

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Impeachment Inquiry

Hearing With U.S. Ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland

November 20, 2019

Gordon Sondland Opening Statement

Sondland: (00:00)

I appreciate the opportunity to speak again to the members of this committee. First, let me offer my thanks to the men and women of the US Department of State, who have committed their professional lives to support the foreign policy work of the United States. In particular, I want to thank my staff at the US Mission to the European Union. Your integrity, dedication, and hard work often performed without public acclaim or recognition serve as a shining example of true public service. And I am personally grateful to work beside you each and every day.

Sondland: (00:44)

It is my honor to serve as the US Ambassador to the European Union. The US Mission to the EU is the direct link between the United States and the European Union and its members. America's longest standing allies and one of the largest economic blocks in the world. Every day I work to support a strong, united and peaceful Europe. Strengthening our ties with Europe serves both American and European goals as we together promote political stability and economic prosperity around the world.

Sondland: (01:24)

I expect that few Americans have heard my name before these events. So before I begin my substantive testimony, please let me share some of my personal background. My parents fled Europe during the Holocaust. Escaping the atrocities of that time, my parents left Germany for Uruguay and then in 1953 emigrated to Seattle, Washington, where I was born and raised. Like so many immigrants, my family was eager for freedom and hungry for opportunity. They raised my sister and me to be humble, hardworking and patriotic and I am forever grateful for the sacrifices they made on our behalf.

Sondland: (02:12)

Public service has always been important to me. As a lifelong Republican, I have contributed to initiatives of both Republican and Democratic administrations. In 2003, I served as a member of the transition team for Oregon Democratic Governor Ted Kulongoski. Governor Kulongoski also appointed me to serve on various statewide boards. In 2007, President George W. Bush appointed me as a member of the Commission on White House Fellows. I worked with President Bush on charitable events for his foundation's military service initiative. And I also worked briefly with former Vice President Joe Biden's office in connection with the vice president's nationwide anti-cancer initiative at a local Northwest hospital.

Sondland: (03:07)

And of course the highest honor in my public life came when President Trump asked me to serve as the United States Ambassador to the European Union. The Senate confirmed me as an ambassador on a bipartisan voice vote and I assumed the role in Brussels on July 9th, 2018. Although today is

my first public testimony on the Ukraine matters, this is not my first time cooperating with this committee. As you know, I've already provided 10 hours of deposition testimony. And I did so despite directives from the White House and the State Department that I refused to appear as many others have done. I agreed to testify because I respect the gravity of the moment and I believe I have an obligation to account fully for my role in these events.

Sondland: (04:06)

But I also must acknowledge that this process has been challenging. And in many respects, less than fair. I have not had access to all of my phone records, State Department emails and many, many other State Department documents. And I was told I could not work with my EU staff to pull together the relevant files and information. Having access to the State Department materials would have been very helpful to me in trying to reconstruct with whom I spoke and met and when and what was said.

Sondland: (04:43)

As ambassador, I've had hundreds of meetings and calls with individuals, but I'm not a note taker or a memo writer. Never have been. My job requires that I speak with heads of state, senior government officials, members of the cabinet, the president almost each and every day. Talking with foreign leaders might be memorable to some people, but this is my job. I do it all the time. My lawyers and I have made multiple requests to the State Department and the White House for these materials. Yet these materials were not provided to me and they have also refused to share these materials with this committee. These documents are not classified. And in fairness should have been made available.

Sondland: (05:41)

In the absence of these materials, my memory, admittedly, has not been perfect. And I have no doubt that a more fair, open and orderly process of allowing me to read the State Department records and other materials would have made this process far more transparent. I don't intend to repeat my prior opening statement or attempt to summarize 10 hours of previous deposition testimony. However, a few critical points have been obscured by noise over the last few days and weeks and I'm worried that the bigger picture is being ignored. So let me make a few key points.

Sondland: (06:25)

First, Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker and I worked with Mr. Rudy Giuliani on Ukraine matters at the express direction of the President of the United States. We did not want to work with Mr. Giuliani. Simply put, we were playing the hand we were dealt. We all understood that if we refuse to work with Mr. Giuliani, we would lose a very important opportunity to cement relations between the United States and Ukraine. So we followed the president's orders.

Sondland: (07:07)

Second, although we disagreed with the need to involve Mr. Giuliani at the time, we did not believe that his role was improper. As I previously testified, if I had known of all of Mr. Giuliani's dealings or his associations with individuals, some of whom are now under criminal indictment, I personally would not have acquiesced to his participation. Still, given what we knew at the time, what we were asked to do did not appear to be wrong.

Sondland: (07:44)

Third, let me say precisely because we did not think that we were engaging in improper behavior, we made every effort to ensure that the relevant decision makers at the National Security Council and the State Department knew the important details of our efforts. The suggestion that we were engaged in some irregular or rogue diplomacy is absolutely false. I have now identified certain State

Department emails and messages that provide contemporaneous support for my view. These emails show that the leadership of the State Department, the National Security Council, and the White House were all informed about the Ukraine efforts from May 23rd, 2019 until the security aid was released on September 11th, 2019. I will quote from some of those messages with shortly.

Sondland: (08:58)

Fourth, as I testified previously, Mr. Giuliani's requests were a quid pro quo for arranging a White House visit for President Zelensky. Mr. Giuliani demanded that Ukraine make a public statement announcing the investigations of the 2016 election, DNC server and Burisma. Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the President of the United States and we knew these investigations were important to the president.

Sondland: (09:37)

Fifth, in July and August of 2019, we learned that the White House had also suspended security aid to Ukraine. I was adamantly opposed to any suspension of aid. I was adamantly opposed to any suspension of aid as the Ukrainians needed those funds to fight against Russian aggression. I tried diligently to ask why the aid was suspended, but I never received a clear answer. Still haven't to this day. In the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I later came to believe that the resumption of security aid would not occur until there was a public statement from Ukraine committing to the investigations of the 2016 elections and Burisma as Mr. Giuliani had demanded. I shared concerns of the potential quid pro quo regarding the security aid with Senator Ron Johnson and I also shared my concerns with the Ukrainians.

Sondland: (10:51)

Finally, at all times, I was acting in good faith. I was acting in good faith. As a presidential appointee, I followed the directions of the president. We worked with Mr. Giuliani because the president directed us to do so. We had no desire to set any conditions. We had no desire to set any conditions on the Ukrainians. Indeed, my own personal view, which I shared repeatedly with others, was that the White House and security assistance should have proceeded without preconditions of any kind. We were working to overcome the problems given the facts as they existed. Our only interest, and my only interest, was to advance longstanding US policy and to support Ukraine's fragile democracy.

Sondland: (11:54)

Now let me provide additional details specifically about Ukraine and my involvement. First, my very first days as ambassador to the EU, which was starting back in July of 2018, Ukraine has featured prominently in my broader portfolio. Ukraine's political and economic development are critical to the long standing and long lasting stability of Europe. Moreover, the conflict in eastern Ukraine and Crimea remains one of the most significant security crisis for Europe and the United States. Our efforts to counterbalance an aggressive Russia depend in substantial part on a strong Ukraine.

Sondland: (12:46)

On April 21st, 2019, Volodymyr Zelensky was elected president of Ukraine in an historic election. With the expressed support of Secretary Pompeo, I attended President Zelensky's inauguration on May 20th as part of the US delegation, which was led by Energy Secretary Rick Perry. The US delegation also included Senator Johnson, Ukraine special envoy Volker and Lieutenant Colonel Alex Vindman of the National Security Council.

Sondland: (13:24)

My attendance at President Zelensky's inauguration was not my first involvement with Ukraine. As I testified previously, just four days after assuming my post as ambassador in July of 2018, I received an official delegation from the government of then Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko. The meeting took place at the US Mission in Brussels and was prearranged by my career EU Mission staff. And I've had several meetings since then in Brussels. Later in February of 2019, I worked well with US Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch in making my first official visit to Ukraine for a US Navy visit to the strategic Black Sea port of Odessa.

Sondland: (14:16)

And the reason I raise these prior Ukraine activities, the meetings in Brussels, my visit to Odessa, is to emphasize that Ukraine has been a part of my portfolio from my very first days as the US Ambassador. Any claim that I somehow muscled my way into the Ukraine relationship is simply false. During the Zelensky inauguration on May 20th, the US delegation developed a very positive view of the Ukraine government. We were impressed by President Zelensky's desire to promote a stronger relationship with the United States. We admired his commitment to reform and we were excited about the possible-

Sondland: (15:03)

Commitment to reform and we were excited about the possibility of Ukraine making the changes necessary to support a greater western economic investment. And, we were excited that Ukraine might, after years and years of lip service, finally get serious about addressing its own well-known corruption problems. With that enthusiasm, we returned the White House on May 23rd to brief President Trump. We advised the president of the strategic importance of Ukraine and the value of strengthening the relationship with President Zelensky. To support this reformer, we asked the White House for two things. First, a working phone call between Presidents Trump and Zelensky, and second, a working oval office visit. In our view, both were vital to cementing the US-Ukraine relationship, demonstrating support for Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression and advancing broader US foreign policy interests.

Sondland: (16:13)

Unfortunately, President Trump was skeptical. He expressed concerns that the Ukrainian government was not serious about reform and he even mentioned that Ukraine tried to take him down in the last election. In response to our persistent efforts in that meeting to change his views, President Trump directed us to, "talk with Rudy." We understood that talk with Rudy meant, talk with Mr. Rudy Giuliani, the president's personal lawyer. Let me say again, we weren't happy with the president's directive to talk with Rudy. We did not want to involve Mr. Giuliani. I believe then, as I do now, that the men and women of the state department, not the president's personal lawyer, should take responsibility for Ukraine matters.

Sondland: (17:09)

Nonetheless, based on the president's direction we were faced with a choice, we could abandon the efforts to schedule the White House phone call and a White House visit between Presidents Trump and Zelensky, which was unquestionably in our foreign policy interest, or we could do as President Trump had directed and talk with Rudy. We chose the latter course, not because we liked it, but because it was the only constructive path open to us.

Sondland: (17:44)

Over the course of the next several months, Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker and I were in communication with Mr. Giuliani. Secretary Perry volunteered to make the initial calls with Mr. Giuliani given their prior relationship. Ambassador Volker made several of the early calls and generally informed us of what was discussed.

Sondland: (18:11)

I first communicated with Mr. Giuliani in early August, several months later. Mr. Giuliani emphasized that the president wanted a public statement from President Zelensky committing Ukraine to look into the corruption issues. Mr. Giuliani specifically mentioned the 2016 election, including the DNC server and Burisma, as two topics of importance to the president.

Sondland: (18:42)

We kept the leadership of the state department and the NSC, informed of our activities. And that included communications with Secretary of State Pompeo, his counselor, Ulrich Brechbuhl, his executive secretary, Lisa Kenna, and also communications with Ambassador Bolton, Dr. Hill, Mr. Morrison, and their staff at the NSC. They knew what we were doing and why.

Sondland: (19:15)

On July 10th, 2019 Senior Ukrainian national security officials met with Ambassador Bolton, Ambassador Volker, Dr. Hill, Secretary Perry, myself, and several others in Washington DC. During that meeting, we all discussed the importance of the two action items I identified earlier. One, a working phone call, and two, a White House meeting between Presidents Trump and Zelensky. From my perspective, the July 10th meeting was a positive step toward accomplishing our shared goals. While I am now aware of accounts of the meeting from Dr. Hill and Lieutenant Colonel Veneman, their recollections of those events simply don't square with my own or with those of Ambassador Volker or Secretary Perry.

Sondland: (20:12)

I recall mentioning the prerequisite of investigations before any White House call or meeting, but I do not recall any yelling or screaming or abrupt terminations as others have said. Instead, after the meeting, Ambassador Bolton walked outside with our group and we all took some great pictures together outside on the White House lawn. More important, those recollections of protests do not square with the documentary record of our interactions with the NSC in the days and weeks that followed. We kept the NSC apprised of our efforts, including, specifically, our efforts to a public statement from the Ukrainians that would satisfy President Trump's concerns.

Sondland: (21:04)

For example, on July 13th, and this is three days after that July 10th meeting, I emailed Tim Morrison. He had just taken over Dr. Hill's post as the NSC Eurasia Director and I met him that day for the first time. I wrote to Mr. Morrison with these words, "The call between Zelensky and POTUS, President of the United States, should happen before 7/21, which is the parliamentary elections in Ukraine. Sole purpose is for Zelensky to give POTUS assurances of new sheriff in town, corruption ending, un-bundling moving forward," and I emphasize, "any hampered investigations will be allowed to move forward transparently. Goal is for POTUS to invite him to oval. Volker, Perry, Bolton, and I strongly recommend." Mr. Morrison acknowledged and said, "Thank you," and specifically noted that he was tracking these issues.

Sondland: (22:17)

Again, there was no secret regarding moving forward and the discussion of investigations. Moreover, I have reviewed other state department documents, some of which are not currently in the public domain, detailing Mr. Giuliani's efforts. For example, on July 10th, the very same day that Ambassador Volker, Secretary Perry, and I were meeting with the Ukraine officials in Washington, Ambassador Taylor received a communication that Mr. Giuliani was still talking with Ukrainian prosecutor Yuriy Lutsenkoin. In WhatsApp messages with Ambassador Volker and I, Ambassador Taylor wrote to us as follows, "Just had a meeting with Andre and Vadim," referring

to Ukraine Foreign Minister Vadim Prystaiko. “Taylor said the Ukrainians were, “Very concerned about what Lutsenkoin told them,” that according to RG,” meaning Rudy Giuliani, “the Zelensky POTUS meeting will not happen.” Volker responded, “Good grief. Please tell the deem to let the official US government representatives speak for the US. Lutsenkoin has his own self interest here.”

Sondland: (23:44)

Taylor confirmed that he had communicated that message to the Ukrainians and he added, “I briefed Ulrich this afternoon on this,” referring to State Department Counselor Ulrich Brechbuhl. Again, everyone’s in the loop. Three things are critical about this WhatsApp exchange. First, while the Ukrainians were in Washington at the White House, Mr. Giuliani was communicating with the Ukrainians without our knowledge. Ambassador Taylor, Ambassador Volker, and I were all surprised by this. Second, Mr. Giuliani was communicating with the, reportedly, corrupt Ukrainian prosecutor, Lutsenkoin and discussing whether a Zelensky-Trump meeting was going to happen again, without our knowledge. And third, with this alarming news, Ambassador Taylor briefed Ulrich Brechbuhl, who is the counselor to Secretary of State Pompeo. And even as late as September 24th of this year, Secretary Pompeo was directing Kurt Volker to speak with Mr. Giuliani. In a WhatsApp message, Kurt Volker told me in part, “Spoke with Rudy per guidance from S.” S is the state department’s official designator for the secretary. “Spoke with Rudy per guidance from S.”

Sondland: (25:11)

Look, we tried our best to fix the problem while keeping the state department and the NSC closely apprised of the challenges we faced. On July 25th Presidents Trump and Zelensky had their official call. I was not on the call and I don’t think I was invited to be on the call. In fact, I first read the transcript on September 25th, the day it was publicly released. All I had heard at that time, was that the call had gone well. Looking back, I find it very odd, very odd, that neither I nor Ambassador Taylor, nor Ambassador Volker, ever received a detailed readout of that call with the Biden references.

Sondland: (26:03)

Now, there are people who say they had concerns about the call, but no one shared any concerns about the call with me at the time, which frankly would have been very helpful to know. On July 26th Ambassador Taylor, Ambassador Volker, and I were all in Kyiv to meet with President Zelensky. The timing of that trip, immediately after the call between Presidents Trump in Zelensky, was entirely, entirely coincidental. The key of meetings had been scheduled well before the date that the White House finally fixed the call. During our Kyiv meeting, I do not recall President Zelensky discussing the substance of his July 25th call with President Trump, nor did he discuss any request investigate Vice President Biden, which we all later learned was discussed on the July 25th call. And this is consistent with the reported comments from Ambassadors Volker and Taylor.

Sondland: (27:07)

After the Zelensky meeting, I also met with the Zelensky’s senior aide, Andriy Yermak. I don’t recall the specifics of our conversation, but I believe the issue was probably a part of that agenda or meeting. Also on July 26, shortly after our Kyiv meetings, I spoke by phone with President Trump. The White House, which has finally, finally shared certain call dates and times with my attorneys, confirms this. The call lasted five minutes. I remember I was at a restaurant in Kyiv and I have no reason to doubt that this conversation included the subject of investigations. Again, given Mr. Giuliani’s demand that President Zelensky make a public statement about investigations, I knew that investigations were important to President Trump. We did not discuss any classified information.

Sondland: (28:05)

Other witnesses have recently shared their recollection of overhearing this call. For the most part, I have no reason to doubt their accounts. It's true that the president speaks loudly at times and it's also true, I think we primarily discussed ASAP Rocky. It's true that the president likes to use colorful language. Anyone who has met with him at any reasonable amount of time, knows this. Well I cannot remember the precise details, again, the White House has not allowed me to see any readouts of that call and the July 26th call did not strike me as significant at the time. Actually, I would have been more surprised if President Trump had not mentioned investigations, particularly given what we were hearing from Mr. Giuliani about the president's concerns. However, I have no recollection of discussing Vice President Biden or his son on that call or after the call ended.

Sondland: (29:07)

I know that members of this committee frequently frame these complicated issues in the form of a simple question. Was there a quid pro quo? As I testified previously with regard to the requested White House call and the White House meeting, the answer is yes. Mr. Giuliani conveyed to Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker and others that President Trump wanted a public statement from President Zelensky committing to investigations of Burisma and the 2016 election. Mr. Giuliani expressed those requests directly to the Ukrainians and Mr. Giuliani also expressed those requests directly to us. We all understood that these prerequisites for the White House call and the White House meeting reflected President Trump's desires and requirements.

Sondland: (30:02)

Reflected President Trump's desires and requirements. Within my State Department emails, there is a July 19th email. This email was sent. This email was sent to Secretary Pompeo, Secretary Perry, Brian McCormack, who is Secretary Perry's chief of staff at the time. Ms. Kenna, who is the acting... Pardon me. Who is the executive secretariat for Secretary Pompeo, Chief of Staff Mulvaney, and Mr. Mulvaney's senior advisor, Rob Blair. A lot of senior officials. A lot of senior officials.

Sondland: (30:45)

Here is my exact quote from that email, "I talked to Zelensky just now. He is prepared to receive POTUS's call. Will assure him that he intends to run a fully transparent investigation, and will turn over every stone. He would greatly appreciate a call prior to Sunday so that he can put out some media about a friendly and productive call. No details. Prior to Ukraine election on Sunday." Chief of Staff Mulvaney responded, "I asked the NSC to set it up for tomorrow." Everyone was in the loop. It was no secret. Everyone was informed via email on July 19th, days before the presidential call. As I communicated to the team, I told President Zelensky in advance that assurances to run a fully transparent investigation and turn over every stone were necessary in his call with President Trump. On July 19th, in a WhatsApp message between Ambassador Taylor, Ambassador Volker, and me, Ambassador Volker stated, "Had breakfast with Rudy this morning." That's Ambassador Volker and Rudy Giuliani. "Teeing up call with Yermak Monday." That's senior advisor, Andriy Yermak. "Must have helped. Most important is for Zelensky to say that he will help investigation and address any specific personnel issues, if there are any."

Sondland: (32:33)

On August 10th, the next day, Mr. Yermak texted me, "Once we have a date," which is a date for the White House meeting, "we will call for a press briefing, announcing upcoming visit and outlining vision for the reboot of the US-Ukraine relationship, including among other things, Burisma and election meddling in investigations." This is from Mr. Yermak to me.

Sondland: (33:06)

The following day, August 11th, and this is critical, I sent an email to Counselor Brechbuhl and Lisa Kenna. Lisa Kenna was frequently used as the pathway to Secretary Pompeo, as sometimes he preferred to receive his emails through her. She would print them out and put them in front of him. With the subject "Ukraine." I wrote, "Mike," referring to Mike Pompeo, "Kurt and I negotiated a statement from Zelensky to be delivered for our review in a day or two. The contents will hopefully make the boss happy enough," the boss being the President, "to authorize an invitation. Zelensky plans to have a big presser," press conference, " on the openness subject, including specifics next week." All of which referred to the 2016 and the Burisma.

Sondland: (34:11)

Ms. Kenna replied, "Gordon, I'll pass to the Secretary. Thank you." Again, everyone was in the loop.

Sondland: (34:23)

Curiously, and this was very interesting to me. On August 26th, shortly before his visit to Kiev, Ambassador Bolton's office requested Mr. Giuliani's contact information from me. I send Ambassador Bolton the information directly. They requested Mr. Giuliani's contact information on August 26th. I was first informed that the White House was withholding security aid to Ukraine during conversations with Ambassador Taylor on July 18th, 2019. However, as I testified before, I was never able to obtain a clear answer regarding the specific reason for the hold, whether it was bureaucratic in nature, which often happens, or reflected some other concern in the interagency process. I never participated in any of the subsequent DOD or DOS review meetings that others have described, so I can't speak to what was discussed in those meetings.

Sondland: (35:43)

Nonetheless, before the September 1st Warsaw meeting, the Ukrainians had become aware that security funds had yet to be disbursed. In the absence of credible explanation for the hold, I came to the conclusion that the aid, like the White House visit, was jeopardized.

Sondland: (36:06)

In preparation for the September 1 Warsaw meeting, I asked Secretary Pompeo whether a face-to-face conversation between Trump and Zelensky would help to break the logjam, and this was when President Trump was still intending to travel to Warsaw. Specifically, on August 22nd, I emailed Secretary Pompeo directly, copying Secretariat Kenna. I wrote, and this is my email to Secretary Pompeo, "Should we block time in Warsaw for a short pull-aside for POTUS to meet Zelensky? I would ask Zelensky to look him in the eye and tell him that once Ukraine's new justice folks are in place in mid-September, that Zelensky, he, Zelensky, should be able to move forward publicly and with confidence on those issues of importance to POTUS and the US. Hopefully, that will help break the logjam." The Secretary replied, "Yes."

Sondland: (37:19)

I followed up the next day asking to get 10 to 15 minutes on the Warsaw schedule for this. I said, "We'd like to know when it's locked so that I can tell Zelensky and brief him." Executive Secretary Kenna replied, "I will try for sure."

Sondland: (37:37)

Moreover, given my concerns about the security aid, I have no reason to dispute that portion of Senator Johnson's recent letter, in which he recalls conversations he and I had on August 30th. By the end of August, my belief was that if Ukraine did something to demonstrate a serious intention to fight corruption, and specifically addressing Burisma and the 2016, then the hold on military aid would be lifted.

Sondland: (38:08)

There was a September 1st meeting with President Zelensky in Warsaw. Unfortunately, President Trump's attendance at the Warsaw meeting was canceled due to Hurricane Dorian. Vice President Pence attended instead. I mentioned to Vice President Pence before the meetings with the Ukrainians that I had concerns that the delay in aid had become tied to the issue of investigations. I recall mentioning that before the Zelensky meeting.

Sondland: (38:37)

During the actual meeting, President Zelensky raised the issue of security assistance directly with Vice President Pence. The Vice President said that he would speak to President Trump about it.

Sondland: (38:49)

Based on my previous communication with Secretary Pompeo, I felt comfortable sharing my concerns with Mr. Yermak. It was a very, very brief pull-aside conversation that happened within a few seconds. I told Mr. Yermak that I believed that the resumption of US aid would likely not occur until Ukraine took some kind of action on the public statement that we had been discussing for many weeks.

Sondland: (39:17)

As my other State Department colleagues have testified, this security aid was critical to Ukraine's defense and should not have been delayed. I expressed this view to many during this period. But my goal, at the time, was to do what was necessary to get the aid released, to break the logjam. I believed that the public statement we had been discussing for weeks was essential to advancing that goal. I really regret that the Ukrainians were placed in that predicament, but I do not regret doing what I could to try to break the logjam and to solve the problem.

Sondland: (39:58)

I mentioned at the outset that throughout these events, we kept State Department leadership and others apprised of what we were doing. State Department was fully supportive of our engagement in Ukraine efforts, and was aware that a commitment to investigations was among the issues we were pursuing.

