got some previous year some, probably FY '18 assistance, but George, you may know.

George Kent: (01:30)

It takes a while once money is obligated to actually reach the country. There were two island-class ships that just arrived in the Port of Odessa and that was with prior year money, so there's about a lag of a year.

Rep. Will Hurd: (01:42)

My point is that we have been supporting the Ukrainians under this administration in order to help them kick out the Russians who invaded their country.

Bill Taylor: (01:52)

Yes, sir.

George Kent: (01:53)

100%.

Rep. Will Hurd: (01:54)

Ambassador Taylor, you are testifying that Ukrainian officials did not become aware of potential US assistance being withheld until August 29th, is that accurate?

Bill Taylor: (02:04)

That's my understanding, Mr. Hurd.

Rep. Will Hurd: (02:06)

Would you find it surprising if a Ukrainian official knew about that sooner and did not contact you?

Bill Taylor: (02:17)

I can answer that it was only after August 29th when the political argument that I got calls from several of the Ukrainian officials.

Rep. Will Hurd: (02:29)

Good copy. Mr. Kent, had you had any Ukrainian official contacting you concerned about ... When was the first time a Ukrainian official contacted you concerned about potential withholding of USAID?

George Kent: (02:42)

It was after the article in Politico came out in that first intense week of September.

Rep. Will Hurd: (02:47)

Got you, so after that August 29th conversation. There's a lot of talk about Rudy Giuliani and who he was and wasn't meeting. Do we know or have an idea of the Ukrainian officials that he was meeting with over the last couple of years?

Bill Taylor: (03:08)

I don't, sir.

Rep. Will Hurd: (03:10)

Have you had any Ukrainian officials call you after a meeting with Rudy Giuliani concerned about the nature of the context of that conversation?

Bill Taylor: (03:23)

Yes. Mr. Yermak has expressed concern about his interactions with Mr. Giuliani.

Rep. Will Hurd: (03:29)

And I believe that meeting was somewhere in late August, is that correct?

Bill Taylor: (03:33)

It was. There were meetings and there were, I think, also phone calls.

Rep. Will Hurd: (03:43)

And you all have talked many times that you all are still concerned about corruption and Ukraine. Is that correct?

Bill Taylor: (03:47)

Yes, sir.

Rep. Will Hurd: (03:48)

Have we seen whatever this anti-corruption statement we wanted the Ukrainians to make?

George Kent: (03:59)

Are you referring to the statement that was being negotiated between Kurt Volker, Gordon Sondland and Andrey Yermak?

Rep. Will Hurd: (04:04)

Yes.

George Kent: (04:05)

That was not an anti-corruption statement, sir.

Rep. Will Hurd: (04:07)

What was the statement?

George Kent: (04:09)

I think if you go back to the back and forth, the WhatsApps that were shared by Kurt Volker, they shared a draft with Rudy Giuliani and Rudy Giuliani said it would not be acceptable if it didn't mention Biden, Burisma in 2016.

Rep. Will Hurd: (04:23)

But that statement was never agreed to or was never issued by the Ukrainian officials. Is that correct?

George Kent: (04:29)

No statement of that sort was issued, correct.

Rep. Will Hurd: (04:32)

And have US businesses ever contacted you all concerned about corruption within Ukraine?

Bill Taylor: (04:39)

Yes, sir.

Rep. Will Hurd: (04:41)

As of this year, even?

Bill Taylor: (04:43)

Yes, sir.

Rep. Will Hurd: (04:43)

Because the concern is not just how Ukrainian businesses run by oligarchs are being operated, it's also concerns about how the Ukrainian government is dealing with American businesses trying to operate in Ukraine. Is that accurate?

Bill Taylor: (04:58)

American businesses are very concerned about the judicial system in particular. Yes, sir.

Rep. Will Hurd: (05:02)

I yield back in time I do not have, Mr. Chairman.

Speaker 1: (00:01)

Mister ... Sorry, representative Stefanik, you're recognized.

Rep. Stefanik: (00:05)

Thank you. For the millions of Americans viewing today, the two most important facts are the following. Number one, Ukraine received the aid. Number two, there was, in fact, no investigation into Biden.

Rep. Stefanik: (00:18)

Mr. Kent and Ambassador Taylor, you both spoke eloquently and passionately about the need to support Ukraine to counter Russian aggression, particularly during this very critical time. I agree with you in that assessment. And isn't it the case that the Trump administration has, indeed, provided substantial aid to Ukraine in the form of defensive lethal aid? Correct?