Sondland: (40:18)

To provide just two examples, on June 5th, the day after the US EU mission hosted our Independence Day, we did it a month early, Acting Assistant Secretary Phil Reeker sent an email to me, to Secretary Perry, and to others, forwarding some positive media coverage of President Zelensky's attendance at our event. Mr. Reeker wrote, and I quote, "This headline underscores the importance and timeliness of Zelensky's visit to Brussels, and the critical, perhaps historic, role of the dinner and engagement Gordon coordinated. Thank you for your participation and dedication to this effort."

Sondland: (41:04)

Months later, on September 3rd, I sent Secretary Pompeo an email to express my appreciation for his joining a series of meetings in Brussels following the Warsaw trip. I wrote, "Mike, thanks for schlepping to Europe. I think it was really important and the chemistry seems promising. Really appreciate it."

Sondland: (41:31)

Secretary Pompeo replied the next day on Wednesday, September 4th, quote, “All good. You’re doing great work. Keep banging away.” State Department leadership expressed total support for our efforts to engage the new Ukrainian administration.

Sondland: (41:51)

Look, I’ve never doubted the strategic value of strengthening our alliance with Ukraine. At all times, our efforts were in good faith and fully transparent to those tasked with overseeing them. Our efforts were reported and approved. Not once do I recall encountering an objection.

Sondland: (42:14)

It remains an honor to serve the people of the United States as their United States Ambassador to the European Union. I look forward to answering the Committee’s questions. Thank you.

Adam Schiff & Devin Nunes Opening Statements

Adam Schiff: (00:00)

your interest in being here. In turn, we ask for your respect as we proceed with today’s hearing. It is the intention of the committee to proceed without disruptions. As Chairman, I’ll make all necessary and appropriate steps to maintain order and to ensure the committee is run in accordance with house rules, and House Resolution 660. 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: (00:26)

This morning we will hear from Gordon Sondland, the American Ambassador to the European Union. We are here today as part of the House of Representatives impeachment inquiry, because president Donald Trump sought to condition military aid to Ukraine in an Oval Office meeting with the new Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, in exchange for politically motivated investigations that Trump believed would help his reelection campaign.

Adam Schiff: (00:51)

The first investigation was of a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, was responsible for interfering in the 2016 election. Second investigation that Trump demanded was into a political rival that he apparently feared most, Joe Biden. Trump sought to weaken Biden, and to refute the fact that his own election campaign in 2016 had been helped by Russian hacking and dumping operation, and Russian social media campaign directed by Vladimir Putin to help Trump.

Adam Schiff: (01:27)

Trump’s scheme undermined military and diplomatic support for a key ally, and undercut US anti-corruption efforts in Ukraine. Trump put his personal and political interests above those of the United States. As ambassador Sondland would later tell career foreign service officer David Holmes, immediately after speaking to the President, “Trump did not give a expletive about Ukraine. He cares about big stuff that benefits him, like the Biden investigations that Rudy Giuliani was pushing.”

Adam Schiff: (01:58)

Ambassador Sondland was a skilled deal maker, but in trying to satisfy a directive from the President found himself increasingly embroiled in an effort to press the new Ukrainian president, that deviated sharply from the norm in both terms of policy and process. In February, Ambassador Sondland traveled to Ukraine on his first official trip to that country. While in Kiev, he met with then US Ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, and found her to be an excellent diplomat with a deep command of Ukrainian internal dynamics.

Adam Schiff: (02:29)

On April 21st, Zelensky was elected president of Ukraine and spoke to President Trump who congratulated him, and said he would look into attending Zelensky's inauguration, but pledged to send someone at a very, very high level. Between the time of that call and the inaugural and May 20, Trump's attitude towards Ukraine hardened.

Adam Schiff: (02:52)

On May 13th, the President ordered Vice President Mike Pence, not to attend Zelensky's inauguration, opting instead to dispatch the self dubbed Three Amigos; Energy Secretary Rick Perry, Ambassador Sondland, and Ambassador Kurt Volker, the special representative for Ukraine negotiations.

Adam Schiff: (03:09)

After returning from the inauguration, members of the US delegation briefed President Trump on their encouraging first interactions with the new current Ukrainian administration. They urged the President to meet with Zelensky, but the President's reaction was decidedly hostile. The President's order was clear, however. Talk with Rudy.

Adam Schiff: (03:31)

During this meeting, ambassador Sondland first became aware of what Giuliani and the President were really interested in. "This whole thing was sort of a continuum," he testified at his deposition, "... starting at the May 23rd meeting. Ending up at the end of the line when the transcript of the call came out." "It was a continuum," he would explain, "... that became more insidious over time."

Adam Schiff: (03:58)

The Three Amigos were disappointed with Trump's directive to engage Giuliani, but vowed to press ahead. Ambassador Sondland, "We could abandon the goal of a White House meeting for President Zelensky," which the group teemed crucial for US/Ukrainian relations, "... or we could do as President Trump directed and talk to Mr. Giuliani to address the President's concerns. We chose the latter path."

Adam Schiff: (04:24)

In the coming weeks, Ambassador Sondland got more clearly involved in Ukraine policymaking. Starting with the June 4 US mission to the EU Independence Day event in Brussels, one month early. Secretary Perry, Ulrich Brechbuhl and the State Department Counselor, and Sondland met with President Zelensky, whom Sondland had invited personally on the margins of the event.

Adam Schiff: (04:48)

On June 10, 2019, Secretary Perry organized a conference call with Sondland, then National Security Advisor, John Bolton, Volker and others. They reviewed Ukraine strategy with Bolton and decided that Perry, Sondland and Volker would assist Ambassador Bill Taylor, the new acting ambassador in Kiev on Ukraine, and discuss Trump's desire for Rudy Giuliani to be somehow involved. At the end of the call, according to Sondland, we all felt very comfortable with the strategy moving forward.

Adam Schiff: (05:17)

Two weeks later, on June 27th, Ambassador Sondland called Taylor to say that, "Zelensky needed to make clear to President Trump that he was not standing in the way of investigations." On July 10th, Ambassador Sondland and other US officials met at the White House with a group of US and Ukrainian officials. Participants in the meeting have told us that Ambassador Sondland invoked acting White House Chief of Staff, Mick Mulvaney, and said that the White House meeting sought

by the Ukrainian President with Trump would happen only if Ukraine undertook certain investigations. National Security Advisor, Bolton, abruptly ended the meeting upon hearing this.

Adam Schiff: (05:55)

Undeterred, Sondland brought Ukrainian delegation downstairs to another part of the White House and was more explicit. According to witnesses, Ukraine needed to investigate the Bidens or Burisma in the 2016 election interference if they wanted to get a meeting at all.

Adam Schiff: (06:11)

Following this meeting in July, Bolton said that he would not be part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up on this. Sondland continued to press for a meeting, but he and others were willing to settle for a phone call as an intermediate step.

Adam Schiff: (06:25)

On July 21, Taylor texted Sondland that, "President Zelensky is sensitive about Ukraine being taken seriously, not merely as an instrument of Washington domestic reelection politics." Sondland responded, "Absolutely, but we need to get the conversation started and the relationship built irrespective of the pretext, so that Zelensky and Trump could meet and all of this will be fixed."

Adam Schiff: (06:54)

On July 25th, the day of the Trump/Zelensky call, Volker had lunch in Kiev with a senior aid to Ukrainian President Zelensky, and later texted the aide to say that he'd heard from the 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."

Adam Schiff: (07:17)

Ambassador Sondland spoke to President Trump a few minutes before the call was placed, but was not on the call. During that now infamous phone call with Zelensky, Trump responded to the Ukrainian expression of appreciation for US defense support, and requests to buy more Javelin anti-tank missiles by saying, "I would like you to do us a favor, though." Trump asked Zelensky to investigate the discredited 2016 conspiracy theory, and even more ominously, look into the Bidens.

Adam Schiff: (07:46)

Neither had been part of the official preparatory material for the call, but they were in Donald Trump's personal interest, and the interests of his reelection campaign. The Ukrainian President knew about both in advance. In part because of Ambassador Volker, and Ambassador Sondland's efforts to make him aware of what the President was demanding.

Adam Schiff: (08:06)

Around this time, Ambassador Sondland became aware of the suspension of security assistance to Ukraine, which had been announced on a secure inter-agency video conference on July 18th. Telling us that it was extremely odd that nobody involved in making and implementing policy towards Ukraine knew why the aid had been put on hold. During August, Sondland participated in conference calls, and text messages with Volker and Giuliani and said that the gist of every call was what was going to go in the press statement.

Adam Schiff: (08:37)

In August, nine text message with Volker/Sondland stated, "I think POTUS really wants the deliverable," which was according to Sondland a deliverable public statement that President Trump wanted to see or hear before a White House meeting could happen.

Adam Schiff: (08:52)

On September 1, Ambassador Sondland participated in Vice President Pence's bilateral meeting with Zelensky in Warsaw, during which Zelensky raised the suspended security assistance. Following that meeting, Sondland approached the senior Ukrainian official to tell him that he believed what could help them move the aid was if the Ukrainian Prosecutor General would go to the mic and announced that he was opening the Burisma investigation.

Adam Schiff: (09:18)

Sondland told Taylor that he had made a mistake by telling Ukrainians that an Oval Office Meeting was dependent on a public announcement of investigations. In fact, everything was dependent on such an announcement, including security assistance.

Adam Schiff: (09:37)

Even the announcement by the Prosecutor General would not satisfy the President. On September 7, Sondland spoke to the President and told Tim Morrison and Bill Taylor about the call shortly thereafter. The President said 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. Moreover, an announcement by the Prosecutor General would not be enough. President Zelensky must announce personally that he would open the investigations.

Adam Schiff: (10:07)

Sondland told Taylor that, "President Trump is a businessman. When a businessman is about to sign a check to someone who owes him something," he said, "... the businessman asks that person to pay up before signing the check." The check referred to here was the US military assistance to Ukraine, and Ukraine had to pay up with investigations. Throughout early September, Volker and Sondland sought to close the deal on an agreement that Zelensky would announce investigations. After, Taylor texted Sondland on September 9, 2019 that, "I think it's crazy to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign."

Adam Schiff: (10:46)

16 days later, the transcript of the July 25th call was made public, and the American people learn the truth of how our President tried to take advantage of a vulnerable ally. Now it is up to Congress, as the People's representatives, to determine what response is appropriate. If the President abused his power and invited foreign interference in our elections. 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 aid; a White House meeting, or hundreds of millions of dollars of needed military aid, it will be up to us to decide whether those acts are compatible with the office of the Presidency.

Adam Schiff: (11:28)

Finally, I want to say a word about the President and Secretary Pompeo's obstruction of this investigation. We have not received a single document from the State Department. As Ambassador Sondland's opening statement today will make clear, those documents bear directly on this investigation and this impeachment inquiry. I think we know now, based on a sample of the documents attached to Ambassador Sondland's statement, that the knowledge of this scheme was far and wide, and included among others Secretary of State Pompeo, as well as the Vice President.

Adam Schiff: (12:12)

We can see why Secretary Pompeo, and President Trump have made such a concerted, and across-the-board effort to obstruct this investigation and this impeachment inquiry. I will just say this. They do so at their own peril. I remind the President that Article Three of the Impeachment Articles

drafted against President Nixon was his refusal to obey the subpoenas of Congress. With that, I recognize ranking member Nunes for any remarks that he would wish to make.

Devin Nunes: (12:49)

Thank the gentleman. As we learned last night, story time last night, we get story time first thing this morning. Ambassador Sondland, welcome. Glad you're here. I'm really not glad you're here, but welcome to the fifth day of this circus.

Devin Nunes: (13:07)

As I've noted before, the Democrats on this committee spent three years accusing President Trump of being a Russian agent. In March 2018, after a year-long investigation, Intelligence Committee Republicans issued a 240-page report describing in detail how the Russians meddled in the 2016 elections, and making specific recommendations to improve our election security. Denouncing the report as a whitewash, and accusing Republicans of subverting the investigation, the Democrats issued their own report, focusing on their now debunked conspiracy theory that the Trump campaign colluded with Russia to hack the elections.

Devin Nunes: (13:54)

Notably, the Democrats vowed at the time to present a further "comprehensive report," after they finished their investigation into Trump's treasonous collusion with Russia. For some completely unexplainable reason, after the implosion of their Russia hoax, the Democrats failed to issue that comprehensive report. We're still waiting.

Devin Nunes: (14:20)

This episode shows how the Democrats have exploited the Intelligence Committee for political purposes for three years. Culminating in these impeachment hearings, and their mania to attack the President. No conspiracy theory is too outlandish for the Democrats. Time and time again, they floated the possibility of some farfetched malfeasance by Trump, declared the dire need to investigate it, and then suddenly dropped the issue and moved on to their next asinine theory.

Devin Nunes: (14:53)

A sampling of their accusations and insinuations includes these. Trump is a long time Russian agent as described in the Steele dossier. The Russians gave Trump advanced access to emails stolen by the DNC and the Hillary Clinton campaign. The Trump campaign based some of his activities on these stolen documents. Trump received nefarious materials from the Russians through a Trump campaign aid. Trump laundered Russian money through real estate deals. Trump was blackmailed by Russia through his financial exposure with Deutsche Bank. Trump had a diabolical plan to build a Trump Tower in Moscow. Trump changed the Republican National Committee platform to hurt Ukraine, and benefit Russia. The Russians laundered money through the NRA for the Trump campaign. Trump's son-in-law lied about his Russian contacts while obtaining his security clearance.

Devin Nunes: (15:58)

It's a long list of charges, all false, and I could go on, and on, and on but I'll spare you for these moments. Clearly, these ludicrous accusations don't reflect committee members who are honestly searching for the truth. They're the actions of partisan extremists who hijacked the Intelligence Committee, transformed it into the Impeachment Committee, abandoned its core oversight functions, and turned it into a beachhead for ousting and elected president from office. You have to keep that history in mind as you consider the Democrats' latest catalog of supposed Trump outrages.

Devin Nunes: (16:39)

Granted, a friendly call with the Ukrainian President wouldn't seem to rise to the same level as being a Russian agent, but the Democrats were running out of time. If they waited any longer, their impeachment circus would intervene with their own candidates' 2020 campaigns. You have to give them points for creativity, and selling this absurdity as an impeachable offense. All this explains why the Democrats have gathered zero Republican support in the House of Representatives for their impeachment crusade. In fact, the vote we held was a bipartisan vote against this impeachment inquiry.

Devin Nunes: (17:21)

Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Schiff, and Chairman Nadler are the key figures behind this impeachment crusade. All proclaim that impeachment is so damaging to the country that it can only proceed with bipartisan support. Are those declarations suddenly no longer true? Did impeachment become less divisive? Of course not. They know exactly what kind of damage they're inflicting on this nation, that they've passed the point of no return.

Devin Nunes: (17:54)

After three years of preparation work, much of it's spearheaded by the Democrats on this committee, using all the tools of Congress to accuse, investigate, indict and smear the President. They stoked a frenzy amongst their most fanatical supporters that they can no longer control. Ambassador Sondland, you are here today to be smeared. You'll make it through it, and I appreciate your service to this country, and I'm sorry that you've had to go through this.

Devin Nunes: (18:34)

In closing, the Democrats have zeroed in on an anonymous whistleblower complaint that was cooked up in cooperation with the Democrats on this very committee. They lied to the American people about that cooperation, and refused to let us question the whistleblower to discover the truth. Meanwhile, the Democrats lash out against anyone who questions or casts doubt on this spectacle.

Devin Nunes: (19:05)

When Ukrainian President Zelensky denies anything improper happened on the phone call, the Democrats say that he's a liar. When journalists report on the Ukraine election meddling and Hunter Biden's position on the board of corrupt Ukrainian companies, the Democrats label them conspiracy theorists. When the Democrats can't get any traction for their allegations of quid pro quo, they move the goalpost and accuse the President of extortion. Then, bribery, and at last resort obstruction of justice.

Devin Nunes: (19:42)

The American people sent us to Washington to solve problems. Not to wage scorched earth political warfare against the other party. This impeachment is not helping the American people. It's not a legitimate use of taxpayer dollars. It's definitely not improving our national security.

Devin Nunes: (20:03)

Finally, the Democrats' fake outrage that President Trump used his own channel to communicate with Ukraine. I'll remind my friends on the other side of the aisle that our first president, George Washington, directed his own diplomatic channels to secure a treaty with great Britain. If my Democratic colleagues were around in 1794, they'd probably want to impeach him too.

Devin Nunes: (20:36)

Mr. Chairman, this morning. We have transmitted to you a letter exercising our rights under H.Res.660 to subpoena documents and witnesses. We take this step because you have failed to

ensure fairness and objectivity in this inquiry. As such, we need to subpoena Hunter Biden, and the whistleblower for closed-door depositions, as well as relevant documents from the DNC, Hunter Biden's firm, Rosemont Seneca, and the whistle blower.

Devin Nunes: (21:08)

In the interest of some basic level of fairness, we expect you to concur with these subpoenas. I'll submit that letter for the record, and yield back the balance of my time.

Adam Schiff: (21:23)

I thank the gentleman. We are joined this afternoon by Ambassador Gordon Sondland. I'm sorry, this morning. It was a long day yesterday. Gordon Sondland is the US Representative to the European Union with the rank of Ambassador. Before joining the State Department, Ambassador Sondland was the founder and CEO of Providence Hotels, a national owner and operator of full service hotels. Also prior to his government service, Ambassador Sondland was engaged in charitable enterprises.

Adam Schiff: (21:55)

Two final points before witness is sworn. First, witness depositions as part of this inquiry were unclassified in nature, and all open hearings will also be held at the unclassified level. Any information that may touch on classified information will be addressed separately. Second, Congress will not tolerate any reprisal, threat of reprisal, or attempt to retaliate against any US government official for testifying before Congress, including you or any of your colleagues. If you would please rise and raise your right hand, I will begin by swearing you in.

Questioning

Adam Schiff: (00:00)

We will now proceed the first round of questions as detailed in the memo provided to committee members. There'll be 45 minutes of questions conducted by the chairman and majority counsel followed by 45 minutes for the ranking member or minority counsel. Following that, unless I specify additional equal time for extended questioning, we will proceed under the five minute rule and every member will have the chance to ask questions. I recognize myself or majority counsel for the first round of questions. Ambassador Sondland, there's a lot of new material in your opening statement for us to get through, but I want to start with a few top line questions before passing it over to Mr. Goldman. In your deposition, you testified that you found yourself on a continuum that became more insidious over time. Can you describe what you mean by this continuum of insidiousness?

Gordon Sondland: (00:53)

Well, Mr. Chairman, when we left the Oval Office I believe on May 23rd, the request was very generic for an investigation of corruption in a very vanilla sense and dealing with some of the oligarch problems in Ukraine, which were longstanding problems. And then as time went on, more specific items got added to the menu, including the Burisma and 2016 election meddling specifically, the DNC server specifically. And over this, over this continuum, it became more and more difficult to secure the White House Meeting because more conditions were being placed on the White House meeting.

Adam Schiff: (01:44)

And then of course, on July 25th, although you were not privy to the call and other condition was added, that being the investigation of the Bidens.

Gordon Sondland: (01:53)

I was not privy to the call and I did not know that the condition of investigating the Bidens was a condition, correct.

Adam Schiff: (02:01)

You saw that in the call record, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (02:03)

It was not in any record I received.

Adam Schiff: (02:05)

But when you did receive-

Gordon Sondland: (02:06)

Yes, I saw that in September, correct.

Adam Schiff: (02:10)

So on this continuum, the beginning of the continuum begins on May 23rd when the President instructs you to talk to Rudy?

Gordon Sondland: (02:17)

Correct.

Adam Schiff: (02:18)

And you understood that as a direction by the President that you needed to satisfy the concerns that Rudy Giuliani would express to you about what the President wanted in Ukraine?

Gordon Sondland: (02:28)

Not to me, to the entire group, Volker, Perry and myself, correct.

Adam Schiff: (02:33)

Now in your opening statement, you confirm that there was a quid pro quo between the White House meeting and the investigations into Burisma and the 2016 election that Giuliani was publicly promoting, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (02:44)

Correct.

Adam Schiff: (02:49)

And in fact, you say that other senior officials in the State Department and the chief of staff's office, including Mick Mulvaney, Secretary Pompeo, were aware of this quid pro quo, that in order to get the White House Meeting that we're going to have to be these investigations the President wanted.

Gordon Sondland: (03:07)

Correct.

Adam Schiff: (03:09)

And those again, are investigations into 2016 and Burisma slash the Bidens?

Gordon Sondland: (03:14)

2016, Burisma. The Biden's did not come up.

Adam Schiff: (03:19)

But you would ultimately learn that Burisma meant the Bidens when you saw the call record, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (03:24)

Of course, today I know exactly what it means. I didn't know at the time.

Adam Schiff: (03:33)

And then on July 26th you confirm you did indeed have the conversation with president Trump from a restaurant in Kiev that David Holmes testified about last week, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (03:41)

Correct.

Adam Schiff: (03:43)

And you have no reason to doubt Mr. Holmes recounting of your conversation with the President?

Gordon Sondland: (03:49)

The only part of Mr. Holmes recounting that I take exception with is I do not recall mentioning the Bidens, that did not enter my mind. It was Burisma and 2016 elections.

Adam Schiff: (04:00)

You have no reason to believe that Mr. Holmes would make that up if that's what he recalls you saying? You have no reason to question that, do you?

Gordon Sondland: (04:06)

I don't recall saying Biden. I never recalled saying Biden.

Adam Schiff: (04:14)

But the rest of Mr. Holmes recollection is consistent with your own?

Gordon Sondland: (04:19)

Well, I can't testify as to what Mr. Holmes might or might not have heard through the phone. I don't know how he heard the conversation.

Adam Schiff: (04:26)

Are you familiar with his testimony?

Gordon Sondland: (04:28)

Vaguely, yes.

Adam Schiff: (04:30)

And the only exception you take as to the mention of the name Biden?

Gordon Sondland: (04:33)

Correct.

Adam Schiff: (04:40)

And I think you said in your testimony this morning that not only is it correct that the President brought up with you investigations on the phone the day after the July 25th call, but you would have been surprised had he not brought that up, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (04:55)

Right, because we had been hearing about it from Rudy and we presumed Rudy was getting it from the President, so it seemed like a logical conclusion.

Adam Schiff: (05:07)

Mr. Holmes also testified that you told him, "President Trump doesn't care about Ukraine. He only cares about big stuff that relates to him personally." I take it from your comment you don't dispute that part of the conversation.

Gordon Sondland: (05:19)

Well, he made that clear in the May 23rd meeting that he was not particularly fond of Ukraine and we had a lot of heavy lifting to do to get him to engage.

Adam Schiff: (05:29)

So you don't dispute that part of Mr. Holmes' recollection?

Gordon Sondland: (05:32)

No.

Adam Schiff: (05:39)

In August when you worked with Rudy Giuliani and a top Ukrainian aid to draft a public statement for President Zelensky to issue that includes the announcement investigations into Burisma. You understood that was required by President Trump before he would grant the White House meeting to President Zelensky?

Gordon Sondland: (05:54)

That's correct.

Adam Schiff: (05:56)

And the Ukrainians understood that as well?

Gordon Sondland: (05:58)

I believe they did.

Adam Schiff: (05:59)

And you informed Secretary Pompeo about that statement as well?

Gordon Sondland: (06:03)

I did.

Adam Schiff: (06:08)

Later in August, you told Secretary Pompeo that President Zelensky would be prepared to tell President Trump that his new justice officials would be able to announce matters of interest to the President, which could break the log jam. When you say matters of interest to the President, you mean the investigations that President Trump wanted, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (06:27)

Correct.

Adam Schiff: (06:28)

And that involved 2016 and Burisma or the Bidens?

Gordon Sondland: (06:33)
2016 and Burisma.

Adam Schiff: (06:36)
And when you're talking here about breaking the logjam, you're talking about the logjam over the security assistance, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (06:42)
I was talking logjam generically because nothing was moving.

Adam Schiff: (06:46)
But that included the security assistance, did it not?

Gordon Sondland: (06:48)
Correct.

Adam Schiff: (06:52)
And based on the context of that email, this was not the first time you had discussed his investigations with Secretary Pompeo was it?

Gordon Sondland: (06:59)
No.

Adam Schiff: (07:02)
He was aware of the connections that you were making between the investigations and the White House meeting and security assistance?

Gordon Sondland: (07:08)
Yes.

Adam Schiff: (07:12)
Did he ever take issue with you and say, "No, that connection is not there or you're wrong?"

Gordon Sondland: (07:17)
Not that I recall.

Adam Schiff: (07:23)
Now you mentioned that you also had a conversation with Vice President Pence before his meeting with President Zelensky in Warsaw and that you raised the concern you had as well, that the security assistance was being withheld because of the President's desire to get a commitment from Zelensky to pursue these political investigations. What did you say to the Vice President?

Gordon Sondland: (07:43)
I was in a briefing with several people and I just spoke up and I said, "It appears that everything is stalled until this statement gets made." Something, words to that effect, and that's what I believe to be the case based on the work that the three of us had been doing, Volcker, Perry and myself and the Vice President nodded like he heard what I said and that was pretty much it, as I recall.

Adam Schiff: (08:13)

And you understood that the Ukrainians were going to raise the security assistance with the Vice President at this meeting?

Gordon Sondland: (08:20)

I didn't know what they were going to raise, but they in fact did raise it, Mr. Chairman.

Adam Schiff: (08:25)

Well, it was public by that point that there was a hold on the security assistance, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (08:28)

Yeah, but I didn't know what they were going to raise. I didn't get a pre-brief from the Ukrainians.

Adam Schiff: (08:33)

Well, you knew certainly they were concerned about the hold on the security assistance, right?

Gordon Sondland: (08:37)

They were concerned, obviously.

Adam Schiff: (08:39)

And you wanted to help prepare the Vice President for the meeting by letting him know what you thought was responsible for the hold on the security assistance.

Gordon Sondland: (08:46)

That's fair.

Adam Schiff: (08:48)

Do you recall anything else the Vice President said other than nodding his head when you made him aware of this fact?

Gordon Sondland: (08:53)

No, I don't have a readout of that meeting, so I can't remember anything else.

Adam Schiff: (08:59)

And it was immediately after this meeting between the Vice President and Zelensky that you went to speak with Yermak and you told him similarly that in order to release the military assistance they were going to have to publicly announce these investigations?

Gordon Sondland: (09:13)

Yeah, much has been made of that meeting and it really wasn't a meeting. What happened was everyone got up after the bilateral meeting between President Zelensky and Vice President Pence and people do what they normally do. They get up, they mill around, they shake hands. And I don't know if I came over to Yermak or he came over to me, but he said, "What's going on here?" And I said, "I don't know. It might all be tied together now, I have no idea." I was presuming that it was, but it was a very short conversation.

Adam Schiff: (09:41)

Well, in that short conversation, as you would later relay to Mr. Morrison and Ambassador Taylor, you informed Mr. Yermak that they would need to announce these investigations in order to get the aid, did you not?

Gordon Sondland: (09:53)

Well, Mr. Yermak was already working on those investigation or on the statement about the investigations.

Adam Schiff: (10:01)

And you confirmed for him that he needed to get it done if they were going to get the military aid.

Gordon Sondland: (10:04)

I likely did.

Adam Schiff: (10:11)

Mr. Morrison and Ambassador Taylor have also relayed a conversation you had with the President following the Warsaw meeting, in which the President relayed to you that there was no quid pro quo but nevertheless, unless Zelensky went to the mic and announced these investigations, they would be a stalemate over the aide, is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (10:33)

That's correct.

Adam Schiff: (10:34)

And that was an accurate reflection of your discussion with the President?

Gordon Sondland: (10:37)

Well, that email was not artfully written. I'm the first to admit what I was trying to convey to Ambassador Taylor after his frantic emails to me and to others about the security assistance, which by the way, I agreed with him. I thought it was a very bad idea to hold that money. I finally called the President, I believe it was on the 9th of September. I can't find the records and they won't provide them to me. But I believe I just asked him an open ended question. Mr. Chairman, "What do you want from Ukraine? I keep hearing all these different ideas and theories and this and that. What do you want?" And it was a very short, abrupt conversation. He was not in a good mood and he just said, "I want nothing. I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. Tell Zelensky to do the right thing." Something to that effect.

Gordon Sondland: (11:31)

So I typed out a text to Ambassador Taylor and my reason for telling him this was not to defend what the President was saying, not to opine on whether the President was being truthful or untruthful but simply to relay, "I've gone as far as I can go. This is the final word that I heard from the President of the United States. If you're still concerned, you Ambassador Taylor are still concerned, please get ahold of the Secretary, maybe he can help."

Adam Schiff: (12:01)

I'm not asking you about your text message. I'm asking about your conversations with Mr. Morrison and Ambassador Taylor after you spoke with the President, either in that call or in a different call.

Gordon Sondland: (12:11)

I'm confused, Mr. Chairman, which conversations with Mr. Morrison and Mr. Taylor?

Adam Schiff: (12:16)

Well, Mr. Morrison testified that you relayed a conversation you had with the President, in which the president told you no quid pro quo, but President Zelensky must go to a microphone and announce these investigations and that he should want to. Similarly, you told Ambassador Taylor

that while the President said no quid pro quo, unless Zelensky announced these investigations, they would be at a stalemate. Presumably a stalemate over the military assistance. Do you have any reason to question those conversations that Mr. Morrison and Ambassador Taylor took notes about?

Gordon Sondland: (12:56)

Well, I think it's tied to my text, Mr. Chairman, because in my text I think I said something to the effect that he wants Zelensky to do what he ran on I believe his transparency, et cetera, et cetera, which was my clumsy way of saying he wanted these announcements to be made.

Adam Schiff: (13:16)

Again, Ambassador, I'm not asking about your text message. I'm asking you about what you relayed to Ambassador Taylor and Mr. Morrison about your conversation with the President. Do you have any reason to question their recollection of what you told them?

Gordon Sondland: (13:30)

All I can say is that I expressed what I told or what the President told me in that text. And if I had relayed anything other than what was in that text, I don't recall.

Adam Schiff: (13:44)

You don't recall?

Gordon Sondland: (13:45)

I don't recall.

Adam Schiff: (13:46)

You have no reason to question Ambassador Taylor or Mr. Morrison of what they wrote in their notes about your conversation with them.

Gordon Sondland: (13:54)

Could you kindly repeat what they wrote?

Adam Schiff: (13:56)

I'll have Mr. Goldman go through that with you.

Gordon Sondland: (13:58)

That'd be great.

Adam Schiff: (13:59)

But let me get to the the top line here, Ambassador Sondland.

Gordon Sondland: (14:02)

Okay.

Adam Schiff: (14:05)

You've testified that the White House meeting that President Zelensky desperately wanted and that was very important to President Zelensky, was it not?

Gordon Sondland: (14:15)

Absolutely.

Adam Schiff: (14:17)

You've testified that that meeting was conditioned was a quid pro quo for what the President wanted, these two investigations, isn't that right?

Gordon Sondland: (14:27)
Correct.

Adam Schiff: (14:28)
And that everybody knew it.

Gordon Sondland: (14:29)
Correct.

Adam Schiff: (14:32)
Now that White House meeting was going to be an official meeting between the two presidents, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (14:37)
Presumably.

Adam Schiff: (14:39)
It would be an Oval Office meeting, hopefully.

Gordon Sondland: (14:41)
A working meeting, yes.

Adam Schiff: (14:42)
A working meeting, so an official act, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (14:45)
Yeah.

Adam Schiff: (14:46)
And in order to perform that official act, Donald Trump, wanted these two investigations that would help his re-election campaign, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (14:55)
I can't characterize why he wanted them, all I can tell you is this is what we heard from Mr. Giuliani.

Adam Schiff: (15:01)
But he had to get those two investigations if that official act was going to take place, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (15:08)
He had to announce the investigations, he didn't actually have to do them as I understood it.

Adam Schiff: (15:13)
Okay, President Zelensky had to announce the two investigations the President wanted, make a public announcement, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (15:20)
Correct.

Adam Schiff: (15:22)

And those were of great value to the President, he was quite insistent upon them and his attorney was insistent upon them?

Gordon Sondland: (15:28)

I don't want to characterize whether they are of value, not value. Again, through Mr. Giuliani, we were led to believe that that's what he wanted.

Adam Schiff: (15:37)

Well, and you said that Mr. Giuliani was acting at the President's demand, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (15:42)

Right. When the President says, "Talk to my personal lawyer, Mr. Giuliani," we followed his direction.

Adam Schiff: (15:47)

And so that official act of that meeting was being conditioned on the performance of these things the president wanted as expressed both directly and through his lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (15:59)

As expressed through Rudy Giuliani, correct.

Adam Schiff: (16:02)

And you've also testified that your understanding, it became your clear understanding that the military assistance was also being withheld pending Zelensky announcing these investigations, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (16:14)

That was my presumption, my personal presumption based on the facts at the time, nothing was moving.

Adam Schiff: (16:22)

And in fact, you had a discussion, communication with the Secretary of State, which you said that logjam over aid could be lifted if Zelensky announced these investigations, right?

Gordon Sondland: (16:34)

I did not, I don't recall saying the logjam over aid, I recall saying the logjam, I don't know-

Adam Schiff: (16:39)

That that's what you meant, right Ambassador?

Gordon Sondland: (16:41)

I meant that whatever was holding up the meeting, whatever was holding up our deal with Ukraine, I was trying to break. Again, I was presuming-

Adam Schiff: (16:55)

Well, here's what you said in your testimony a moment ago.

Gordon Sondland: (16:57)

Okay.

Adam Schiff: (16:58)

Page 18, "But my goal at the time was to do what was necessary to get the aid released to break the logjam." Okay, that's still your testimony, right?

Gordon Sondland: (17:07)

Yeah.

Adam Schiff: (17:09)

So the military aid is also an official act, am I right?

Gordon Sondland: (17:16)

Yes.

Adam Schiff: (17:17)

This is not President Trump's personal bank account he's writing a check from, this is \$400 million of U.S. taxpayer money, is it not?

Gordon Sondland: (17:24)

Absolutely.

Adam Schiff: (17:25)

And there was a logjam, in which the President would not write that U.S. check you believed until Ukraine announced these two investigations the President wanted, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (17:38)

That was my belief.

Adam Schiff: (17:40)

Mr. Goldman.

Dan Goldman: (17:42)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In your opening statement, Ambassador Sondland, you detailed the benefits that you have gained from obtaining some additional documents over the past few weeks, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (17:58)

In terms of refreshing my recollection.

Dan Goldman: (18:00)

Right, because reviewing these documents has helped you to remember the events that we're asking about. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (18:08)

Correct.

Dan Goldman: (18:09)

Because you acknowledge of course, that when you can place a document and a date and a context, it helps to jog your memory.

Gordon Sondland: (18:15)

That's correct.

Dan Goldman: (18:16)

And so you would agree that for people unlike yourself who take notes, that that is very helpful to their own recollection of events, right?

Gordon Sondland: (18:29)

I think you asked your question backwards. Are you saying people that take notes, it's helpful to have those documents or people that don't take notes, it's helpful to have those documents?

Dan Goldman: (18:37)

No, no. You are not a note taker, right?

Gordon Sondland: (18:40)

I'm not a note taker, never have been.

Dan Goldman: (18:41)

But you would agree that people who do take contemporaneous notes generally are more able to remember things than people who don't.

Gordon Sondland: (18:51)

Some, yes.

Dan Goldman: (18:53)

And there are additional documents that you've been unable to obtain, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (18:57)

That's correct.

Dan Goldman: (18:58)

And I think you even said in your opening statement that the State Department prevented you and your staff from trying to gather more documents. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (19:07)

Certain documents, yes.

Dan Goldman: (19:09)

Which documents?

Gordon Sondland: (19:10)

Documents that I didn't have immediate access to.

Dan Goldman: (19:13)

And who at the State Department prevented you from doing that?

Gordon Sondland: (19:16)

You have to ask my counsel, he was dealing with them.

Dan Goldman: (19:18)

But certainly based on the additional memory that you have gained over the past few weeks from reading the testimony of others, based on their notes and reviewing your own documents, you have remembered a lot more than you did when you were deposed, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (19:37)

That's correct.

Dan Goldman: (19:38)

And one of the things that you now remember is the discussion that you had with President Trump on July 26th in that restaurant in Kiev, right?

Gordon Sondland: (19:48)

Yeah, what triggered my memory was someone's reference to ASAP Rocky, which was I believe the primary purpose of the phone call.

Dan Goldman: (19:55)

Certainly, so that's one way memory works isn't it? And you were sitting in a restaurant with David Holmes in Kiev, right, having lunch?

Gordon Sondland: (20:06)

I think I took the whole team out to lunch after the meeting, yeah.

Dan Goldman: (20:10)

And it was a meeting, a one-on-one meeting you had with Andriy Yermak?

Gordon Sondland: (20:16)

Again, trying to reconstruct a very busy day without the benefit. But if someone said I had a meeting and I went to the meeting, then I'm not going to dispute that.

Dan Goldman: (20:28)

And particularly if that person took notes at that meeting.

Gordon Sondland: (20:31)

Correct.

Dan Goldman: (20:32)

Or sat outside the door when you didn't let them in?

Gordon Sondland: (20:35)

I have no control over who goes into a meeting in Ukraine, that was the Ukrainians that didn't let them in.

Dan Goldman: (20:41)

And you had also met with President Zelensky among others that day, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (20:44)

That's correct.

Dan Goldman: (20:46)

And you called President Trump from your cell phone from the restaurant, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (20:53)

That's right.

Dan Goldman: (20:54)

And this was not a secure line, was it?

Gordon Sondland: (20:56)

No, it was an open line.

Dan Goldman: (20:58)

Did you worry that a foreign government may be listening to your phone call with the President of the United States?

Gordon Sondland: (21:04)

Well, I have a unclassified conversations all the time from landlines that are unsecured and cell phones. If the topic is not classified and it's up to the President to decide what's classified and what's not classified. And we were having ... he was aware that it was an open line as well.

Dan Goldman: (21:23)

And you don't recall the specifics of holding your phone far away from your ear as Mr. Holmes testified, but you have no reason to question his recollection of that, do you?

Gordon Sondland: (21:38)

I mean it seems a little strange I would hold my phone here. I probably had my phone close to my ear and he claims to have overheard part of the conversation and I'm not going to dispute what he did or didn't hear.

Dan Goldman: (21:49)

Well, he also testified that you confirmed to President Trump that you were in Ukraine at the time and that President Zelensky quote loves your ass unquote. Do you recall saying that?

Gordon Sondland: (22:03)

Yeah, it sounds like something I would say. That's how President Trump and I communicate, a lot of four letter words. In this case, three letters.

Dan Goldman: (22:17)

Holmes then said that he heard President Trump ask "Is he," meaning Zelensky, going to do the investigation?" To which you replied, "He's going to do it." And then you added that President Zelensky will do anything that you, meaning President Trump, asked him to. Do you recall that?

Gordon Sondland: (22:38)

I probably said something to that effect because I remember the meeting, President Zelensky was very, solicitous is not a good word. He was just very willing to work with the United States and was being very amicable. And so putting it in Trump speak by saying "he loves your ass, he'll do whatever you want," meant that he would really work with us on a whole host of issues.

Dan Goldman: (23:05)

He was not only willing, he was very eager, right?

Gordon Sondland: (23:09)

That's fair.

Dan Goldman: (23:10)

Because Ukraine depends on the United States as its most significant ally, isn't that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (23:15)

One of its most, absolutely.

Dan Goldman: (23:19)

Just so we understand, you were in Kiev the day after President Trump spoke to President Zelensky on the phone and you now know from reading the call record that in that phone call he requested a favor for President Zelensky to do investigations related to the Bidens and the 2016 election, right?

Gordon Sondland: (23:44)

I do now know that, yes.

Dan Goldman: (23:46)

And you met with President Zelensky and his aides on the day after that phone call and then you had a conversation with President Trump from your cell phone from a restaurant terrace, and he asked you whether President Zelensky will do the investigations. And you responded that he's going to do them or it, and that President Zelensky will do anything you ask them to do. Is that an accurate recitation of what happened there?

Gordon Sondland: (24:13)

It could have been words to that effect. I don't remember my exact response.

Dan Goldman: (24:18)

But you don't have any reason to dispute Mr. Holmes' recollection, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (24:22)

I won't dispute it, but again, I don't recall.

Dan Goldman: (24:26)

After you hung up with the President, Mr. Holmes testified about a conversation that you and he had, where he says that you told Mr. Holmes that the President does not care about Ukraine, but the President used the more colorful language including a four letter word that you just referenced to, you've just referenced. Do you recall saying that to Mr. Holmes?

Gordon Sondland: (24:52)

Again, I don't recall my exact words, but clearly the President beginning on May 23rd when we met with him in the Oval Office was not a big fan.

Dan Goldman: (25:03)

But he was a big fan of the investigations?

Gordon Sondland: (25:06)

Apparently so.

Dan Goldman: (25:08)

And in fact, Mr. Holmes said that you said that President Trump only cares about the "big stuff" that benefits himself. Is that something that you would have said at the time?

Gordon Sondland: (25:21)

I don't think I would have said that. I would have honestly said that he was not a big fan of Ukraine and he wants the investigations that we had been talking about for quite some time to move forward. That's what I would've said because that's the fact.

Dan Goldman: (25:36)

Mr. Holmes also remembers that you told him in giving an example of the big stuff, the Biden investigation that Rudy Giuliani was pushing. Do you recall that?

Gordon Sondland: (25:50)

I don't, I recall Burisma, not Biden.

Dan Goldman: (25:53)

But do you recall saying, at least referring to an investigation that Rudy Giuliani was pushing, is that something that you likely would have said?

Gordon Sondland: (26:01)

I would have, yes.

Dan Goldman: (26:05)

Now, even if you don't recall specifically mentioning the Biden investigation to David Holmes, we know that it was certainly on President Trump's mind. Because just the day before in his call with President Zelensky, he mentions specifically the Biden investigation. And I want to show you that exhibit or that excerpt from the call on July 25th, where President Trump says, "The other thing, 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."

Dan Goldman: (26:55)

President Zelensky then responds without reference to the company that he's referring to. And two witnesses yesterday said that when President Zelensky actually said the company, he said Burisma. So you would agree that regardless of whether you knew about the connection to the Bidens, at the very least, that you now know that that's what President Trump wanted at the time through the Burisma investigation.

Gordon Sondland: (27:24)

I now know it all, of course.

Dan Goldman: (27:26)

And at this time you were aware of the President's desire along with Rudy Giuliani to do these investigations, including the 2016 election interference investigation, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (27:38)

That's correct.

Dan Goldman: (27:40)

And you said President Trump had directed you to talk, you and the others to talk to Rudy Giuliani at the Oval Office on May 23rd, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (27:51)

If we wanted to get anything done with Ukraine, it was apparent to us we needed to talk to Rudy.

Dan Goldman: (27:55)

Right, you understood that Mr. Giuliani spoke for the President, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (28:00)

That's correct.

Dan Goldman: (28:03)

And in fact, President Trump also made that clear to President Zelensky in that same July 25th phone call, he said, "Mr. Giuliani is a highly respected man. He was the Mayor of New York city, a great mayor and I would like him to call you. I will ask him to call you along with the attorney general. Rudy very much knows what's happening and he is a very capable guy." And after this, President Trump then mentions Mr. Giuliani twice more in that call. Now from Mr. Giuliani by this point, you understood that in order to get that White House meeting that you wanted President Zelensky to have and that President Zelensky desperately wanted to have, that Ukraine would have to initiate these two investigations. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (28:55)

Well, they would have to announce that they were going to do it.

Dan Goldman: (28:58)

Right, because Giuliani and President Trump didn't actually care if they did them, right?

Gordon Sondland: (29:03)

I never heard, Mr. Goldman, anyone say that the investigations had to start or had to be completed. The only thing I heard from Mr. Giuliani or otherwise was that they had to be announced in some form and that form kept changing.

Dan Goldman: (29:19)

Announced publicly?

Gordon Sondland: (29:20)

Announced publicly.

Dan Goldman: (29:21)

And you of course, recognized that there would be political benefits to a public announcement as opposed to a private confirmation, right?

Gordon Sondland: (29:27)

Well, the way it was expressed to me was that the Ukrainians had a long history of committing to things privately and then never following through. So President Trump presumably, again communicated through Mr. Giuliani wanted the Ukrainians on record publicly that they were going to do these investigations. That's the reason that was given to me.

Dan Goldman: (29:47)

But you never heard anyone say that they really wanted them to do the investigations? Just that they want it to announce-

Gordon Sondland: (29:55)

I didn't hear either way.

Dan Goldman: (29:59)

Now your July 26th call with the President was not the only time that you spoke to the President surrounding that Ukraine trip, was it?

Gordon Sondland: (30:08)

I believe I spoke to him before his call.

Dan Goldman: (30:14)

So that would be on July 25th, the day before?

Gordon Sondland: (30:16)

Yeah, I think I was flying to Ukraine and I spoke with him, if I recall correctly just before I got on the plane.

Dan Goldman: (30:24)

So that's two private telephone calls with President Trump in the span of two days, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (30:29)

Correct.

Dan Goldman: (30:31)

You had direct access then to President Trump, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (30:34)

I had a occasional access when he chose to take my call. Sometimes he would, sometimes he wouldn't.

Dan Goldman: (30:40)

Well he certainly took your call twice as it related to Ukraine on these two days, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (30:44)

He did.

Dan Goldman: (30:47)

Now the morning of July 25th, you texted Ambassador Volker and we could bring up the next text exchange at 7:54 AM and you said, "Call ASAP." Ambassador Volker did not respond to you for another hour and a half and he said, "Hi Gordon, got your message, had a great lunch with Yermak and then passed your message to him. He will see you tomorrow. Think everything in place." Volker though, an hour before that and about a half an hour before the phone call, had texted Andriy Yermak, a top aid for President Zelensky and he wrote, "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."

Dan Goldman: (31:38)

Ambassador Sondland, was this message that Kurt Volker passed to Andryi Yermak the message you left for Kurt Volker on that voicemail that he referenced?

Gordon Sondland: (31:48)

You know, I don't remember Mr. Goldman, but it very well could have been.

Dan Goldman: (31:52)

You don't have any reason to think it wasn't, right?

Gordon Sondland: (31:54)

Again, I honestly, honestly don't remember, but seems logical to me.

Dan Goldman: (32:00)

And if Ambassador Volker testified that he did get that message from you, you have no reason-

Dan Goldman: (32:03)

And if Ambassador Volker testified that he did get that message from you, you have no reason to doubt that.

Gordon Sondland: (32:05)

No, if he testified that he got that message from me, then I would concur with that.

Dan Goldman: (32:09)

So, is it fair to say that this message is what you received from President Trump in that phone call that morning?

Gordon Sondland: (32:14)

Again, if he testified to that to refresh my own memory, then yes, it's likely I would have received that from President Trump.

Dan Goldman: (32:21)

But the sequence certainly makes sense, right?

Gordon Sondland: (32:23)

Yeah, it does.

Dan Goldman: (32:24)

You talked to President Trump, you told Kurt Volker call you, you left a message for Kurt Volker. Kurt Volker sent this text message to Andrei Yermak to prepare Presidents Zelensky, and then President Trump had a phone call where President Zelensky spoke very similar to what was in this text message. Right?

Gordon Sondland: (32:42)

Right.

Dan Goldman: (32:43)

And you would agree that the message in this, that is expressed here is that President Zelensky needs to convince Trump that he will do the investigations in order to nail down the date for a visit to Washington, DC. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (32:58)

That's correct.

Dan Goldman: (33:04)

Now, I'm going to move ahead in time to the end of August and early September when you came to believe, I believe as you testified, that it wasn't just the White House meeting that was contingent on the announcement of these investigations that the president wanted, but security assistance as

well. You testified that in the absence of any credible explanation for the hold on security assistance, you came to the conclusion that like the White House visit, the aid was conditioned on the investigations that President Trump wanted. Is that what you said in your opening statement?