Speaker 3: (00:39)

That is correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (00:40)

And that is more so than the Obama administration, correct?

Speaker 3: (00:44)

The Trump administration-

Rep. Stefanik: (00:45)

Defensive lethal aid.

Speaker 3: (00:48)

Yes.

Rep. Stefanik: (00:48)

And in the transcript of the President's July 25th call with President Zelensky, President Zelensky tells Trump they are ready to buy more javelins. This is, indeed, the most effective weapon for fighting insurgent armor Russian tanks. Is that correct?

Speaker 3: (01:02)

That is correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (01:03)

And those javelins were not made available to Ukraine under the Obama administration.

Speaker 3: (01:07)

So-

Rep. Stefanik: (01:09)

The javelins were not made available-

Speaker 3: (01:11)

They were not.

Rep. Stefanik: (01:11)

Correct. Shifting gears to corruption, one of the themes here today is that of rooting out corruption, which is an important tool for the president as we provide taxpayer-funded aid to foreign countries. Mr. Kent, you would characterize Ukraine as having longstanding corruption issues, correct?

George Kent: (01:31)

I did.

Rep. Stefanik: (01:32)

And in fact, you testified. "I would say that corruption is part of the reason why Ukrainians came out to the streets, in both 2004 when somebody tried to steal the election and again in 2014 because of a corrupt kleptocratic pro-Russian government which eventually collapsed. The Ukrainians decided enough was enough." Is that your testimony?

George Kent: (01:52)

It remains so.

Rep. Stefanik: (01:53)

And you testified that you first came to learn about Burisma in 2015 when you were the senior anti-corruption coordinator, correct?

George Kent: (02:01)

Correct. Detailed to the embassy in Kiev as the acting deputy chief of mission.

Rep. Stefanik: (02:07)

And you testified that the issue of corruption in Burisma was in the US interest because, and this is from your deposition, "We had made a commitment to the Ukrainian government in 2014 to try to recover an estimated tens of billions of dollars of stolen assets out of the country." Is that correct?

George Kent: (02:26)

That is stolen assets that were in the name of the owner of Burisma, Mykola Zlochevsky. He was the one who we believed had stolen the money.

Rep. Stefanik: (02:34)

Sure. So the first case, this was ... the first case that the US, the UK, and Ukraine investigator worked on was against the owner of Burisma.

George Kent: (02:44)

That's correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (02:45)

And this was during the Obama administration.

George Kent: (02:48)

That's correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (02:48)

So for the millions of Americans viewing, the first investigation against the owner of Burisma was under President Obama's administration.

George Kent: (02:57)

That's correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (02:58)

You testified also, "We spent roughly half a million dollars of State Department money in support of the FBI and this investigation, to build capacity and track down stolen assets." Is that correct?

George Kent: (03:09)

That's correct. It was launched in May 2014 by the Attorney General of the US and UK, in conjunction with the World Bank.

Rep. Stefanik: (03:16)

And in fact, by 2016, you were so concerned about corruption questions related to Burisma that when there was an effort by Burisma to sponsor an essay contest with USAID, you asked USAID to stop it.

George Kent: (03:31)

That's correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (03:32)

And you testified that it was because "Burisma had a poor reputation in the business," and that you didn't think it was appropriate for the US government to be co-sponsoring

something with a company that had a bad reputation. Correct?

George Kent: (03:45)

Correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (03:46)

You are also aware, and you testified today, that Hunter Biden served on the board of Burisma.

George Kent: (03:52)

Correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (03:53)

And you also testified that you were indeed concerned about the appearance of conflict of interest.

George Kent: (03:57)

That's correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (03:59)

And broadly, this is very important, you testified in your deposition that when the State Department evaluates for an assistance, it is appropriate for them to look at levels of corruption in countries.

George Kent: (04:11)

That's correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (04:11)

And lastly, you also testified that, and this is your quote, "Issues of corruption have been part of high-level dialogue between US leaders and Ukrainian leaders, regardless of who is the US leader and who is the Ukrainian leader. And that is a normal issue of diplomatic discussion at the highest level." Is that correct?

George Kent: (04:30)

That's correct.

Rep. Stefanik: (04:31)

I will yield 30 seconds. You know what? I will yield back after that. Thank you.