Gordon Sondland: (33:39)

It is.

Dan Goldman: (33:41)

So, let me break this down with you. By this time you, and many top officials, knew that that coveted White House meeting for President Zelensky was conditioned on these investigations, right?

Gordon Sondland: (33:55)

The announcement of the investigations, correct.

Dan Goldman: (33:56)

Thank you. And that includes Secretary Pompeo right?

Gordon Sondland: (34:01)

Many, many people.

Dan Goldman: (34:03)

And well, Secretary Pompeo?

Gordon Sondland: (34:04)

Yes.

Dan Goldman: (34:05)

And acting chief of staff Mulvaney.

Gordon Sondland: (34:06)

Yes.

Dan Goldman: (34:08)

And you testified that this was a quid pro quo, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (34:11)

I did.

Dan Goldman: (34:12)

And you, at this point by the end of August, knew that the aide had been held up for at least six weeks. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (34:19)

I believe I found out through Ambassador Taylor that the aid had been held up around July 18th, is when I heard originally.

Dan Goldman: (34:28)

And even though you searched for reasons, you were never given a credible explanation, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (34:34)
That's right.

Dan Goldman: (34:35)
And no one you spoke to thought that the aid should be held to your knowledge, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (34:41)
I never heard anyone advocate for holding the aid.

Dan Goldman: (34:45)
And now, by this point, at the end of August it went public and the Ukrainians knew about it. Right?

Gordon Sondland: (34:51)
I believe there was some press reports, you know, presuming or who knows, but I think at that point it became sort of common knowledge that everything might be tied together.

Dan Goldman: (35:02)
And in fact, President Zelensky brought it up at that September 1st meeting with Vice President Pence that you were at. Right?

Gordon Sondland: (35:08)
I don't know if he brought it up specifically, but asked where the aid was I think was more ... I think he sort of asked, again, very vague recollection because I don't have a readout of the bilateral meeting, but why don't I have my check, essentially?

Dan Goldman: (35:25)
And you understood the Ukrainians received no credible explanation, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (35:31)
I certainly didn't, couldn't give them one.

Dan Goldman: (35:33)
So, is this kind of a two plus two equals four conclusion that you reached?

Gordon Sondland: (35:39)
Pretty much.

Dan Goldman: (35:41)
Is the only logical conclusion to you that, given all of these factors, that the aid was also a part of this quid pro quo?

Gordon Sondland: (35:48)
Yep.

Dan Goldman: (35:51)
Now, I want to go back to that conversation that you had with Vice President Pence right before that meeting in Warsaw. You indicated that you said to him that you were concerned that the delay in the aid was tied to the issue of investigations. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (36:10)

I don't know exactly what I said to him. This was a briefing attended by many people and I was invited at the very last minute. I wasn't scheduled to be there, but I think I spoke up at some point late in the meeting and said, "It looks like everything is being held up until these statements get made." And that's my personal belief.

Dan Goldman: (36:31)

And Vice President Pence just nodded his head?

Gordon Sondland: (36:34)

Again, I don't recall any exchange or where he asked me any questions. I think he, it was sort of a duly noted.

Dan Goldman: (36:41)

Well he didn't say, "Gordon, what are you talking about?"

Gordon Sondland: (36:44)

No, he did not.

Dan Goldman: (36:45)

He didn't say, "What investigations?"

Gordon Sondland: (36:49)

He did not.

Dan Goldman: (36:54)

Now, after this meeting, you discussed this a pull aside, you had with Mr. Yermak where you relayed your belief that they needed to announce these investigations prior to the aid being released. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (37:09)

I said I didn't know exactly why, but this could be a reason.

Dan Goldman: (37:16)

And obviously you had been speaking with Mr. Yermak for quite a while about a public announcement of these investigations. Right?

Gordon Sondland: (37:22)

We had all been working on toward that end, yeah.

Dan Goldman: (37:25)

And so, you indicated to him that in addition to the White House meeting, security aid was now also involved in that.

Gordon Sondland: (37:32)

As I said, I said it could have been involved, yes.

Dan Goldman: (37:35)

Now, I'm going to show you another text exchange you had on September 1st where Ambassador Taylor says to you, "Are we now saying that security assistance and White House meeting are conditioned on investigations?" And you respond, "Call me." Ambassador Taylor recalls that he did call you and you did have a conversation, and in that conversation you told Ambassador Taylor that

the announcement of these investigations by President Zelensky needed to be public and that that announcement was conditioned on, that announcement would ultimately release the aid. Do you recall that conversation with Ambassador Taylor?

Gordon Sondland: (38:21)

Again, my conversation with Ambassador Taylor, my conversation with Senator Johnson were all my personal belief just based on, as you put it, two plus two equals four.

Dan Goldman: (38:32)

Well, in his testimony, Ambassador Taylor says that you said that President Trump had told you that he wanted President Zelensky to state publicly as of September 1st. Do you have any reason to doubt Ambassador Taylor's testimony, which he said was based on his meticulous contemporaneous notes?

Gordon Sondland: (38:52)

President Trump never told me directly that the aid was conditioned on the meetings. The only thing we got directly from Giuliani was that the Burisma and 2016 elections were conditioned on the White House meeting. The aid was my own personal, guess based again on your analogy, two plus two equals four.

Dan Goldman: (39:18)

So, you didn't talk to President Trump when Ambassador Taylor says that that's what you told him? Is that your testimony here?

Gordon Sondland: (39:24)

My testimony as I never heard from President Trump that aid was conditioned on an announcement of elections.

Dan Goldman: (39:32)

So, you never heard those specific words-

Gordon Sondland: (39:35)

Correct.

Dan Goldman: (39:35)

Right? But-

Gordon Sondland: (39:36)

Never heard those words.

Dan Goldman: (39:37)

And, well, let's move ahead because you have another conversation a little bit later that both Tim Morrison and Ambassador Taylor recount. But in this September 1st conversation, Ambassador Taylor also testified under oath that you said that President Trump wanted Zelensky in a public box. Do you recall using that expression?

Gordon Sondland: (40:02)

Yeah. It goes back to my earlier comment that again, coming from the Giuliani source, because we didn't discuss this specifically with president Trump, that they wanted whatever commitments Ukraine made to be made publicly so that they would be on the record and be held more accountable. Whatever those commitments were.

Dan Goldman: (40:23)

You also testified, or Ambassador Taylor rather, testified that you told him that you had made a mistake in telling the Ukrainians that only the White House meeting was conditioned on the announcement of the investigations, and that in fact everything was, including the security assistance. Do you remember saying that?

Gordon Sondland: (40:42)

When I referenced a mistake, what I recall was I thought that a statement made by the new Ukrainian prosecutor, that these investigations would be started up again or commenced, would be sufficient to satisfy Mr. Giuliani/ President Trump. As I recall, my mistake was, someone came back through Volcker otherwise and said, "No, it's not going to do if the prosecutor makes these statements. The president wants to hear it from Zelensky directly." That's the mistake I think I made.

Dan Goldman: (41:17)

Do you have any reason to question Ambassador Taylor's testimony based on his meticulous and careful contemporaneous notes?

Gordon Sondland: (41:23)

I'm not going to question or not question. I'm just telling you what I believe I was referring to.

Dan Goldman: (41:30)

Let me fast forward a week and show you another text exchange which may help refresh your recollection. On September 8th, you sent a text to Ambassador Taylor and Ambassador Volker. Can you read what you wrote there?

Gordon Sondland: (41:43)

"Guys, multiple convos with Zelensky POTUS. Let's talk."

Dan Goldman: (41:47)

And so, this was September 8th at 11:20 in the morning and Ambassador Taylor responds immediately, "Now is fine with me." And if we could go to the next exchange, Ambassador Taylor then, 15 minutes later says, "Gordon and I just spoke," or 20 minutes later rather, "I can brief you if you and Gordon don't connect," speaking to Ambassador Volker. Then Ambassador Taylor an hour later says, "The nightmare is they give the interview and don't get the security assistance. The Russians love it and I quit." You would agree that in this text message after you had spoken earlier, an hour earlier with Ambassador Taylor that he is linking the security assistance to this interview, this public announcement by President Zelensky. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (42:33)

Absolutely.

Dan Goldman: (42:34)

And in fact, Ambassador Taylor testified that you did have a conversation with him at that point, and that you told him that just as your text message indicates, you did have a conversation with President Trump prior to that text message. Does that help to refresh your recollection that you in fact spoke to President Trump at that time?

Gordon Sondland: (42:56)

Again, I don't recall President Trump ever talking to me about any security assistance ever. What this tells me, refreshing my memory, is that by the 8th of September it was abundantly clear to everyone that there was a link and that we were discussing the chicken and egg issue of, should the Ukrainians go out on a ledge and make the statement that President Trump wanted them to make and then they still don't get their White House visit and their aid, that would be really bad for our credibility. I think that's what he was referring to.

Dan Goldman: (43:36)

So, you do acknowledge you spoke to President Trump as you indicated in that text, right?

Gordon Sondland: (43:42)

If I said I did, I did.

Dan Goldman: (43:43)

And that after that conversation, you were still under the impression that the aid was contingent on these public announcements?

Gordon Sondland: (43:51)

I did not get that from President Trump, but I was under the impression that absolutely it was contingent-

Dan Goldman: (43:56)

Well, you weren't dissuaded then. Right? Because you still thought that the aid was conditioned on the public announcement of the investigations, after speaking to President Trump.

Gordon Sondland: (44:05)

By September 8th I was absolutely convinced it was.

Dan Goldman: (44:09)

And President Trump did not dissuade you of that in the conversation that you acknowledge you had with him?

Gordon Sondland: (44:14)

I don't ever recall, because that would have changed my entire calculus. If President Trump had told me directly, "I'm not-

Dan Goldman: (44:21)

That's not what I'm asking Ambassador Sondland. I'm just saying, you still believed that the security assistance was conditioned on the investigation after you spoke to President Trump? Yes or no.

Gordon Sondland: (44:31)

From a timeframe standpoint, yes.

Dan Goldman: (44:34)

Now, Ambassador Taylor also testified that, and Mr. Morrison, both of them testified, that you told them that President Trump said there was no quid pro quo, which you also included in that text message that you're referred. But then you went on and they had slight variations as to what you told them, but then you said that, to Ambassador Taylor, that President Zelensky himself, not the prosecutor general, needed to clear things up in public or there would be a stalemate, and Mr.

Morrison recounted something similar. You don't have any reason to doubt that both of their very similar recollections of the conversations they had with you, do you Ambassador Sondland?

Gordon Sondland: (45:15)

Let me break that down. Mr Goldman. The text, as I said, about the no quid pro quo was my effort to respond to Ambassador Taylor's concerns to go to President Trump. Apparently Ambassador Taylor had access to Secretary Pompeo, He did not have access to President Trump. So, I made the phone call. I said, what do you want? President Trump responded with what I put in the text and then I strongly encouraged Ambassador Taylor to take it up with the secretary, and he responded, "I agree," when I said that.

Gordon Sondland: (45:54)

As far as the other part of your question, relating to whether or not the prosecutor could make the statement or Zelensky could make the statement, I don't recall who told me, whether it was Volker, whether it was Giuliani or whether it was President Trump, "It's got to be Zelensky, it can't be the prosecutor." But that's what I relayed. Whoever I got that information from, I relayed that to, I believe, both Mr., Or, excuse me, Ambassador Taylor and to Mr. Morrison.

Dan Goldman: (46:23)

But as of September 9th you understood, did you not, that President Trump, either himself or through his agents, required that President Zelensky make a public announcement of the two investigations that President Trump cared about in order to get both the White House meeting and to release the security assistance. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (46:43)

I believe that is correct.

Dan Goldman: (46:45)

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Adam Schiff: (46:47)

That concludes our 45 minutes. I now recognize Mr. Nunes. Oh, okay. Why don't we take a five or 10 minute break.

Gordon Sondland: (46:55)

Thank you.

Adam Schiff: (54:35)

Now, in your opening statement, you confirm that there was-

Adam Schiff: (54:37)

This is your, this is what you said about your conversation with the president, so this is your words about what the president told you.

Gordon Sondland: (54:45)

This is the May 23rd meeting?

Adam Schiff: (54:48)

That's correct. "They are all corrupt. They're all terrible people. And you know, I don't want to spend any time with that." And he also said, "They tried to take me down."

Gordon Sondland: (54:59)

That's correct.

Adam Schiff: (55:02)

When they tried to take him down, I think any logical person that wants to do two plus two equals four games would say, that was in the 2016 election, wasn't it?

Gordon Sondland: (55:15)

I believe that's what he was referring to, yes. Right, ranking member.

Adam Schiff: (55:18)

So, during all this time, and remember in the spring, the Democrats' Russia hoax witch hunt is still ongoing. They're still claiming that President Trump is a Russian agent. They're out to get President Trump at the time. His personal attorney is then interested in trying to figure out, "Okay, who are these Ukrainians that are trying to get to my candidate?" As those of us, the Republicans on this committee, who are also trying to get to the bottom of who were the sources in the Steele dossier that the Democrats had paid for? The House Republicans wanted to know that all through the spring and even the summer of, and even as of today, we'd still like to know.

Adam Schiff: (56:01)

That's why we've subpoenaed the DNC operatives that they refuse to subpoena. We sent a letter this morning. I doubt we'll see those subpoenas. We want to know exactly, get to the bottom of exactly who are these democratic operatives that were dirtying up the Trump campaign in 2016. And they just can't get over that the president would send his personal attorney over there to try and get to the bottom of that. And Ambassador, you had very few dealings with Rudy Giuliani, a few text messages ...

Gordon Sondland: (56:32)

A few text messages and a few phone calls. Right.

Adam Schiff: (56:36)

So, the whistleblower, trying to put together here with their timeline, they seem to have a timeline problem, because the whistleblower that only they know, who they won't subpoena, who clearly Mr. Vindman knows who they block testimony yesterday from and would not allow Mr. Vindman to answer our questions. That whistleblower says on July 25th that there were all these promises being made. Yet the ... I forgot what they call it, the drug deal that the three amigos were cooking up seems to be their latest, you're part of the three amigos and the drug deal, Ambassador. Were you aware of any drug deal on July 25th when the phone call actually occurred?

Gordon Sondland: (57:25)

I don't know about any drug deal.

Adam Schiff: (57:27)

Right, and did you know you're a part of the three Amigos?

Gordon Sondland: (57:31)

I am. I am a proud part of the three Amigos.

Adam Schiff: (57:33)

And that's the same thing Ambassador Volker said yesterday. Because, by the time the phone call that supposedly the whistleblower claims was the reason, was the original quid pro quo has now got

down to, we're now a month later where you're involved and their quid pro quo has gotten down to down to the low level of, "Well, they want a statement." And you didn't even know about anything to do with, on July 25th you knew nothing about military aid being withheld.

Gordon Sondland: (58:08)

I knew military aid was withheld beginning, I believe, on July 18th when Ambassador Taylor told both of us that that was the case.

Adam Schiff: (58:17)

But on July, but you don't know about, you are not on the July 25th call.

Gordon Sondland: (58:20)

I was not.

Adam Schiff: (58:21)

Where the aid doesn't come up at all.

Gordon Sondland: (58:25)

Again, I just read the readout when everyone else did-

Adam Schiff: (58:28)

We've had, everybody's testified that was on the July 25th call, that there was no aid discussed on the July 25th call. So then, you're in the process, you have no idea that this is tied to Burisma or anybody else. You say you don't realize that until end of August.

Gordon Sondland: (58:46)

I didn't realize that aid was tied. The Burisma and 2016 piece was much earlier, ranking member.

Adam Schiff: (58:57)

I'm glad you bring up Burisma, because this is another issue that the Democrats don't want to go into. They refuse to call in Hunter Biden. Hunter Biden could get to the bottom of all of this. He could come in and talk about whether or not it was appropriate for him to receive over \$50,000 a month while his dad was vice president, and when they actually were able to stop and get an investigator fired. They could call in Hunter Biden, but they don't want to do it. But, let's talk about Burisma, Ambassador. I know you're the Ambassador to the EU. I think some of the members later we'll get into whether or not it was appropriate for you to be in Ukraine or not. I believe it was. I think you have a clear mandate to do it. But you wouldn't be the first Ambassador to actually be interested in Burisma. Did you know that in September, 2015 then Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt publicly called for an investigation into Zlochevsky, the president of Burisma? This was the Ukrainian Ambassador appointed by president Obama in Ukraine.

Gordon Sondland: (01:00:11)

I wasn't aware of that, no.

Adam Schiff: (01:00:12)

You were not aware of it. So, you would not be the first one to be mentioning that investigation should be done on Burisma, because it happened during the Obama administration. Did you know that financial records show Burisma routed more than \$3 million to the American accounts tied to Hunter Biden?

Gordon Sondland: (01:00:33)

I did not know that.

Adam Schiff: (01:00:34)

Did you know that Burisma's American lawyers tried to secure a meeting with a new state prosecutor the same day his predecessor, Victor Shokin, who the vice president wanted fired, was announced?

Gordon Sondland: (01:00:48)

Did not know that.

Adam Schiff: (01:00:52)

Well, we're not going to get to the answer to many of these questions because the witnesses that need to come in and clarify exactly what the Democrats were doing in 2016, we're not going to be able to visit with those witnesses. And so, it's an inconvenient truth that the Democrats don't want to admit. It was their operatives that were dirtying up the Trump campaign using Ukrainian sources in 2016, and they do not want us to get to the bottom of it. They don't want you, Ambassador, to get to the bottom of it. They don't want the president's personal attorney, even though he's under a special council investigation that they fed into the FBI, that we've dealt with for over three years, they don't want to get you to the bottom of that, Ambassador. I think Mr. Castor has some questions for you.

Mr. Castor: (01:01:43)

Thank you, Mr. Nunes. Good morning, Ambassador. How are you?

Gordon Sondland: (01:01:46)

Good morning, Mr. Castor.

Mr. Castor: (01:01:48)

Welcome back. You're here all day on the 17th, late into the night, so thank you for your cooperation with the investigation. Did the president ever tell you personally about any preconditions for anything?

Gordon Sondland: (01:02:00)

No.

Mr. Castor: (01:02:01)

Okay, so the president never told you about any preconditions for the aid to be released?

Gordon Sondland: (01:02:06)

No.

Mr. Castor: (01:02:07)

The president never told you about any preconditions for a White House meeting?

Gordon Sondland: (01:02:11)

Personally, no.

Mr. Castor: (01:02:14)

You said you didn't have your records or your documents from the State Department, but if you did, there wouldn't be any document or record that ties president Trump personally to any of this. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:02:24)
I don't want to speculate what would be-

Mr. Castor: (01:02:26)
Your documents or records.

Gordon Sondland: (01:02:28)
I don't recall anything like-

Mr. Castor: (01:02:29)
okay, good heavens. Okay, you testified Mr. Giuliani's requests for a quid pro quo for the White House meeting, and you indicated that you believe that was, he was evincing President Trump's interests, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:02:51)
My contact with Mr. Giuliani began, as I said, very late in the process after August 1st, when I was first introduced to him by a text from Ambassador Volker. So, we had already begun those discussions, I believe, with the Ukrainians prior to August 1st, so everything was being funneled through others, including Mr. Volker.

Mr. Castor: (01:03:12)
Okay, but you testified that Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the president. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:03:19)
That's our understanding, yes.

Mr. Castor: (01:03:22)
But, how did you know that? Who told you?

Gordon Sondland: (01:03:23)
Well, when the president says, "Talk to my personal attorney," and then Mr. Giuliani, as his personal attorney, makes certain requests or demands, we assume it's coming from the president. I'm not testifying that I heard the president tell Mr. Giuliani to tell us. So, if that's your question ...

Mr. Castor: (01:03:42)
Right, but at your deposition, you said the question was at the May 23rd meeting, when the president said, "Go talk to, go talk to Rudy," you responded, "He didn't even say go talk. [inaudible 01:03:55] talk to Rudy." You subsequently said, "It was sort of like, I don't want to talk about this." So, it wasn't an order or a direction to go talk with ...

Mr. Castor: (01:04:03)
I want to talk about this. So it wasn't an order or a direction to go talk with Mr. Giuliani, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:04:06)
Our conclusion and the conclusion of the three of us was that if we did not talk to Rudy, nothing would move forward on Ukraine.

Mr. Castor: (01:04:13)
Okay. And then that was May 23rd and then you never had any personal communications with Giuliani until August, right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:04:19)
That's correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:04:21)
And Volcker was handling, Ambassador Volker was he the primary- [crosstalk 01:04:25].

Gordon Sondland: (01:04:26)
Volker, Perry and others.

Mr. Castor: (01:04:27)
Okay. Ambassador Volker, you testified he's a professional diplomat, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:04:35)
Yes, he is.

Mr. Castor: (01:04:35)
And you said you had a great relationship with him?

Gordon Sondland: (01:04:38)
I do, yes.

Mr. Castor: (01:04:39)
You said he was a very smart guy.

Gordon Sondland: (01:04:41)
Yes.

Mr. Castor: (01:04:42)
Ambassador Ivanovich said he's a brilliant diplomat in fact. Do you agree with that?

Gordon Sondland: (01:04:47)
He is pretty, pretty smart.

Mr. Castor: (01:04:49)
You stated that he's one of those people I'd hand my wallet too.

Gordon Sondland: (01:04:54)
I would.

Mr. Castor: (01:04:56)
And so did you hear his testimony yesterday?

Gordon Sondland: (01:04:58)
I did not.

Mr. Castor: (01:04:58)
Okay. Because he didn't-

Gordon Sondland: (01:05:00)
I was busy getting ready for you.

Mr. Castor: (01:05:03)

He didn't have any, he didn't have any evidence of any of these preconditions. And he was the one most engaged with the Ukrainians, wasn't he?

Gordon Sondland: (01:05:12)

Yes.

Mr. Castor: (01:05:13)

Okay. I mean, you testified and you know this was his full time job, although he was doing it for free.

Gordon Sondland: (01:05:18)

He was the special envoy.

Mr. Castor: (01:05:20)

And you testified you came in and out of the events, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:05:24)

That's correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:05:25)

Okay. All right. Your deposition and we asked you about your communications with the President and we asked you whether there were so many that it would be impossible to chronicle and you said no, it wasn't that many, and we went down the path of building a list of communications you remember with the President, right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:05:49)

Correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:05:50)

And we talked about May 23rd and the Oval Office.

Gordon Sondland: (01:05:53)

Yes.

Mr. Castor: (01:05:54)

You mentioned on July 25th before you went to Ukraine, you called the President, but there was no material information on the 25th call, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:06:03)

Not that I recall.

Mr. Castor: (01:06:04)

Okay. Then the last Friday, Mr. Holmes came in and I guess his testimony refreshed your recollection?

Gordon Sondland: (01:06:12)

Yeah. What refreshed my recollection was when he mentioned ASAP Rocky. Then all of a sudden it came back to me.

Mr. Castor: (01:06:19)

And talking about President Zelensky loving the President and so forth.

Gordon Sondland: (01:06:24)

Well, the whole thing sort of came back to me after he mentioned ASAP Rocky.

Mr. Castor: (01:06:28)

And then the next time, you know, we tried to unpack this, the next time you talked with the President was on the telephone was September 9th according to your deposition, right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:06:39)

I may have even spoken to him on September 6th but again, I just don't have all the records. I wish I could get them. Then I could answer your questions very easily.

Mr. Castor: (01:06:48)

Okay. But in September 9th at least at your deposition, you were extremely clear, you've called the President, you said he was feeling cranky that day. Right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:06:56)

He seemed very cranky to me.

Mr. Castor: (01:06:57)

And you said in no uncertain terms, and this is on the heels of the Bill Taylor text, right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:07:03)

Right.

Mr. Castor: (01:07:04)

And why don't you tell us, what did the President say to you on September 9th that you remember?

Gordon Sondland: (01:07:11)

Well, words to the effect. I decided to ask the President the question in an open ended fashion because there were so many different scenarios floating around as to what was going on with Ukraine. So rather than ask the President nine different questions, is it this? Is it this? Is it that? I just said, what do you want from Ukraine? I may have even used a four letter word and he said, "I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. I just want Zelensky to do the right thing, to do what he ran on" or words to that effect. And that gave me the impetus to respond to Ambassador Taylor with the texts that I sent. As I said to Mr. Goldman, it was not an artfully written text. I should've been more specific, put it in quotes, something like that. But basically I wanted Mr. Taylor, Ambassador Taylor to pick up the ball and take it from there. I had gone as far as I could go.

Mr. Castor: (01:08:08)

And you believe the President, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:08:11)

You know what? I'm not going to characterize whether I believed or didn't believe. I was just trying to convey what he said on the phone.

Mr. Castor: (01:08:16)

Okay. And at that point in time the aid was paused for 55 days. There was a news article in Politico on August 28th talking about it. So by that point in time, the President had been receiving calls from senators. He had been getting pressure to lift the aid, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:08:37)
That's what I understand. Yes.

Mr. Castor: (01:08:42)
I want to turn back to your opener on page five under, when you talk about in the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I later came to believe that the resumption of security aid would not occur until there was a public statement from Ukraine committing to the investigations, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:09:05)
Correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:09:06)
And you acknowledge that this is speculation, right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:09:11)
It was a presumption.

Mr. Castor: (01:09:13)
Okay. That it was a guess. In fact, I think you even said this morning-

Gordon Sondland: (01:09:18)
Well, I want to say that it goes back to Mr. Goldman's point or Chairman Schiff's two plus two equaled four in my mind at that point.

Mr. Castor: (01:09:27)
Okay. But you didn't have any evidence of that, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:09:30)
Other than the aid wasn't being released and we weren't getting anywhere with the Ukrainians.

Mr. Castor: (01:09:34)
Okay. But did it Ambassador Volker clue you in that that was the issue? I mean this is a pretty high, I mean this is a pretty serious conclusion you've reached without precise evidence.

Gordon Sondland: (01:09:46)
Well, I sent that email to Secretary Pompeo to set up a potential meeting between President Trump and President Zelensky in Warsaw. And when I referred to the log jam, I referred to the logjam in a very inclusive way. Everything was jammed up at that point. And secretary Pompeo essentially gave me the green light to brief President Zelensky about making those announcements.

Mr. Castor: (01:10:17)
Okay, we can turn to that. And then that was your email dated what date?

Gordon Sondland: (01:10:26)
Do you have the page there?

Mr. Castor: (01:10:29)

Well, your email with secretary Pompeo, is that, was that August 11th? 16th.

Gordon Sondland: (01:10:43)

August 22nd.

Mr. Castor: (01:10:51)

Okay. So you're asking secretary Pompeo whether we should block time and I mean, is there any discussion of specific investigations? Is there any discussion of Biden or Barisma or anything linking to aid in this email that you sent to Pompeo? [crosstalk 01:11:06].

Gordon Sondland: (01:11:04)

This was a proposed briefing that I was going to give President Zelensky and I was going to call President Zelensky and ask him to say what is in this email. And I was asking essentially President Pompeo's permission to do that, which he said yes.

Mr. Castor: (01:11:27)

But at that point in time, we're talking about investigations into the origins of the 2016 election. We're not talking about anything to do with Joe Biden.

Gordon Sondland: (01:11:37)

Joe Biden did not come up.

Mr. Castor: (01:11:38)

Okay. Stepping back a page to your email to the state department on August 11th, you emailed Secretary Pompeo and you say, "Kurt and I negotiated a statement from Zelensky to be delivered for our review in a day or two." And the question I have here is that, I mean that statement never was issued. And in fact, Ambassador Volker has testified that he didn't think it was a good idea and ultimately the Ukrainians didn't think it was a good idea. And so the statement never reached a finalized state.

Gordon Sondland: (01:12:17)

That's correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:12:19)

But even if it had it doesn't talk about Biden's or Barisma or anything insidious.

Gordon Sondland: (01:12:26)

Correct. Well, the statement as I recall, would have mentioned the 2016 election slash DNC server and Barisma.

Mr. Castor: (01:12:35)

Okay.

Gordon Sondland: (01:12:35)

It would not have mentioned the Bidens.

Mr. Castor: (01:12:37)

And have you heard Ambassador Volker how he talks about what might be an investigation into Barisma?

Gordon Sondland: (01:12:43)

No.

Mr. Castor: (01:12:43)

Okay. I mean he has said that if there were Ukrainians engaged in violations of Ukrainian law, then the prosecutor general with the new administration ought to investigate that. Did Ambassador Volker ever relate that to you?

Gordon Sondland: (01:13:03)

No, we just talked in generic terms about quote investigating Barisma.

Mr. Castor: (01:13:08)

Okay. But it had nothing to do with the Vice President Biden.

Gordon Sondland: (01:13:10)

I had never heard Vice President Biden come up until very late in the game.

Mr. Castor: (01:13:15)

When?

Gordon Sondland: (01:13:16)

I don't recall the exact date. But when it all sort of came together, maybe after the transcript of the July 25th call, I don't know. I don't know the exact date when I made the connection.

Mr. Castor: (01:13:26)

Okay.

Gordon Sondland: (01:13:28)

Apparently a lot of people did not make the connection.

Mr. Castor: (01:13:31)

Okay. I want to turn to the letter from Senator Johnson. When he heard about some of these issues in the hold of the aid he wanted, he called the President. He called the President on August 31st it's page six of his letter. Senator Johnson states or he rights, "I asked him, the President whether there was some kind of arrangement where Ukraine would take some action and the hold would be lifted. Without hesitation, President Trump immediately denied such an arrangement existed." And Senator Johnson quotes the President saying, "No," and he prefaced it with a different word. "No way. I would never do that. Who told you that? I have," Senator Johnson says, "I have accurately characterize the President's reaction is adamant, vehement and angry." Senator Johnson's telephone call with the President wasn't a public event. It was capturing a genuine, you know, moment with the President. And he had at this point in time on August 31st he was adamant, vehement and angry that there was no connections to aid. There were no preconditions.

Gordon Sondland: (01:14:48)

Yeah, I had my meeting with Senator Johnson where again, I had made the presumption that I had made to both Mr. Urmach and the email I had sent to secretary Pompeo and we were sort of ruminating about what was going on. Senator Johnson I believe said, "I'm going to call President Trump, you know, and find out." And then he obviously had that phone call. I wasn't involved in that phone call.

Mr. Castor: (01:15:12)

Okay. But you have no reason to disbelieve that wasn't the way it went down, right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:15:17)

No, no reason to disbelieve Senator Johnson.

Mr. Castor: (01:15:20)

And now that you've had some time since your deposition and you submitted an addendum relating to the Warsaw get together with Mr. Urmach, as you sit here today, I mean, are we missing a lot of your communications with the President?

Gordon Sondland: (01:15:38)

I haven't had that many communications with the President. And in fact a bunch of the call records that I have had access to just the short period of time on the call indicates I never got through. In other words, I was put on hold for one or two minutes and the call never connected. So I really can't give you an accurate count of how many conversations plus Mr. Caster, I've had a lot of conversations with the President about completely unrelated matters that have nothing to do with Ukraine.

Mr. Castor: (01:16:05)

But you don't think we're missing any material conversations that you have with the President?

Gordon Sondland: (01:16:10)

I don't recall any material conversations today as I'm sitting here.

Mr. Castor: (01:16:14)

Or with Rudy Giuliani.

Gordon Sondland: (01:16:16)

Yeah. My memory about the conversations with Rudy Giuliani, whether they were direct, whether they were conference calls with Ambassador Volker or Secretary Perry is really vague without seeing the, you know, the call logs.

Mr. Castor: (01:16:34)

Are there any other key fact witnesses that would help us, you know, get to the bottom of whether there was any link to the aid and the-

Gordon Sondland: (01:16:44)

Maybe Brian McCormack, the chief of staff for Secretary Perry who was involved in and out as well.

Mr. Castor: (01:16:50)

Okay. Now the aid was ultimately lifted on September 11th correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:17:00)

I believe that's correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:17:01)

Okay. And Senator Johnson in his letter on page six quotes the President on August 31st, "Ron, I understand your position. We're reviewing it now and you'll probably like my final decision." So even on August 31st and this is before any congressional investigation started, the President was signaling to Senator Johnson that he was going to lift the aid.

Gordon Sondland: (01:17:29)

[crosstalk 01:17:29] It sounds like it. Yeah.

Mr. Castor: (01:17:30)

Okay. And most of the other witnesses we talked to, whether it's from the Department of Defense or OMB or you know, have told us that all along during this 55 day period, they genuinely believed the hold would be lifted. What was that your feeling too at the time?

Gordon Sondland: (01:17:49)

I didn't know because every time I asked about the hold, I was never given a straight answer as to why it had been put in place to begin with.

Mr. Castor: (01:17:57)

Now what do you know about the Ukrainians knowledge of the hold?

Gordon Sondland: (01:18:01)

Oh, that's very vague, I don't know if the Politico article triggered it. I don't know if they were told by Mr. Giuliani, it would be pure, you know, guesswork on my part. Speculation. I don't know.

Mr. Castor: (01:18:14)

I mean during your deposition you testified that you did not believe the Ukrainians were aware of the hold until the Politico article.

Gordon Sondland: (01:18:28)

Yeah. Again, I think I testified that I was not clear on the exact dates of when these things, when the light went on. There were a lot of conversations going on with the Ukrainians by a lot of people. So I don't know who communicated what to them.

Mr. Castor: (01:18:45)

We have testimony from several witnesses that the President was concerned about foreign aid generally. And so he had an appetite to put holds on aid because he was trying to be a good steward of US tax payer dollars. Do you agree with that?

Gordon Sondland: (01:19:01)

I'm aware that that's been his position on aid and other matters. Yes.

Mr. Castor: (01:19:06)

And are you aware that he was also interested in better understanding the contributions of our European allies?

Gordon Sondland: (01:19:12)

That I'm definitely aware of.

Mr. Castor: (01:19:13)

And there was some back and forth between the state department officials trying to better understand that information for the President.

Gordon Sondland: (01:19:20)

Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:19:21)

And how do you know that wasn't the reason for the hold?

Gordon Sondland: (01:19:24)

I don't.

Mr. Castor: (01:19:26)

But yet you speculate that there was, you know, a link to this announcement?

Gordon Sondland: (01:19:34)

I presumed it, yes.

Mr. Castor: (01:19:35)

Okay. I want to turn quickly to the July 10th meeting, the July 10th meeting in Ambassador Bolton's office involving Ambassador Volker, Mr. [Dunnie Luk 00:15:57], Mr. Yara Mark has been the subject of some controversy. Ambassador Volker yesterday testified that it wasn't until the end of the meeting, Mr. Dunnie Luk said it was going through some real detailed information about some of the plans he had, but it wasn't until the end of the meeting, Ambassador Volker recollects that you mentioned something general about investigations. What do you remember from that meeting?

Gordon Sondland: (01:20:26)

Well, again, I'm not going to dispute Ambassador Volker's recollection, particularly if he had notes. I know that the desire to have the 2016 election DNC server and Barisma were already being discussed by then. Again, I had no direct contact with Mr. Giuliani on July 10th but through Ambassador Volker and I probably mentioned that this needs to happen in order to move the process forward. That seemed to be the conventional wisdom at the time. I don't recall any abrupt ending of the meeting or people storming out or anything like that. That would have been very memorable if someone had stormed out of a meeting based on something I said.

Mr. Castor: (01:21:15)

Okay. And nobody accused you at that point in time of being involved with some sort of drug deal?

Gordon Sondland: (01:21:20)

No.

Mr. Castor: (01:21:21)

Did Dr. Hill ever relate to you her concerns about you being involved in a drug deal?

Gordon Sondland: (01:21:25)

Never.

Mr. Castor: (01:21:26)

Okay. So you were surprised when testimony emerged that she thought there was a drug deal going on?

Gordon Sondland: (01:21:33)

I was shocked.

Mr. Castor: (01:21:33)

And in fact after the meeting you went out and you took a picture, right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:21:39)

Yeah, Ambassador Bolton or his assistant indicated that he was out of time, that he needed, he had another meeting to attend and we all walked out of the White House. Everyone was smiling, everyone was happy, and we took a picture on the lawn on a nice sunny day.

Mr. Castor: (01:21:55)

Okay. Then did you retire to the ward room?

Gordon Sondland: (01:22:00)

I think Secretary Perry asked to use the ward room to continue the conversation and the real subject that was under debate, and it wasn't a angry debate, it was a debate, is should the call from President Trump to President Zelensky be made prior to the parliamentary elections in Ukraine or after the parliamentary elections? And there was good reason for both. We felt Ambassador Perry, Ambassador Volker, and I thought it would help Presidents Zelensky to have President Trump speak to him prior to the parliamentary elections because it would give President Zelensky more credibility and ultimately he would do better with his people in the parliamentary elections. Others I believe, pushed back and said, no, it's not appropriate to do it before. It should be done after. And ultimately it was done after.

Mr. Castor: (01:22:56)

There was no mention of Vice President Biden in the ward room?

Gordon Sondland: (01:22:59)

Not that I remember, no.

Mr. Castor: (01:23:01)

Or any specific investigation?

Gordon Sondland: (01:23:04)

Just the generic investigations.

Mr. Castor: (01:23:09)

When again, did the Vice President Biden nexus come to your attention?

Gordon Sondland: (01:23:16)

Very late. Again, I don't, I can't recall the exact date the light bulb went on. It could have been as late as once the transcript was out, but it was always Barisma to me and I didn't know about the connection between Barisma and Biden.

Mr. Castor: (01:23:30)

And to the best of your knowledge, you never understood that anyone was asking Ukrainians to investigate US persons, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:23:38)

Ukrainians to investigate US persons?

Mr. Castor: (01:23:40)

Right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:23:43)

No.

Mr. Castor: (01:23:43)

Okay.

Gordon Sondland: (01:23:44)

No.

Mr. Castor: (01:23:48)

And just to sort of be clear here, ultimately the aid was lifted on September 11th. There was never any announcement by the Ukrainians about any investigations they were going to do, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:24:04)

Correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:24:05)

The Ukrainians never, to your knowledge, started any of these investigations, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:24:09)

Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Castor: (01:24:11)

And consequently, these allegations that there was a quid pro quo that had to be enforced before the aid is released, that never came to fruition, right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:24:28)

I don't believe so.

Mr. Castor: (01:24:40)

I want to just step back a little bit and just verify with you that the President had some deep rooted concerns about corruption in Ukraine, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:24:52)

That's what he expressed to us. Yes.

Mr. Castor: (01:24:53)

Okay. And you believed him, right? Given his business dealings in the region?

Gordon Sondland: (01:24:57)

When we had the conversation, I did.

Mr. Castor: (01:25:00)

And when you first started discussing the concerns the President had with corruption, Barisma wasn't the only company that was mentioned right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:25:11)

It was a generic, as I think I testified to Chairman Schiff, it was a generic corruption, oligarchs, just bad stuff going on in Ukraine.

Mr. Castor: (01:25:23)

But other companies came up, didn't they?

Gordon Sondland: (01:25:28)

I don't know if they were mentioned specifically. It might've been NAFTA gas because we were working on another issue with NAFTA gas. So that might've been one of them.

Mr. Castor: (01:25:39)

At one point in your deposition, I believe you said yeah, NAFTA gas comes up at every conversation. Is that fair?

Gordon Sondland: (01:25:44)

Probably.

Mr. Castor: (01:25:45)

Okay. You had, I guess Dr. Hill at one point, attributed to you the terminology that the President has given you a large remit. You familiar with her assertion of that?

Gordon Sondland: (01:26:03)

I didn't understand what she was talking about.

Mr. Castor: (01:26:04)

Okay. But you have and we got into this a little bit in your deposition, you know, you said that the President gave you a special assignment with regard to Ukraine, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:26:20)

Well, when the President appointed me as the US ambassador of the European Union, Ukraine was part of my portfolio. What made my assignment larger than just being part of my portfolio were the unique circumstances where there was no current sitting ambassador in Ukraine and there was a new President in Ukraine. The discussions that we had, the three amigos, Perry, Volker and I was that Ukraine needed extraordinary as high level support as it could get from the United States during this period, which we cleared with both Ambassador Bolton and with Chief Of Staff Mulvaney to continue working on it. So by extension, yes. If the national security advisor and the chief of staff approve your remit, it really is coming from the President.

Mr. Castor: (01:27:16)

Okay. When we asked you that at the deposition, you said I was spinning a little bit.

Gordon Sondland: (01:27:21)

I was spinning about something else I think in the interview in Kiev.

Mr. Castor: (01:27:26)

Okay, and you further testified, so when I said the President gave me an assignment, it wasn't really the President, it was the secretary through the President and that's where I received my direction. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:27:39)

Correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:27:40)

Okay. Did Ambassador Taylor ever bring any concerns to your attention about the so called channel he dubbed the irregular?

Gordon Sondland: (01:27:53)

No, in fact the opposite. When he came to post, I think I know I called him or he called me, I think he spoke with Secretary Perry and Ambassador Volker separately and in the course of the first few weeks he was highly appreciative that a new ambassador coming to post like himself was getting the kind of support he was getting from all three of us. Having a cabinet member, a special envoy, and a fellow ambassador all helping to raise the profile of Ukraine. He was highly appreciative and highly complimentary.

Mr. Castor: (01:28:31)

And you maintained an open line with him, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:28:35)

Correct. I think there are a number of texts, some of which I have and some of which I don't, where he is reaching out constantly to me and to the others for advice and help.

Mr. Castor: (01:28:44)

Okay. We had tried to count them up. There's 215 or something, text messages between you Volker and ambassador Taylor, you know, during the early August timeframe. Does that make sense to you?

Gordon Sondland: (01:29:01)

I think Taylor started in late June or early July was when he first took post and I think we began communicating fairly shortly thereafter.

Mr. Castor: (01:29:09)

Okay. And he never communicated any concerns to you during this timeframe that he had issues with what was going on?

Gordon Sondland: (01:29:17)

What do you mean by what was going on?

Mr. Castor: (01:29:19)

This request for some sort of investigation.

Gordon Sondland: (01:29:25)

Not in the early stages. As time went on, his emails began to be a little more pointed and frantic and that's when we had very little visibility as to what was going on either. I think it had to do more with the aid and as to why the aid was suspended.

Mr. Castor: (01:29:44)

Ultimately you put a period on that issue by having the September 9th communication with the President, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:29:53)

That's correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:29:53)

And when you shared that feedback with ambassador Taylor, was he satisfied that this issue is now behind them?

Gordon Sondland: (01:29:59)

I don't really know because he responded when I said, you know, get ahold of the secretary, he said, I agree. And I never knew whether he reached out to the secretary or not. That was sort of the end of that.

Mr. Castor: (01:30:10)

At one point in your text she said, let's get on the phone. Right. And you said you're an individual that doesn't like to walk through these issues on text when you can talk about it on the telephone, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:30:21)

I say that to everybody when something becomes more substantive than just a few lines of text, I say let's talk.

Mr. Castor: (01:30:28)

Okay. And did you talk with Ambassador Taylor?

Gordon Sondland: (01:30:30)

I don't recall. I mean, I don't recall whether we spoke right after that, whether he called the secretary. Basically, Mr. Castor wanted to get the notion across that I've gone as far as I can go with this, you to pick up the, you're the ambassador. You need to pick up the ball and run with it at this point.

Mr. Castor: (01:30:48)

Okay. And just getting back to the irregular channel, did anyone else express any concerns to you about this so called irregular channel?

Gordon Sondland: (01:30:56)

I'm not sure how someone could characterize something as an irregular channel. When you're talking to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, the Chief of Staff of the White House, the Secretary of Energy. I don't know how that's irregular. If a bunch of folks that are not in that channel are aggrieved for some reason for not being included, I don't know how they can consider us to be the irregular channel and they to be the regular channel when it's the leadership that makes the decisions.

Mr. Castor: (01:31:33)

And so the concerns, you know, raised were never brought to a head?

Gordon Sondland: (01:31:40)

Well, they were never raised.

Mr. Castor: (01:31:42)

Okay.

Gordon Sondland: (01:31:42)

They were never raised. No one's said back off of Ukraine, this is dangerous. You're doing something that's untoward. We have concerns. There was a bad phone call on July 25th, there's talk about a drug cocktail or something. No one ever said that to me by phone, by text, by email. I don't remember anybody sounding any alarm bell because of course had someone mentioned it, I would have sat up and taken notice.

Mr. Castor: (01:32:24)

When you talk in your statement about in the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I later came to believe, it was your speculation, it was your guess that the resumption of security aid would not occur until there was a public statement from Ukraine committing to the investigations of 2016. I believe you said that at this point you believed everyone knew this. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:32:50)

I think once that Politico article broke, it started making the rounds that, you know, if you can't get a White House meeting without the statement, what makes you think you're going to get a \$400 million check? Again that was my presumption.

Mr. Castor: (01:33:05)

Okay. But you had no evidence to prove that, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:33:10)

That's correct.

Mr. Castor: (01:33:17)

You stated that you haven't been able to access your records, is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:33:23)

Not all of them. And there are lots of notes, records, readouts of calls, can't get to them.

Mr. Castor: (01:33:31)

But you've also stated that you don't take notes. Right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:33:35)

I don't take notes, but there are a lot of others out there.

Mr. Castor: (01:33:41)

You freely admit that you, I asked you your deposition, we put together a list of all the times you said you don't recall. It's like two pages long.

Gordon Sondland: (01:33:52)

Is that all?

Mr. Castor: (01:33:53)

So, you know, you don't on a lot of these questions, I mean there's nuance, there are ambiguities and we don't have records, we don't have notes and we don't have recollections, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (01:34:03)

Right. I mean it's situational things that sort of trigger memory, especially when I'm, you know, I'm dealing with the European Union, I'm dealing with the 28 member countries. I'm dealing with other countries that are not in the European Union that are part of my mandate. I'm dealing with the White House leadership. There's a lot of stuff to juggle. And as I said in my opening statement, a phone call for me with the President of the United States or the President of fill in the blank country, while people who get a call like that, maybe once in a lifetime, a call like that might be very memorable. They might remember every single thing about it. I'm doing that all day long and I'm not saying it in a way of being braggadocio or anything like that, but it's part of my routine day. So all of these calls, these meetings with very important people tend to sort of blend together until I

have someone that can show me what we discussed, what the subject was, then all of a sudden it comes back.

Mr. Castor: (01:35:03)

I mean, what we're trying to get to the facts here, we're trying to find out what actually happened, what's reliable, what's accurate. Bill Taylor kept notes. He brought a little notebook in his pocket at his deposition and he held it up and he says, when I'm not at my desk and I'm on the phone, I use this notebook. When I'm at my desk, I use a notebook. George Kent said he wrote just innumerable memos to the file. Catherine Croft, she testified that she didn't believe George Kent's notes would be accurate. And so, you know, we have all this, you know, back and forth, but you know as we get to the end here, you don't have records. You don't have your notes because you didn't take notes. You don't have a lot of recollections. I mean, this is the like the trifecta of unreliability isn't that true?

Gordon Sondland: (01:35:49)

Well, what I'm trying to do today is to use the limited information I have to be as forthcoming as possible with you and the rest of the committee. And as these recollections had been refreshed by-

Gordon Sondland: (01:36:03)

And as these recollections had been refreshed by subsequent testimony by some texts and emails that I've now had access to, I think I filled in a lot of blanks.

Mr. Caster: (01:36:12)

But a lot of it's speculation, a lot of it is your guess and we're talking about an impeachment of the President United States. So the evidence here ought to be pretty darn good.

Gordon Sondland: (01:36:22)

I've been very clear as to when I was presuming and I was presuming on the aid, on the other things, Mr. Caster, I did have some texts that I read from. So when it comes to those, I'll rely on those texts because I don't have any reason to believe that those texts were falsely sent or that there's some subterfuge there. They are what they are. They say what they say.

Mr. Caster: (01:36:45)

Okay, thank you sir.

Gordon Sondland: (01:36:46)

Thank you.

Adam Schiff: (01:36:48)

Time of the gentleman has expired. We'll now move to a second staff led round of 30 minutes. Mr. Volker, I just have a few questions before I turn it back to Mr. Goldman. You testified in response to my colleagues in the minority something along the lines of, "A lot of people did not make the connection between Burisma and Biden." I think a lot of people have real difficulty understanding that. Tim Morrison testified that I think it took him all of doing a Google search to find out, "Oh, this is the significance of Burisma. It involves the Bidens." Are you saying during all this time, up until the call, you never made the connection between Burisma and the Bidens? You just thought that the president and Rudy Giuliani were interested in this one particular Ukrainian company?

Gordon Sondland: (01:37:43)

Again, my role Mr. Chairman was just to get the meeting.

Adam Schiff: (01:37:48)

I understand that, but my question is, are you saying that for months and months and I was standing everything Rudy Giuliani was saying on TV and all the discussion with Rudy Giuliani that you never put Burisma together with the Bidens?

Gordon Sondland: (01:38:03)

I didn't and I wasn't paying attention to what Mr. Giuliani was seeing on TV, we were talking to him directly.

Adam Schiff: (01:38:08)

Let me ask you this. Ambassador Volker testified yesterday to a similar epiphany, for lack of a better word. This is what he said, "In hindsight, I now understand that others saw the idea of investigating possible corruption involving the Ukrainian company Burisma as equivalent to investigating former Vice President Biden. I saw them as very different. The former being appropriate and unremarkable. The latter being unacceptable. In retrospect, I should have seen that connection differently and had I done so, I would have raised my own objections." Does that sum up your views as well?

Gordon Sondland: (01:38:47)

It does

Adam Schiff: (01:38:53)

Now I think you were asked a question with a bit of an incorrect premise by my colleagues in the minority about Fiona Hill saying that referring to a drug deal between you and Mr. Mulvaney was Ambassador Bolton who made the comment that he didn't want to be part of any drug deal that Ambassador Sondland and Mulvaney were cooking up. No one thinks they're talking about a literal drug deal here or a drug cocktail. The import I think of the ambassador's comments is quite clear that he believed that this bargain, this quid pro quo, as you've described it over a meeting, the investigations to get the meeting was not something he wanted to be a part of.

Adam Schiff: (01:39:45)

What I want to ask you about is he makes reference in that drug deal to a drug deal cooked up by you and Mulvaney. It's the reference to Mulvaney that I want to ask you about. You've testified that Mulvaney was aware of this quid pro quo of this condition that the Ukrainians had to meet that is announcing these public investigations to get the White House meeting. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:40:14)

Yeah. A lot of people were aware of it and-

Adam Schiff: (01:40:17)

Including about including Mr. Mulvaney?

Gordon Sondland: (01:40:20)

Correct.

Adam Schiff: (01:40:22)

And including the secretary of state?

Gordon Sondland: (01:40:24)

Correct.

Adam Schiff: (01:40:26)

Now, have you seen the acting chief of staff's press conference in which he acknowledged that the military aid was withheld in part because of a desire to get that 2016 investigation you've talked about?

Gordon Sondland: (01:40:44)

I don't think I saw it live. I saw later, yeah.

Adam Schiff: (01:40:48)

So you saw him acknowledged publicly what you have confirmed too that Mr. Mulvaney understood that two plus two equals four. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:40:56)

Well again, I didn't know that the aid was conclusively tied. I was presuming he was in a position to say yes it was or no it wasn't because-

Adam Schiff: (01:41:05)

And he said yes it was.

Gordon Sondland: (01:41:06)

He said yes it was.

Adam Schiff: (01:41:11)

Mr. Goldman.

Dan Goldman: (01:41:13)

Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you again Ambassador Sondland. We do appreciate your efforts to refresh your recollection to the documents and we understand we share your frustration in not having the documents to help guide this investigation. So we do appreciate those efforts. One of the documents that you provided to us goes back to the conversation you and the chairman were having about Mr. Mulvaney. and you had been trying for some time before the July 25th call to set up that call. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:41:48)

To set up the call between President Trump and President Zelensky, yes.

Dan Goldman: (01:41:52)

Correct. Yes. And I want to show you an email that you reference in your opening statement that is a July 19th email. And who is this from?

Gordon Sondland: (01:42:12)

It looks like it's... Is it from me? I don't know.

Dan Goldman: (01:42:16)

It's from you, I believe.

Gordon Sondland: (01:42:17)

It's from me to to the group.

Dan Goldman: (01:42:19)

Now who is the group?

Gordon Sondland: (01:42:23)

People mentioned on the email? Blair, Kenna, McCormack, Mulvaney, Perry, Pompeo.

Dan Goldman: (01:42:30)

And who's Robert Blair?

Gordon Sondland: (01:42:32)

I believe he's a deputy chief of staff or a advisor to the chief of staff.

Dan Goldman: (01:42:39)

And you've already told us that Lisa Kenna is the executive secretary for secretary Pompeo. Who's Brian McCormack?

Gordon Sondland: (01:42:46)

He was was the chief of staff for Secretary Perry.

Dan Goldman: (01:42:50)

And then we see Mr. Mulvaney, Secretary Perry and Secretary Pompeo. Can you read what you wrote on July 19th to this group please?

Gordon Sondland: (01:43:05)

He is prepared to receive POTUS' call will assure him that he intends to run a fully transparent investigation. We'll turn over every stone. He would greatly appreciate a call prior to Sunday so he can put out some media about a friendly and productive call. No details prior to Ukraine election on Sunday.

Dan Goldman: (01:43:25)

So Sunday was the 21st which was the date of the parliamentary elections in Ukraine. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:43:30)

That's right.

Dan Goldman: (01:43:31)

Okay. When you say, "Will assure him that he intends to run a fully transparent investigation and will, 'turn over every stone,'" what do you mean there?

Gordon Sondland: (01:43:43)

I'm referring to the Burisma and the 2016 / DNC server investigations.

Dan Goldman: (01:43:50)

Later that evening, Secretary Perry responds just to you and Brian McCormack saying, "Mick, just confirm the call being set up for tomorrow by NSCRP." And then a little later, Mr. Mulvaney replies to all saying, "I asked NSC to set it up for tomorrow." Were these the only responses that you received to this email?

Gordon Sondland: (01:44:17)

I don't know. If I have them, I would show them. I don't know.

Dan Goldman: (01:44:22)

No one wrote back to you and said, “What are you talking about in terms of these investigations and turning over every stone?”

Gordon Sondland: (01:44:28)

No, there was a chain, and I don't know if it's part of this email or a subsequent email where I believe Ambassador Bolton pushed back and said he did not want a call to President Zelensky made by President Trump until after the parliamentary elections.

Dan Goldman: (01:44:47)

So that would explain why it was moved from the next day, July 20th to the 25th right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:44:52)

That's right.

Dan Goldman: (01:44:53)

But Ambassador Bolton is not on this is he?

Gordon Sondland: (01:44:56)

I don't think he is, no.

Dan Goldman: (01:44:57)

Now you were asked by Mr. Caster if there are any other key witnesses who might be able to help with our investigation and you mentioned Brian McCormack. The chief of staff for Secretary Perry.

Gordon Sondland: (01:45:09)

I did.

Dan Goldman: (01:45:10)

You are aware that the committee subpoenaed him, are you not?

Gordon Sondland: (01:45:13)

I wasn't aware of that.

Dan Goldman: (01:45:14)

And that he refused to come testify. Are you also aware that Mr Mulvaney was subpoenaed by the committee and refused to come testify?

Gordon Sondland: (01:45:22)

I did read that in the newspaper, yes.

Dan Goldman: (01:45:24)

Are you also aware that Robert Blair was subpoenaed and refused to come testify?

Gordon Sondland: (01:45:29)

I think I'm aware of that, yeah.

Dan Goldman: (01:45:30)

And that Secretary Perry was asked to come testify and refused.

Gordon Sondland: (01:45:34)

I am aware of that as well.

Dan Goldman: (01:45:35)

So would you include them include as well as Secretary Pompeo as key witnesses that would be able to provide some additional information on this inquiry?

Gordon Sondland: (01:45:47)

I think they would.

Dan Goldman: (01:45:49)

Now this was not the first time, as you indicated, that Mr. Mulvaney heard about these investigations into Burisma and the 2016 election. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:46:05)

I don't know what Mr. Mulvaney heard or didn't hear. I think there's been a huge amount of exaggeration over my contact with Mr. Mulvaney. It was actually quite limited.

Dan Goldman: (01:46:16)

Well, he certainly didn't indicate... He certainly indicated a familiarity with what you were talking about in this July 19th email. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:46:23)

Right, because I think Mr. Mulvaney was in the May 23rd briefing with President Trump. I don't remember because there were people sitting behind us that were coming and going when we were sitting in front of President Trump's desk.

Dan Goldman: (01:46:37)

Okay. Now you've said that you don't have a recollection of referencing Mulvaney in the July 10th meeting and Ambassador Bolton's office. Is that right or-

Gordon Sondland: (01:46:48)

I don't recall.

Dan Goldman: (01:46:51)

So when both Fiona Hill and Colonel Vindman testified that in response to a question from Ukrainian officials at that July 10th meeting about scheduling a White House visit that you said, "Well I spoke with Mr. Mulvaney and it will be scheduled after they announce these investigations." Do you have any reason to dispute that characterization?

Gordon Sondland: (01:47:18)

I don't have any reason to agree or dispute. I just don't remember.

Dan Goldman: (01:47:21)

So if they both remembered it and they both then went and spoke to the NSC legal advisor about it, you would trust that whatever they relay to the NSC legal advisor would likely be an accurate reflection?

Gordon Sondland: (01:47:32)

Again, I trust that they related to the NSC legal advisor. I don't know whether I said it and I don't know which conversation... Again, I've had very, very limited conversations with Mr. Mulvaney.

Dan Goldman: (01:47:45)

This email indicates that you spoke to President Zelensky and were relaying what he said to very senior officials. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:47:56)
Which email again?

Dan Goldman: (01:47:57)
Sorry, the July 19th email. Where you say, the subject is, "I talked to Zelensky just now."

Gordon Sondland: (01:48:04)
Yes. I got it.

Dan Goldman: (01:48:08)
Was there some sort of assurance that President Zelensky needed to provide about what he would say to President Trump in order just to get the phone call?

Gordon Sondland: (01:48:23)
I think that part was verbal and then there were a lot of communications going around back and forth with the Ukrainians and that's when someone, and I don't remember who, came up with the idea of a draft statement, so there would be no misunderstanding about what in fact the Ukrainians would say and would be willing to say that we could rely on and negotiate something on a piece of paper.

Dan Goldman: (01:48:53)
So just to place you in time, we're going to get to that draft statement, which was in August, this is July 19th before the July 25th call. Do you remember whether there was a need from any of the White House officials or other national security officials for President Zelensky to provide some assurance of what he would say to President Trump before a phone call? Not the meeting, but a phone call was scheduled.

Gordon Sondland: (01:49:21)
There was initially apparently a condition, but that condition was obviously dropped because the phone call took place and there was no such statement made. The phone call took place as you said on the 25th of July.

Dan Goldman: (01:49:35)
And when you say there was no such statement that took place, what do you mean?

Gordon Sondland: (01:49:39)
Well the Ukrainians never made their public statement prior to the phone call on the 25th of July.

Dan Goldman: (01:49:45)
Right, but we're not talking about a public statement. What I was asking is whether President Zelensky needed to relay to you or the other American officials that he would assure President Trump that he would do these investigations in a phone call. That is-

Gordon Sondland: (01:50:05)
In my email, I obviously had just spoken with him and he being Zelensky, and he said that he was prepared to receive the call and he would make those assurances to President Trump on that call. And then presumably that would then lead to the White House meeting.

Dan Goldman: (01:50:26)

And you had been discussing this phone call for several weeks now, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:50:31)

Yes. With Volcker, with Perry, with Giuliani through Volcker and Perry.

Dan Goldman: (01:50:39)

And then right after you sent this email assuring the others that he will discuss the investigations and we'll turn over every stone, the Burisma in 2016 election investigations, Mr. Mulvaney responded that he asked to set up the call for the next day. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:50:59)

That's what it says.

Dan Goldman: (01:51:00)

Now let's go to that press statement that you were discussing in August and you testified, I believe, that you understood that Rudy Giuliani was representing the president's interests with regard to Ukraine. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:51:17)

That's what we all understood.

Dan Goldman: (01:51:19)

And when you all, who do you mean we all?

Gordon Sondland: (01:51:21)

Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, myself.

Dan Goldman: (01:51:26)

In August, you and Ambassador Volker were coordinating with Andriy Yermak, the Zelensky aid, about a press statement. And I want to pull up some of the text exchanges that you were referring to, which as you acknowledge, helps you refresh your recollection. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:51:46)

And I think Taylor was involved in those initial discussions as well.

Dan Goldman: (01:51:49)

Well, he's not on any of these text messages, so perhaps he was, he does not remember that. But let's go to the first one. Is it working? On August 9th? There's an exchange between Ambassador Volker and you where you are discussing setting up, we'll try to bring it up in a second, but I'll just summarize for you. You're discussing trying to set up a White House meeting. Here it is. And you say Morrison, "Ready to get dates as soon as Yermak confirms." Ambassador Volker says, "Excellent, how did you sway him?" You said, "Not sure I did. I think POTUS really wants the deliverable." What did you mean there?

Gordon Sondland: (01:52:40)

The commitment to do the investigations.

Dan Goldman: (01:52:43)

And how did you know that the president wanted the deliverable?

Gordon Sondland: (01:52:47)

I don't recall. I may have had a conversation with him or I may have heard it from someone else, but I don't recall. Again, without all these records.

Dan Goldman: (01:52:57)

Going to the next exhibit, exhibit 10, or August 10th rather. This is between you and Andriy Yermak. What did you say initially in this exchange?

Gordon Sondland: (01:53:13)

Hello? Good, my prop... Oh no, that's Yermak. "How was your conversation?"

Dan Goldman: (01:53:17)

And Mr. Yermak responds, "Hello, good. My proposal, we received date and then we make general statement with discussed things. Once we have a date, we'll call for a press briefing announcing upcoming visit and outlining vision for the reboot of U.S. Ukraine relationship, including among other things, Burisma and election meddling and investigations." And you respond, "Got it." That was your understanding of what the statement had to say to satisfy Mr. Giuliani, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:53:45)

Yes.

Dan Goldman: (01:53:45)

And then ultimately to satisfy the POTUS deliverable?

Gordon Sondland: (01:53:48)

Yes.

Dan Goldman: (01:53:50)

Now the next day you write an email to Ulrich Brechbuhl and Lisa Kenna. Are you able to see that on your-

Gordon Sondland: (01:54:05)

Yeah, I can see it on the screen, yeah.

Dan Goldman: (01:54:07)

Okay. What is the subject of the email?

Gordon Sondland: (01:54:12)

Ukraine.

Dan Goldman: (01:54:13)

And can you read what you wrote there?

Gordon Sondland: (01:54:17)

"Mike," and I'm referring to Secretary Pompeo, "Kurt and I negotiated a statement from Zelensky to be delivered for our review in a day or two. The contents will hopefully make the boss happy enough to authorize an invitation. Zelensky plans to have a big presser on the openness subject, including specifics next week."

Dan Goldman: (01:54:40)

And in your opening statement you said that the specifics... What did the specifics represent?

Gordon Sondland: (01:54:46)
The 2016 and the Burisma.

Dan Goldman: (01:54:49)
And when you say the boss, who do you mean by that?

Gordon Sondland: (01:54:51)
President Trump.

Dan Goldman: (01:54:52)
And the invitation is what?

Gordon Sondland: (01:54:54)
To the white house meeting.

Dan Goldman: (01:54:57)
And Lisa Kenner responds, "Gordon, I'll pass to S." And S is Secretary Pompeo?

Gordon Sondland: (01:55:02)
Correct.

Dan Goldman: (01:55:03)
Thank you, Lisa. Now two days later, you have a text exchange with Ambassador Volker again, and this is at the end of it, but the earlier text, which we don't have here, you may recall includes the press statement, the revised press statement that includes Burisma and the 2016 election. Do you recall that?

Gordon Sondland: (01:55:32)
Yes. If I could see it, that would be helpful. But yes.

Dan Goldman: (01:55:37)
But you ultimately remembered that after your conversation with Mr. Giuliani, you did pass along a statement to the Ukrainians that included Burisma and the 2016 election. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:55:49)
I think there were statements being passed back and forth between Volker, the Ukrainians, and others to try and negotiate acceptable language.

Dan Goldman: (01:55:59)
And ultimately the statement was not issued, was it?

Gordon Sondland: (01:56:01)
Correct.

Dan Goldman: (01:56:02)
And the White House meeting did not-

Gordon Sondland: (01:56:04)
Still hasn't occurred.

Dan Goldman: (01:56:05)

Still hasn't occurred. But you certainly understood at that time, did you not, that it was the President's direction and instruction that a White House meeting with presidents Zelensky would not occur until President Zelensky announced publicly the investigations that the president wanted, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:56:28)

That's correct.

Dan Goldman: (01:56:29)

And you now know that the investigations the president wanted, was an investigation into the Bidens and an investigation into the 2016 election?

Gordon Sondland: (01:56:37)

I know that now, yes.

Dan Goldman: (01:56:42)

I'm going to move ahead to August 22nd and you wrote an email to secretary Pompeo, directly to secretary Pompeo CC-ing Lisa Kenna with the subject of Zelensky. And could you please read what you wrote to secretary Pompeo?

Gordon Sondland: (01:57:05)

Mike, should we block time in Warsaw for a short pull aside for POTUS to meet Zelensky? I would ask Zelensky to look them in the eye and tell him that once Ukraine's new justice folks are in place mid September, Zelensky should be able to move forward publicly and with confidence on those issues of importance to POTUS and to the U.S. Hopefully that will break the log jam.

Dan Goldman: (01:57:32)

And secretary Pompeo responds to you three minutes later. "Yes." Now I want to unpack this a little bit. You said that in the middle, "Once Ukraine's new justice folks are in place." What did you mean by that?

Gordon Sondland: (01:57:49)

The new prosecutor that was going to be working for President Zelensky. The old prosecutor, I believe his term was up or he was being let go, he was the Poroshenko prosecutor and Zelensky wanted to wait until his person was in place.

Dan Goldman: (01:58:06)

So once that new prosecutor was in place, then Z, President Zelensky, "Should be able to move forward publicly and with confidence on those issues of importance to POTUS." What did you mean by those issues of importance to POTUS?

Gordon Sondland: (01:58:21)

Again, the 2016 election and Burisma investigation.

Dan Goldman: (01:58:24)

Were you aware at this time that secretary Pompeo had listened in to the July 25th phone call?

Gordon Sondland: (01:58:30)

I was not.

Dan Goldman: (01:58:31)

If he had, do you believe that he would fully understand what the issues of importance to POTUS related to Ukraine would be?

Gordon Sondland: (01:58:39)

I mean, I can't characterize his state of mind. He listened in on the phone call and he concluded what he concluded.

Dan Goldman: (01:58:46)

But now that you've read the phone call, it's quite clear what the issues of importance to POTUS are.

Gordon Sondland: (01:58:50)

Yes.

Dan Goldman: (01:58:51)

By an investigation and the 2016 election investigation. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:58:55)

That's correct.

Dan Goldman: (01:58:57)

Then it says, "Hopefully that will break the log jam." Now, by this point, you were aware that security assistance had been on hold for about five weeks. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:59:08)

I became aware on the 18th of July.

Dan Goldman: (01:59:11)

And you understood that there was a lot of activity within the state department and elsewhere to try to get that hold lifted. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (01:59:21)

That's right.

Dan Goldman: (01:59:22)

Just about everybody in the inner agency, meaning the national security apparatus, wanted to lift the hold and wanted the aid to go to Ukraine?

Gordon Sondland: (01:59:30)

Correct.

Dan Goldman: (01:59:32)

So what did you mean here when you said log jam?

Gordon Sondland: (01:59:35)

Well, as I said to chairman Schiff, I meant inclusively anything that was holding up moving forward on the meeting and the Ukraine U.S. relationship.

Dan Goldman: (01:59:48)

And what was holding that up?

Gordon Sondland: (01:59:50)

At that point, it was the statements about Burisma and the 2016 elections.

Dan Goldman: (01:59:59)

But what was being held up?

Gordon Sondland: (02:00:00)

Well, the aid was being held up, obviously

Dan Goldman: (02:00:04)

Four days later, you said in your opening statement that you sent Rudy Giuliani's contact information to John Bolton. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (02:00:11)

I did.

Dan Goldman: (02:00:11)

Did you know why he asked for that?

Gordon Sondland: (02:00:13)

No idea.

Dan Goldman: (02:00:14)

Did you know that he was going to Ukraine the next day?

Gordon Sondland: (02:00:17)

I knew he was about to go to Ukraine. I didn't know exactly when his trip was, but I thought it was kind of an odd request given that the White House can pretty much get anyone's phone number they want.

Dan Goldman: (02:00:29)

Now in this email to Secretary Pompeo, you reference a trip to Warsaw. Ultimately the Vice President went on that trip.

Gordon Sondland: (02:00:36)

That's correct.

Dan Goldman: (02:00:36)

And that was the conversation that you've talked about where you testified earlier to that where you said that we really need to get these investigations from Ukraine in order to release the aid in the pre meeting.

Gordon Sondland: (02:00:51)

That's right.

Dan Goldman: (02:00:53)

And Vice President Pence just nodded?

Gordon Sondland: (02:00:57)

He heard what I said.

Dan Goldman: (02:00:58)
And didn't respond in any way.

Gordon Sondland: (02:01:00)
I don't recall any substantive response.

Dan Goldman: (02:01:03)
Okay, but you never specifically referenced the Bidens or Burisma in that meeting, did you?

Gordon Sondland: (02:01:10)
I don't remember ever mentioning the Bidens. I may have mentioned Burisma.

Dan Goldman: (02:01:15)
And that meeting was with a group. You were not alone with Vice President Pence.

Gordon Sondland: (02:01:18)
That's right.

Dan Goldman: (02:01:21)
And you know that at that bilateral meeting with President Zelensky, I believe you testified earlier, that Vice President Pence did not mention these investigations at all, right?

Gordon Sondland: (02:01:33)
I don't recall him mentioning the investigations.

Dan Goldman: (02:01:36)
So your testimony is just simply in a pre meeting with a group of Americans before the bilateral meeting, you referenced the fact that Ukraine needed to do these investigations in order to lift the aid.

Gordon Sondland: (02:01:51)
I think I referenced, I didn't say that Ukraine had to do the investigations, I think I said that we heard from Mr. Giuliani that that was the case.

Dan Goldman: (02:02:00)
So that helped inform your presumption, correct?

Gordon Sondland: (02:02:03)
Correct.

Dan Goldman: (02:02:04)
So it wasn't really a presumption you heard from Mr. Giuliani?

Gordon Sondland: (02:02:08)
Well, I didn't hear from Mr. Giuliani about the aid. I heard about the Burisma in 2016

Dan Goldman: (02:02:14)
And you understood at that point as we discussed, two plus two equals four that the aid was there as well.

Gordon Sondland: (02:02:20)

That was the problem, Mr. Goldman. No one told me directly that the aid was tied to anything. I was presuming it was.

Dan Goldman: (02:02:28)

Right. Well, I want to go ahead to... I want to go back on September 1st... Or I'm going to jump actually ahead to September 7th okay. When we discussed those text messages where you said there were multiple convos with President Zelensky and POTUS, you recall that?

Gordon Sondland: (02:02:53)

Do you have the email by any chance?

Dan Goldman: (02:02:56)

We could try to pull it up in a second, but you don't remember? I showed it to you this morning.

Gordon Sondland: (02:02:59)

Yeah, go ahead though with your question.

Dan Goldman: (02:03:00)

And you confirmed that that likely meant, as you said it did, that you spoke with President Trump. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (02:03:09)

Again, if my email said I spoke with President Trump, presumably I did.

Dan Goldman: (02:03:14)

You are relying pretty heavily in your testimony on the texts and emails that you are able to review. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: (02:03:19)

That's right.

Dan Goldman: (02:03:20)

So certainly if someone else had contemporaneous texts, emails or notes, you would presume that what they were saying was accurate. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (02:03:29)

Well, if they had texts or emails, I would if they had notes, I don't know. Some people's notes are great, some people's aren't. I don't know.

Dan Goldman: (02:03:37)

But certainly it would be a helpful refresher to anyone's memory.

Gordon Sondland: (02:03:41)

Including my own.

Dan Goldman: (02:03:43)

Now you had a conversation on September 7th according to both Ambassador Taylor and Tim Morrison with Tim Morrison, where you told Mr. Morrison that President Trump told you that he was not asking for a quid pro quo, but that he did insist that President Zelensky go to a microphone and say that he is opening investigations of Biden and 2016 election interference and that President

Zelensky should want to do this himself. You don't have any reason to dispute both Ambassador Taylor's and Mr. Morrison's testimony about that conversation, do you?

Gordon Sondland: (02:04:22)

No.

Dan Goldman: (02:04:24)

On September 8th, you then had a conversation directly with Ambassador Taylor about this same phone call where Ambassador Taylor said that you confirmed that you spoke to President Trump, as he had suggested earlier to you, and that President Trump was adamant that President Zelensky himself, meaning not the prosecutor general, had to, "Clear things up and do it in public." You don't have any reason to think that Ambassador Taylor's testimony based on his contemporaneous notes was-

Gordon Sondland: (02:04:59)

I don't know if I got that from President Trump or I got it from Giuliani. That's the part I'm not clear on.

Dan Goldman: (02:05:06)

Well, Ambassador Taylor is quite clear that you said President Trump, Mr. Morrison is also quite clear that you said President Trump. You don't have any reason to dispute their very specific recollections, do you?

Gordon Sondland: (02:05:16)

No, if they have notes and they recall that, I don't have any reason to dispute it. I just personally can't remember where I got it from.

Dan Goldman: (02:05:23)

And then you also told Ambassador Taylor in that same conversation that if President Zelensky, rather you told President Zelensky and Andriy Yermak that although this was not a quid pro quo as the president had very clearly told you, it was however required for President Zelensky to clear things up in public or there would be a stalemate. You don't have any reason to dispute Ambassador Taylor's recollection of that conversation you had with President Zelensky, do you?

Gordon Sondland: (02:06:00)

No.

Dan Goldman: (02:06:01)

And that you understood the stalemate referenced the aid, is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (02:06:06)

At that point, yes.

Dan Goldman: (02:06:08)

Ambassador Taylor also described a comment that you made where you were trying to explain what President Trump's view of this was. And you said that President Trump is a businessman. When a businessman is about to sign a check to someone who owes him something, the businessman asks the person to pay up before signing the check. Do you recall saying that to Ambassador Taylor?

Gordon Sondland: (02:06:31)

I don't recall it specifically, but I may have.

Dan Goldman: (02:06:34)
And Ambassador Volker also said that you did.

Gordon Sondland: (02:06:37)
Okay.

Dan Goldman: (02:06:38)
So just to summarize here, by the end of the first week of September, before the aid had been released, you had expressed twice to the Ukrainians that you understood that the investigations needed to be publicly announced on CNN in order for the aid to be released. Do you recall that?

Gordon Sondland: (02:07:01)
I didn't say that they had to be announced on CNN. The Ukrainians said to me or to Ambassador Volker or both of us, that they had planned to do an interview anyway on CNN and they would use that occasion to mention these items.

Dan Goldman: (02:07:15)
And that even though at some point you had calculated two plus two to equal four and therefore you believed that the aid was conditioned on the investigations, that you had a phone call with President Trump that you relayed to both Tim Morrison and Ambassador Taylor whose accounts of that conversation you do not dispute where President Trump confirmed that President Zelensky needed to publicly announce the investigations or otherwise, the obvious implication of the stalemate would be that the aid would not be released. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: (02:07:51)
Again, the implication, I did not hear...

Part 2

Devin Nunes: 00:00:00 The foreign aid, but there are people in this town who are in charge of the foreign aid. And, in fact, I don't think it's very fair to you at all, or to us, or to the American people. You might be surprised that we had that person here in the Capitol, in a secret deposition, in the basement last Saturday. That testimony might be pretty important to you before you're here to testify. If you could have read that your lawyers could have went through that because it may have clarified some more things for you about your recollection about the foreign aid.

Devin Nunes: 00:00:45 We had the chair looking at the cameras telling American people, talking about Watergate with their Watergate fantasies that they continue to... I guess they fantasize about this at night, and then they come here and talk about obstruction of justice because they're not giving you documents that you think you should have. So now they've laid out their clear Watergate argument or articles of impeachment. So I just have to remind the gentleman... I know we're not in a court of law because you wrote the rules, the chair here did. But I would think it's obstruction of justice to not give the American people and give the ambassador the right to look at the transcript of the man who's in charge of the foreign aid in this town. Now I could get into what he said, but... Pete, the chair, could release what he said. And we're not even allowed to call that witness here today.

Devin Nunes: 00:01:46 So let's talk about things that we do know are facts as best as I think you, and I, and most people know them. President Trump does not like foreign aid to start with. Is that correct, ambassador?

Gordon Sondland: 00:02:02 I've heard that, yes.

Devin Nunes: 00:02:03 And you've testified that watching over the EU, you have 28 countries, you have neighboring countries that you work with. One of his biggest complaints is the lack of participation that those countries participate in programs around the world. Isn't that correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:02:19 That's correct.

Devin Nunes: 00:02:20 Especially NATO.

Gordon Sondland: 00:02:23 Yes.

Devin Nunes: 00:02:24 Right? When you get directions from the White House when you first became ambassador, probably one of the number one things... I don't want to put words in your mouth, but on the top of the list was making sure countries pay their fair share, especially with NATO.

Gordon Sondland: 00:02:42 Yeah, and we have a very capable ambassador to NATO, so I'm not going to take her lane.

Devin Nunes: 00:02:47 But you work with those countries, it's one of the issues that you bring up in your meetings. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:02:54 It is.

Devin Nunes: 00:02:55 So now I know you weren't on the July 25th phone call, but one of the first things that the President of the United States brings up is Germany's lack of participation. I think he names the president of Germany directly. That they're not participating in helping out Ukraine, who's one of their neighbors? Is that what you read in the transcript?

Gordon Sondland: 00:03:18 I've heard that, yes.

Devin Nunes: 00:03:20 So the whole idea that the president starting out with, he doesn't like foreign aid. He doesn't think countries pay their fair share. That's looking out for the taxpayer. But there's more. And we talked about this in your deposition. We talked about how we have requirements. The Congress writes requirements into the law that require you and all the diplomats to carry out the foreign policy of this country for the President of the United States. Before the president can certify foreign aid and send foreign aid, there has to be certification that there's no corruption. You're aware of that now?

Gordon Sondland: 00:04:00 I am now. Yes.

Devin Nunes: 00:04:04 So being that you learned about that in your deposition. Now looking back at clearly the challenges and concerns the president had with the involvement of high-level Ukrainian government officials, including the ambassador here in the United States that attacked him during his presidential campaign, the concerns of leaks that were leaks or just made up stories and conspiracy theories that were spun in the Steele dossier that the Democrats on this committee own... They paid for it. Other DNC operatives that were working with the Ukrainian ambassador here in Washington, D.C. to dirty up your boss, the President of the United States.

Devin Nunes: 00:04:50 We're not going to hear from those witnesses, just like we're not going to hear from the person we deposed on Saturday. We're not going to hear about what the real reason the person who's in charge of making sure that foreign aid is delivered... We're not going to hear about what actually happened with the foreign aid. Wouldn't that have made it a lot easier for you to testify instead of guessing and doing little funny math problems up here. Two plus two equals four. It's great for all the viewers to hear that. Wouldn't be easier if you just knew exactly why the foreign aid wasn't given.

Gordon Sondland: 00:05:30 It would've been easier to testify if I had a totality of the record.

Devin Nunes: 00:05:34 And would you trust the person who's in charge of cutting the checks for foreign aid, the top career diplomat or the the top career official?

Gordon Sondland: 00:05:43 I'd have no reason not to.

Devin Nunes: 00:05:46 Thank you. On that, sir, I don't know if we'll get to speak again if we have some more magical minutes, but I'm done with questions with you. I know the rest of our members have more questions. I know Mr. Caster has some more questions.

Steve Castor: 00:06:04 Hello again, Ambassador.

Gordon Sondland: 00:06:06 Hi.

Steve Castor: 00:06:07 We'll try not to use all of this time as a courtesy to you. I just want to go through some distinctions between your opener, and your deposition, and some other witnesses. In your opening statement today you said, "President Trump directed us to talk with Rudy." Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:06:27 Correct.

Steve Castor: 00:06:27 But then you and I had a little bit of a back and forth about the president just said, "Talk to Rudy." And I believe, and correct me if I'm wrong, you took that to mean if we wanted to move forward with these types of things Rudy was the place to go?

Gordon Sondland: 00:06:42 Rudy was the guy.

Steve Castor: 00:06:43 Okay. But President Trump didn't direct you to talk to Rudy. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:06:48 It wasn't an order. It was, "If you want to work on this, this is the guy you got to talk to."

Steve Castor: 00:06:56 Ambassador Volker in his deposition said, "I didn't take it as an instruction, but just as a comment." "Talk to Rudy. He knows these things and you've got some bad people around them." I mean, referring to the Ukrainian, so I mean, Ambassador Volker hasn't testified that there's any sort of order or direction, "Talk to Rudy."

Gordon Sondland: 00:07:20 I don't know what he testified. It became very clear to all three of us that if we wanted to move the relationship forward, President Trump was not really

interested in engaging. He wanted Rudy to handle it. And, as I said in my opening statement, Secretary Perry took the lead and made the initial contact with Rudy. And that's when we began working with him.

Steve Castor: 00:07:46 And as to the question of whether Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desire specifically of the President of the United States, in your deposition you said, "I don't know. I don't know if this was coming out of Rudy Giuliani irrespective of the president." Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:08:00 Yeah. I'm not going to dispute what I said in my deposition. It's true. Yeah.

Steve Castor: 00:08:03 And we walked through all your communications with Rudy Giuliani. And they're not a lot, right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:08:07 Correct.

Steve Castor: 00:08:10 Ambassador Volker in his deposition on the same question said, "I did not have that impression. I believe Mr. Giuliani was doing his own communications." And, granted, Mr. Giuliani had business interest in Ukraine. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:08:24 Now I understand he did. I didn't know that at the time.

Steve Castor: 00:08:27 With [inaudible 00:08:27] Parnas and Fruman, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:08:31 Lot of new names I've learned.

Steve Castor: 00:08:32 Okay. And you had never met with those folks?

Gordon Sondland: 00:08:34 No.

Steve Castor: 00:08:42 And then in your September 9th communication with the president, during your deposition that was a striking moment when you walked us through your telephone call with President Trump on September 9th.

Gordon Sondland: 00:08:54 And, by the way, I cannot find a record of that call because the State Department and the White House cannot locate it. But I'm pretty sure I had the call on that day.

Steve Castor: 00:09:02 But whether it was the 9th or the 8th, you had this call. And it was extremely memorable, right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:09:09 It was.

Steve Castor: 00:09:10 And you've been very honest, and we're not trying to give you a hard time on all the times you don't recall. We're just trying to just say that a lot of important events that have happened that the Committee's asked you about, and you've honestly said, "I don't recall."

Steve Castor: 00:09:24 But the call was President Trump on September 9th or the 8th you recall it vividly, right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:09:30 I recall it vividly because it was keyed by the sort of frantic emails from Ambassador Taylor. I had, again, prior to that call, had all kinds of theories as to why things weren't moving, why there was no White House meeting, why there was no aid, why there was no this, why there was no that. And I was getting tired of going around in circles, frankly. So I made the call. And I asked, as I said, the open-ended question, "What do you want from Ukraine?" And that's when I got the answer.

Steve Castor: 00:10:00 He was unequivocal, "Nothing."

Gordon Sondland: 00:10:03 What I said in the text is what I heard.

Steve Castor: 00:10:05 And I'm curious, was that vignette in your opener today?

Gordon Sondland: 00:10:11 I don't think so.

Steve Castor: 00:10:12 How come? It's so memorable. So striking.

Gordon Sondland: 00:10:18 I don't know. It was in my previous testimony. And I assumed if people had questions they would bring it up.

Steve Castor: 00:10:24 Okay. I mean this is an example. A lot of witnesses during the course of this investigation have dealt with ambiguity's in different ways. And some have resolved them in the least favorable to the president over and over again. This is an exculpatory fact shedding some light on the president's state of mind about the situation about the-

Gordon Sondland: 00:10:48 And I'm happy to discuss it.

Steve Castor: 00:10:50 Yeah, so I'm just wondering why you didn't mention it in your opener?

Gordon Sondland: 00:10:53 There were so many things I wanted to do include in my opening. And my opening was already, I think, 45 minutes or something. It would have been an hour and a half. There are a lot of things I'd like to have mentioned-

Steve Castor: 00:11:04 But you only had a couple conversations with the president. And we're trying to evaluate whether the-

Gordon Sondland: 00:11:09 It was not purposeful. Trust me.

Steve Castor: 00:11:12 Okay. Talking about striking conversations. Mr. Holmes, when he came here last Friday in the basement, he, I'll tell you, he thought your conversation that you had with the president was like the most memorable thing he's ever experienced. He=

Gordon Sondland: 00:11:31 How many conversations as he had with the president?

Steve Castor: 00:11:35 He probably hasn't had any, but he was energized, enthusiastic about telling us about this conversation.

Gordon Sondland: 00:11:45 So not only did I buy him lunch, but I also provided entertainment?

Steve Castor: 00:11:49 I mean he conferred with us that he regaled anyone that he came across with this story. And that's, I guess, a great discussion for Thursday. But other than the colorful language... And he was definitely moved by the color.

Steve Castor: 00:12:11 But he was unequivocal that you brought up the Bidens in the post call discussion. And he said something to the effect of the president's only interested in big things. And Mr. Holmes said that, "Oh, there's a lot of big things going on in the Ukraine." Like there are. There's a war. Ukraine's under attack from the East by Russia. And he puts words in your mouth to the effect of, "No, the president only cares about investigations like Rudy is pitching about the Bidens."

Steve Castor: 00:12:48 And what's important about this, this is the day after the 7:25 call. And what's reported by Mr. Holmes and you, the extent you've confirmed it, isn't anything different than happened on the 7:25 call. Agreed? From the president's standpoint?

Gordon Sondland: 00:13:06 With 20/20 hindsight now that we've had the transcript of the call, the Bidens were clearly mentioned on the call. I wasn't making the connection with the Bidens.

Steve Castor: 00:13:15 Right, but with regard to the president, it was just mentioning investigations.

Gordon Sondland: 00:13:20 That's all he said on the phone was investigations, I think.

Steve Castor: 00:13:22 But you told us time and again that you never realized the Bidens were part of any of this. The Barisma. And you talked about a continuum. And you never came to understand that until maybe as late as September 25th. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:13:40 I don't know the exact date, but it was pretty late.

Steve Castor: 00:13:42 Okay. And Ambassador Volker said the Biden's never came up after his one breakfast meeting with Mayor Giuliani where he testified that tried to disabuse the mayor of anything relating to the Bidens.

Gordon Sondland: 00:13:56 And I think Secretary Perry publicly stated that he never heard Biden either until the end.

Steve Castor: 00:14:03 So when you testify here today that you have no recollection of mentioning the Biden's to Mr. Holmes, that's not just a recollection. That's based on your state of mind at that point in time and your state of mind up to September 25th. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:14:20 I wasn't into investigating the Bidens.

Steve Castor: 00:14:22 So it's very surprising to you that he had mentioned that. Right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:14:24 It was very surprising to me.

Steve Castor: 00:14:31 I want to go back to a couple of things in your statement. This July 26th meeting with President Zelensky earlier in the day from this lunch-time event we've

been talking about. During the course of the meeting with President Zelensky, did any of the parties discuss what came up on the telephone call?

Gordon Sondland: 00:14:56 I don't believe so.

Steve Castor: 00:14:57 Okay. So President Zelensky didn't express any concerns about the content of the call. Right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:15:02 I mean, all I heard about that call was that it was a good call. It was friendly. Everyone was happy. I was delighted to hear that so that we could now move to the next phase, which was the meeting.

Steve Castor: 00:15:15 Okay, so you can tell us with certainty that nobody talked about demands in that meeting or fulfilling the president's demands.

Gordon Sondland: 00:15:22 I don't remember exactly. Again, this is a great example, Mr. Caster of where I would have loved to have seen the notes from the meeting. I didn't take any notes, but I know there were notes taken. But I don't remember any heated conversation in the meeting. I remember it being a really, really friendly, good meeting. And that's why I said what I did to the president the next day, which was, "Zelensky will do whatever you want. He's very happy."

Steve Castor: 00:15:52 And you don't remember any discussion by President's Zelensky of lamenting how he had to navigate this difficult situation, right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:16:03 I don't know. I know that that was in the whistleblower complaints. Something about navigating something.

Steve Castor: 00:16:07 It was.

Gordon Sondland: 00:16:08 I didn't remember anything like that.

Steve Castor: 00:16:14 Okay. And I want to get back to your-

Devin Nunes: 00:16:17 Gentleman. Yield just a second.

Steve Castor: 00:16:18 Of course.

Devin Nunes: 00:16:20 Which would be another helpful thing also, Ambassador, is if we actually had heard from the whistleblower and we had testimony of the whistle blower. Then you wouldn't have to be up here speculating as much and guessing because you would have a source that would have been interviewed. We have his complaint. We could have matched it up with your testimony, along with the people from OMB that would've made it very easy for you to testify. So you wouldn't have to just try to remember all this stuff and chase conspiracy theories around.

Devin Nunes: 00:16:49 But the Democrats have continued to lay out for the last six weeks moving from quid pro quo, to extortion, to bribery, to... Where're we at today? Obstruction of justice. And now back to quid pro quo. We wouldn't have to do all that if the whistleblower would have testified. You wouldn't have to speculate about what the whistleblower only had in his or her complaint that nobody seems to know. Yield back to Mr. Caster.

Steve Castor: 00:17:17 Thank you, Mr. Nunes. A couple of times in your opener you said everyone was in the loop. These televised proceedings sometimes we lose track of things. And everyone was not in the loop with your speculation or your guess that in the absence of any credible for the suspension of aid, I later came to believe that the resumption of security aid would not occur without public statement from the Ukraine. Everyone wasn't in the loop with that, right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:18:00 Well, the secretary was because that's why I sent my email.

Steve Castor: 00:18:04 Let's look at your emails. There's two emails that you sent to the secretary, right? That're here?

Gordon Sondland: 00:18:22 August 22nd?

Steve Castor: 00:18:23 Right. And August 11?

Gordon Sondland: 00:18:25 August 11?

Steve Castor: 00:18:30 So the August 11th email... We went through this before. I'm sorry to go through it again. You said to the secretary, "Kurt and I negotiated a statement from Z to be delivered for our review in a day or two. The contents will hopefully make the boss happy enough to authorize an invitation. Z plans to have a big presser on the openness subject next week."

Steve Castor: 00:18:54 A couple of things here. This is only relating to the White House meeting, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:19:01 Yes, I believe so.

Steve Castor: 00:19:02 Okay. And this is just investigations generally making a public statement of openness generally, right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:19:11 Well I think by August 11th, Mr. Caster, I think we were talking about 2016 and Barisma. The investigations generally was really early in the-

Steve Castor: 00:19:21 Okay. But do we know that Secretary Pompeo knows that?

Gordon Sondland: 00:19:23 I think so.

Steve Castor: 00:19:24 Why?

Gordon Sondland: 00:19:25 Well only because I think Ambassador, or I'm sorry, Counselor Brechbuhl was briefed on all of these things.

Steve Castor: 00:19:32 By who? By you?

Gordon Sondland: 00:19:34 By, I believe, Ambassador Volker, by myself very-

Steve Castor: 00:19:39 That's not what he testified to. I mean did you-

Gordon Sondland: 00:19:42 Ambassador or Counselor Brechbuhl testified? I didn't know he had-

Steve Castor: 00:19:46 No, no. Ambassador Volker.

Gordon Sondland: 00:19:47 Oh, okay.

Steve Castor: 00:19:50 He didn't testify that he briefed Mr. Brechbuhl. I mean this email to the secretary is talking about this statement which... By the way, I mean you said, " Kurt and I negotiated a statement." And the statement never went...

Gordon Sondland: 00:20:04 Didn't go anywhere.

Steve Castor: 00:20:06 Ambassador Volker said it wasn't a good idea. Mr. [Yamak 00:20:08] said it wasn't a good idea. And what's you read to the secretary here it relates to a generic openness subject, right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:20:20 Yeah. But I think the secretary, though, was on the July 25th call which, obviously, I wasn't on and I didn't know about.

Steve Castor: 00:20:27 But you use this email to suggest that everyone was in the loop that security sector assistance was tied to some act by the Ukrainians.

Gordon Sondland: 00:20:37 No, no. I don't think I said that this assistance was involved here.

Steve Castor: 00:20:44 Okay. So what was everyone in the loop about then?

Gordon Sondland: 00:20:46 Well, the secretary was in the loop that we had negotiated a statement. I'm fairly comfortable that the secretary knows where the statement was at that point. In other words, the 2016 and Barisma. And that Lisa passed that along to him and kept him informed.

Steve Castor: 00:21:08 Okay. So we can agree that at this point in time the secretary wasn't in a loop, that there was a conditionality on the security sector assistance.

Gordon Sondland: 00:21:17 Hold on a second. Are you asking about July 19th Exhibit 4?

Steve Castor: 00:21:24 I was asking about your email to the secretary on August 11th.

Gordon Sondland: 00:21:29 Oh, okay. Well on July 19, which the secretary was on, I talked about fully transparent investigation and turn over every stone. And the secretary was on that.

Steve Castor: 00:21:48 Okay. But you testified at your deposition that on July 19th in this continuum you talked about, at that point in the continuum it was just a generic investigation. Wasn't anything involving-

Gordon Sondland: 00:22:04 Again, I'm not trying to put words in any [inaudible 00:22:06]. I think it went from the original generic from May 23rd when we left the Oval Office. We're talking about corruption and oligarchs until Mr. Giuliani started to become involved. Then it transitioned into the Barisma-

Steve Castor: 00:22:22 You hadn't even talk to Giuliani by that time. This is July 19th.

Adam Schiff: 00:22:25 Mr. Castor, with all respect, will you all Mr. [inaudible 00:22:27]?

Steve Castor: 00:22:28 Sorry, use the mic.

Adam Schiff: 00:22:29 Will you allow him to finish his answer?

Steve Castor: 00:22:32 Of course. I apologize.

Gordon Sondland: 00:22:36 We were communicating with Mr. Giuliani through Secretary Perry and through Ambassador Volker. I wasn't talking to Mr. Giuliani directly until after August 1st.

Steve Castor: 00:22:48 But as of July 19th weren't we still on the generic part of the-

Gordon Sondland: 00:22:52 I don't know. I believe by then we were talking about Barisma in 2016 to be candid.

Steve Castor: 00:22:59 But not Biden?

Gordon Sondland: 00:23:01 No, no, not Biden.

Steve Castor: 00:23:02 Okay.

Gordon Sondland: 00:23:03 No.

Steve Castor: 00:23:03 And then turning to your email of August 11th.

Gordon Sondland: 00:23:07 Yeah. Got it.

Steve Castor: 00:23:10 I'm sorry, we just dealt with that. August the 22nd.

Gordon Sondland: 00:23:14 Twenty-second?

Steve Castor: 00:23:15 Yeah. It's page 23 of your opener.

Gordon Sondland: 00:23:19 Yeah, I got it.

Steve Castor: 00:23:23 And this is where you were requesting a pull aside for the president. And this is when the president was-

Gordon Sondland: 00:23:34 He was still going to go.

Steve Castor: 00:23:35 He was going to go. It was before the hurricane bumped that off his schedule. "I would ask the Zelensky to look him in the eye and tell him that once Ukraine's new justice folks are in place, Zelensky should be able to move forward publicly and with

confidence on those issues of importance to the President and the United States. Hopefully that'll break the log jam."

Steve Castor: 00:23:58 And at this point in time the issues of importance to the president of the United States were what?

Gordon Sondland: 00:24:06 The two investigations.

Steve Castor: 00:24:08 Okay. But nothing to do with Vice President Biden, right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:24:15 Again, I didn't make the connection then.

Steve Castor: 00:24:17 Okay. I want to just pivot briefly to the president's concerns about foreign assistance under Secretary Hale, who will be with us later today, testified that during this relevant timeframe there was a real focus to re-examine all federal aid programs. Are you aware of that interest of the president?

Gordon Sondland: 00:25:01 I'm generally aware of the president's skepticism toward foreign aid and conditioning foreign aid on certain things. I'm generally aware of that. Yes.

Steve Castor: 00:25:11 And Ambassador Hale testified in his testimony, [inaudible 00:25:15] been public, almost a zero based concept that each assistance program in each country that receives the program be evaluated. The program made sense that we avoid nation building and that we not provide assistance to countries that are lost to us in terms of policy, whether it's because corruption or another reason. Is that something you were aware of it at the time?

Gordon Sondland: 00:25:42 Generally, yes.

Steve Castor: 00:25:43 Okay. And you're certainly aware that the president was concerned about the European allies' contributions to the region?

Gordon Sondland: 00:25:51 Exactly why I was involved.

Steve Castor: 00:25:52 Okay. So as we get down to September 11th right before the... You're advocating that the pause be lifted. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:26:04 I personally didn't think the pause should have ever been put in place.

Steve Castor: 00:26:06 Okay. But as we get down to September 11th, and you're talking with Senator Johnson, and so forth, you don't know with certainty that the genuine reason the president was implementing the pause wasn't because of his concerns about the allies, or his concerns about foreign assistance generally, or that he wasn't just trying to hold the aid as long as he could to see what type of information he could get about those two subjects.

Gordon Sondland: 00:26:35 Fair enough.

Steve Castor: 00:26:36 Okay. I am really trying to finish up before so I can yield some time back. Do we have anything else, [inaudible 00:26:47]?

Devin Nunes: 00:26:48 I have nothing else.

Steve Castor: 00:26:59 Thank you. Yield back.

Adam Schiff: 00:27:02 The gentleman yields back-

Steve Castor: 00:27:04 Yield back the balance of our time.

Adam Schiff: 00:27:08 Let's take a 30 minute recess to allow Ambassador Sondland get a bite to eat. I think the members of the committee might like to get a bite to eat. And then we will resume with the member rounds of questioning of five minutes if we could allow the witnesses to have the opportunity to leave the room first.

Reporter: 00:27:34 Mr. Chairman Ambassador Sondland had intended to fly back to Brussels to resume his duties at the end of the day. And so it would be a great convenience to us if we could have a shorter break now and resume with the member's questions, and try and wrap up in time that he might be able to make his flight.

Adam Schiff: 00:27:53 I appreciate that counsel, we all have a busy schedule these days. The member round of questions should take, I think, slightly less than two hours so I think you should be good depending on the time of your flight. But we will endeavor to make the break as short as possible if you'd like to excuse yourself from the room before the rest of the crowd.

Reporter: 00:28:32 All right. According to Chairman Schiff it might be another two hours of Ambassador Gordon Sondland, the man who Donald Trump appointed as the Ambassador to the European Union.

Reporter: 00:28:45 The one thing I learned from that session, Camille Foster and [Olivia Nusey 00:28:49], that it all begins and ends with ASAP Rocky. I believe that was the actual quote.

Speaker 1: 00:28:55 Subpoena him.

Reporter: 00:28:56 It ends with the ASAP Rocky.

Camille: 00:28:57 It's a lot like Watergate in that way.

Reporter: 00:29:00 He was the ASAP Rocky of Watergate. Camille, what are you taking away from this? I mean, I thought the most interesting bit of this, and I don't see many people pointing this out, is Stephen Caster, the attorney for Republicans, at one point it turns and says, "You're an unreliable witness." And there is that moment where he went from, they're rewriting their script at the same time, and blatantly says to him, "You're an unreliable witness."

Reporter: 00:29:25 The last thing we saw there is Devin Nunez. I wouldn't say questioning him because then Devin doesn't seem to question anyone. He speechifies and he gives you these long soliloquies that are... He just wants a cable news show.

Speaker 1: 00:29:38 Ukraine election [crosstalk 00:00:29:40], et cetera.

Reporter: 00:29:39 You can ask, "Come on Devin. You can come on this one." And he goes on, and on, and on, and... But it was an attack-

Adam Schiff: 00:29:45 Ask just a few questions and our staff because the expanded round hadn't had time to get through much of what I wanted to ask you Ambassador. But with respect to the statement, you are going back... And I mean by you and others, Ambassador Volker and others, were going back and forth with Ukrainians to figure out what statement they would have to make to get the meeting. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:30:09 Correct.

Adam Schiff: 00:30:09 And they understood they were going to have to make this statement publicly in order to get the meeting?

Gordon Sondland: 00:30:13 Correct.

Adam Schiff: 00:30:15 Similarly, you testified that pretty much everyone could put two and two together and make four, and understood that the military assistance was also conditioned on the public announcement of these two investigations, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:30:29 That was my presumption. Yeah.

Adam Schiff: 00:30:30 You put two and two together and you got four is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:30:35 Yes.

Adam Schiff: 00:30:36 Now you're capable of putting two and two together and so are the Ukrainians. They could put two and two together as well? They understood there was a hold on security assistance? There's testimony that they understood that in July or August, but it was without a doubt, understood when it was made public in the newspaper, they understood that the security assistance was being held up. Right.

Gordon Sondland: 00:31:03 I don't know when-

PART 1 OF 5 ENDS [00:31:04]

Adam Schiff: 00:31:00 I understood that the security assistance was being held up. Right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:31:03 I don't know when they understood it but presumably they did.

Adam Schiff: 00:31:07 Well certainly once it was public they understood the security assistance was withheld. Right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:31:11 Once it was public, I assume so, yes.

Adam Schiff: 00:31:13 And indeed that was one of the issues that was brought up in that meeting between Zelensky and Pence in Warsaw.

Gordon Sondland: 00:31:20 I think as I testified previously, Chairman, I think Zelensky, if I recall asked the question more open ended like when do we get our money?

Adam Schiff: 00:31:29 Well okay. So they understood they didn't have the money yet. It had been approved by Congress. There was a hold on it. You couldn't give him any explanation. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:31:39 That's right.

Adam Schiff: 00:31:39 They asked, you couldn't tell him why it was being withheld. Right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:31:42 I could not.

Adam Schiff: 00:31:44 And if they couldn't put two and two together, you put two and two together for them because you told them, in Warsaw, they were going to need to make that public statement likely to get that aid released. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:31:57 I said I presume that might have to be done in order to get the aid released.

Adam Schiff: 00:32:00 Because we've had a lot of a lot of argumentation here. Well the Ukrainians didn't know the aid was withheld, but the Ukrainians found out, and then it was made abundantly clear if they hadn't put two and two together themselves that if they wanted that aid they were going to have to make these statements correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:32:16 Correct.

Adam Schiff: 00:32:20 Mr. Nunez.

Mr Nunez: 00:32:26 Yield to Mr. Ratcliffe.

John Ratcliffe: 00:32:29 Ambassador Sondland, I'm going to try and quickly move to summarize all of your direct communications with President Trump as it relates to this inquiry, and of course you can correct me if I get it wrong. On May 23rd you had a group meeting that included a, what you called a vanilla request about ending corruption involving Ukrainian oligarchs, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:32:51 Correct.

John Ratcliffe: 00:32:52 On July 25th you called President Trump to say you were on your way to Ukraine, but nothing of substance occurred on that call, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:33:00 Correct.

John Ratcliffe: 00:33:01 On July 26, you had a five minute call, a restaurant that you didn't originally remember because it, according to your statement, this morning, "Did not strike me as significant at the time." But once refreshed, recalled that the primary purpose was a rapper named ASAP Rocky, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:33:16 Correct.

John Ratcliffe: 00:33:17 And on September 9th, and most importantly, a reading from your deposition, you called President Trump to ask him, "What do you want from Ukraine?"

He responded, "I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. I want Zelensky to do the right thing. I want him to do what he ran on." And what he ran on was fighting corruption, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:33:36 Correct.

John Ratcliffe: 00:33:38 And then lastly, on October 2nd, in a random in person meeting that you had an event for the Finnish president, you ran into President Trump and advised him that you'd been called to testify before Congress. And he said to you, "Good. Go tell the truth."

Gordon Sondland: 00:33:53 That's correct.

John Ratcliffe: 00:33:54 All right. And that is the entirety of your recollection of your direct communications with President Trump about these matters.

Gordon Sondland: 00:34:01 I may have had another call or meeting or two. I again, I wish Mr. Ratcliffe, I had the record.

John Ratcliffe: 00:34:07 Understand, but this is what you recall.

Gordon Sondland: 00:34:09 This is what I recall.

John Ratcliffe: 00:34:09 Okay, so stop me if there's anything sinister or nefarious in any of this. A vanilla request about corruption, a call to say I'm on my way to Ukraine. A five minute call you didn't remember is significant, but its primary purpose was to discuss a rapper, a call that you made where the president said, "I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. I want Zelensky to do the right thing. I want him to do what he ran on," and him telling you to go tell Congress the truth. Anything sinister or nefarious about any of that?

Gordon Sondland: 00:34:38 Not the way you present it.

John Ratcliffe: 00:34:39 Okay, and that is the truth as you've presented it, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:34:42 Correct.

John Ratcliffe: 00:34:43 All right. Why that's important Ambassador Sondland, is because none of that is hearsay. None of that is speculation. None of that is opinion. That is direct evidence and ultimately that is what if this proceeds to the Senate they're going to care about. Unlike this proceeding, which has been based on largely speculation and presumption and opinion. This is direct testimony and direct evidence.

John Ratcliffe: 00:35:08 And to that point, none of that included evidence about the Bidens and none of that included evidence about military assistance because President Trump never mentioned either of those to you, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:35:18 That's correct.

John Ratcliffe: 00:35:20 So going back to the July 26th call, because it's going to be a spectacle tomorrow, you didn't remember it because it didn't strike you as significant at the time. Is it fair to say that if the President of United States was asking you to do or say something improper or unlawful, that would have been significant to you?

Gordon Sondland: 00:35:38 Yes.

John Ratcliffe: 00:35:39 All right, and if that call was part of a bribery or extortion scheme that you were part of as Democrats have alleged, you'd remember that as significant, wouldn't you?

Gordon Sondland: 00:35:49 I was not a part and I would have remembered.

John Ratcliffe: 00:35:50 I understand that and I agree with you. Let's turn to the quid pro quo, because it's been reported in the papers that this was blockbuster testimony today about quid pro quo in new evidence. To be fair to you, Ambassador Sondland, according to your statement today, as you say on page 14, as you testified previously, this was your opinion that there was a quid pro quo, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:36:20 The 2016 Burisma and the, excuse me, the 2016 election and Burisma in return for the White House meeting. That's correct.

John Ratcliffe: 00:36:30 So you've shared that before. To that point, to be clear again on the part of it that relates to military assistance, though, you don't have any direct evidence from President Trump about that part of it. That's your two plus two part of the equation, right? The presumption, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:36:47 Correct.

John Ratcliffe: 00:36:49 All right, and you understand also that others disagreed. Yesterday we heard from Mr. Morrison, Ambassador Volker, they testified that they didn't see a quid pro quo. Do you understand that?

Gordon Sondland: 00:37:00 I understand that that's what they said.

John Ratcliffe: 00:37:01 Reasonable people could look at all of this and come to different conclusions, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:37:07 Correct.

John Ratcliffe: 00:37:08 I yield back.

Adam Schiff: 00:37:12 Mr. Himes.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:37:12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ambassador, thank you for testifying. Ambassador, a couple of things jumped out at me in your testimony. In your opening statement. You say, Mr. Giuliani demanded that Ukraine make a public statement announcing investigations of the 2016 election, DNC server and Burisma. Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the President of the United States, and we knew that these investigations were important to the President.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:37:35 That last sentence is interesting. No conditionality, no modifiers. Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the President of United States, Mr. Giuliani communicates in colorful and memorable terms. What did Mr. Giuliani say to you that caused you to say that he is expressing the desires of the President of the United States?

Gordon Sondland: 00:37:56 Mr. Himes, when that was originally communicated, that was before I was in touch with Mr. Giuliani directly. So this all came through Mr. Volker and others.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:38:05 So Mr. Volker told you that he was expressing the desires of the President of the United States.

Gordon Sondland: 00:38:12 Correct.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:38:12 And subsequently when you saw the transcript of the July 25th conversation with President Zelensky, you put it all together and yeah, this is the desire of the President of the United States.

Gordon Sondland: 00:38:22 After I saw the July 25th rewrite.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:38:24 Okay. Other thing that is interesting here, the theme of your testimony today is that everybody knew and signed off, which is a little different from what we've heard, right? We've heard this from others saying that your effort out there was irregular. It was a shadow foreign policy characterized as a drug deal, and by the way, that was not a democratic characterization despite what Mr. Nunez says.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:38:49 That of course was the National Security Advisor of the United States characterizing it as a drug deal. What confuses me is that you have said and testified, and it's in here, that the Secretary of State was not only aware, but that he applauded you. Good work, keep banging away. The Secretary of State, if this had been irregular or a drug deal or a shadow foreign policy, he would have been the one to put an end to it and yet he did not, right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:39:14 Well, the Secretary of State I think was taking into account the totality of what I had been working on globally and saying you're doing a great job including this.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:39:24 Right. Okay. So he was aware of what you were doing and you're doing a great job includes this.

Gordon Sondland: 00:39:29 Yes.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:39:29 So in some sense he was validating it rather than saying this was irregular or shadow or a drug deal.

Gordon Sondland: 00:39:34 We never thought it was irregular. We thought it was in the center lane.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:39:38 And why do you think the Secretary of State thought that? [crosstalk 00:39:42] Why did he think that this was a worthy thing to do when so many senior people, including the National Security Advisor thought it was a drug deal?

Gordon Sondland: 00:39:49 I don't know. You'd have to ask him.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:39:51 Okay. To your knowledge, did he have communications with the President about this?

Gordon Sondland: 00:39:57 I have no knowledge of his communications with the President.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:40:00 Okay. Let me take you to the July 26 call that we've talked a little bit about. You basically haven't disputed Mr. Holmes's characterization to that report, although perhaps the mention of Biden, you don't recall that. I'm actually pretty confident we'll get a transcript of that call. A conversation in public between a high profile Ambassador and the President of the United States will be the top target, not for one, but for many foreign intelligence services.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:40:28 And because it's pretty sensitive stuff to this inquiry and pretty sensitive stuff because this information could be used to embarrass the President or leverage public officials. My guess is we're going to see the transcript. Our people are pretty good, and if other people have it, we're going to see this transcript. Until then, all we've got is your recollection and the testimony of the other people there. So I'm curious about your frame of mind.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:40:53 This statement, Ambassador Sondland agreed that the President did not give a fig, not the word used, about Ukraine. Is that a statement you might make? Do you believe that the President doesn't give a fig about Ukraine?

Gordon Sondland: 00:41:14 Are you, Congressman referring to the call or you're referring to my conversation?

Rep Jim Himes: 00:41:19 So Mr. Holmes recounts, and I'll read it to you. Ambassador Sondland agreed that the President did not give a fig about Ukraine. Fig was not the word you used there. And I'm asking you whether it's plausible that he might've heard that, because I'm asking you whether you believe that the President does not give a fig about Ukraine.

Gordon Sondland: 00:41:37 I think that's too strong. I think that based on the May 23rd meeting, the President was down on Ukraine for the reasons mentioned and would need a lot of convincing, and that's why we're pushing so hard for the meeting between the President and President Zelensky, because we thought once the two of them would meet his impression of Ukraine, his stock about Ukraine would go up.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:42:02 And what about this line, Ambassador Sondland replied that he meant "Big stuff that benefits the president." That's what you meant by big stuff. So again, we don't have the transcript. I suspect we will. But is that something you might say? Do you believe that the President really considers big stuff to be that which benefits him?

Gordon Sondland: 00:42:21 I don't recall saying benefits him.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:42:23 No, I understand that. I'm not asking what you recalled. I'm asking whether it's plausible that you might've said that because you believe, I'm asking you what you believe right now, that the President doesn't give a fig about Ukraine and in fact cares about the big stuff that benefits the President. Do you believe that now?

Gordon Sondland: 00:42:41 I really can't opine.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:42:44 I'm not asking for your opinion. I'm asking for your beliefs.

Gordon Sondland: 00:42:50 I don't understand your question. I want to answer your question. I just don't understand.

Rep Jim Himes: 00:42:51 Let me try one more. One time. Do you believe, what is alleged that you said on this phone call that the President cares primarily about stuff? The big stuff that benefits the President. Is that a belief [crosstalk 00:43:06].

Gordon Sondland: 00:43:04 I don't think the President said that on the phone call. I don't think the President said that to me on the phone call. I was talking about the time [crosstalk 00:43:14] ASAP Rocky, and he mentioned investigations. I don't know why your-

Adam Schiff: 00:43:20 Time with the gentleman has expired. Mr Conaway.

Mr. Conaway: 00:43:24 I wish to yield all six minutes to Mr. Jordan.

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:43:28 I thank the gentleman for yielding. Ambassador, when did it happen?

Gordon Sondland: 00:43:32 When did what happen?

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:43:34 The announcement. When did President Zelensky announce that the investigation was going to happen? On page 14 you said this, "Was there a quid pro quo?" Your opening statement, "As I testified previously with regard to the requested White House call, White House meeting, the answer is yes." That there needed to be a public statement from President Zelensky. When the chairman asked you about the security assistance dollars, you said there needed to be a public announcement from Zelensky. So I'm asking you a simple question. When did that happen?

Gordon Sondland: 00:44:00 Never did.

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:44:01 Never did. They got the call July 25th, they got the meeting, not in the White House, but in New York on September 25th. They got the money on September 11th. When did the meeting happen again?

Gordon Sondland: 00:44:13 Never did.

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:44:14 You don't know who was in the meeting?

Gordon Sondland: 00:44:16 Which meeting are you referring to?

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:44:17 The meeting that never happened. Who was in it? [crosstalk 00:44:22] You know how Zelensky announced it? Did he Tweet it? Did he do a press statement? Did he do a press conference? You know how that happened? I mean, you got all three of them wrong. They get the call, they get the meeting, they get the money. It's not two plus two, it's 0 for three. I've never seen anything like this.

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:44:44 And you told Mr. Castor that the President never told you that the announcement had to happen to get anything. In fact, he didn't just not tell you that, he explicitly said the opposite. The gentleman from Texas just read it. You said to the President of the United States, "What do you want from Ukraine?" The President, "I want nothing. I want no quid

pro quo. I want Zelensky to do the right thing. I want him to do what he ran on.” What did he run on Ambassador Sondland?

Gordon Sondland: 00:45:21 Transparency.

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:45:23 And dealing with corruption, right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:45:25 That’s right.

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:45:26 Mr. Castor raised another important point. Why didn’t you put that statement in your opening statement? I think you said you couldn’t fit it in. Is that right? So we might be here for 46 minutes instead of 45. [crosstalk 00:45:41].

Gordon Sondland: 00:45:41 It wasn’t purposeful trust me.

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:45:43 Wasn’t purposeful?

Gordon Sondland: 00:45:44 No.

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:45:45 Couldn’t fit it in a 23 page opener. The most important statement about the subject matter at hand, the President unites in a direct conversation with you about the issue at hand, and the President says, let me read it one more time. “What do you want from Ukraine Mr President?” “I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo.” I want this new guy, brand new guy in politics, his party just took over. I want Zelensky to do the right thing. I want him to run on and do what he ran on, which is deal with corruption. And you can’t find time to fit that in a 23 page opening statement. You know what a quid pro quo is?

Gordon Sondland: 00:46:20 I do.

Rep Jim Jordan: 00:46:21 This for that, right? Looks to me like Ukraine got that three times. There was no this. We didn’t do anything or excuse me, they didn’t have to do anything. I’ve never seen anything like this. When the call came out, you all remember this? When the call came out, everyone said, we’re going to quid pro quo. That was what was in the call. And of course, that didn’t happen. That didn’t happen. Remember what the complaint said? Remember what the memo said, or the whistleblower? This call was frightening. This call was scary. All those things, none of that materialized. None of that materialized. I yield back.

Adam Schiff: 00:47:16 Ms. Sewell.

Terri Sewell: 00:47:17 Thank you Mr. Chairman. I’d like to dig a little deeper in this quid pro quo. Did you not say in your opening statement and in previous testimony in closed door hearing, that you thought there was a quid pro quo?

Gordon Sondland: 00:47:33 I thought the quid pro quo was the White House visit in return for the 2016 DNC server and Burisma investigation.

Terri Sewell: 00:47:43 So when you heard Burisma, you did not see that as code for the Bidens?

Gordon Sondland: 00:47:50 I did not.

Terri Sewell: 00:47:51 When did you even know that? Is your testimony that you only realized that Burisma included the Bidens when the readout came out in September 25th?

Gordon Sondland: 00:48:01 No, my testimony wasn't specific as to the date, because I really don't recall the date. It was very late in the game though.

Terri Sewell: 00:48:07 September?

Gordon Sondland: 00:48:07 I don't recall the date.

Terri Sewell: 00:48:09 So if I told you that the legal definition of bribery was an event of offering, giving, soliciting, or receiving of any item of value as a means of influencing an action of an individual holding a public or legal duty, do you believe that not only was it quid pro quo, but it was bribery?

Gordon Sondland: 00:48:32 I'm not a lawyer and I'm not going to characterize what something was or wasn't legally.

Terri Sewell: 00:48:37 You also said in your opening statement that Secretary Perry and yourself as well as Ambassador Volker worked with Giuliani on the Ukraine matter as an express direction of the President. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:48:53 That's correct.

Terri Sewell: 00:48:54 You also go on to say that we did not want to work with Giuliani. Simply put, we played the hand that we were dealt. What did you mean by that? And more importantly, what did you think would happen if you did not play that hand?

Gordon Sondland: 00:49:08 I think what you're asking me is, well, you asked it.

Terri Sewell: 00:49:12 I did ask it.

Gordon Sondland: 00:49:14 What would happen if we didn't. It was very fragile with Ukraine at the time. There was no new ambassador. The old ambassador had had left. There was a new President, and we thought it was very, very important to shore up the relationship.

Terri Sewell: 00:49:30 In fact, you actually said you go on to say, "We all understood that if we refuse to work with Mr. Giuliani, we would lose an important opportunity to cement relationships with the United States and Ukraine." So "We followed the President's orders." Did you see it as a directive?

Gordon Sondland: 00:49:48 I saw it as the only pathway to moving forward on Ukraine.

Terri Sewell: 00:49:52 So you would say that the efforts that Mr. Giuliani was undertaking became a part of the formal Ukraine, US policy.

Gordon Sondland: 00:50:02 I can't opine on that. All I can tell you is the President wanted us to communicate with Mr. Giuliani.

Terri Sewell: 00:50:07 But you went on to say that in your opening testimony, that the suggestion that you engaged in some "Irregular or rogue diplomacy," is absolutely false. So if in

fact what Giuliani was doing was okay and proper, which is actually what you said. Initially, you all thought that what he was doing was not improper. Right?

Gordon Sondland: 00:50:27 We did not think it was improper. And when I referred to the fact that I was not engaging in rogue diplomacy, by definition, rogue diplomacy would have meant, I would have not have involved the leadership of the state department and the White House.

Terri Sewell: 00:50:39 So you're saying that everyone in the chain of command knew about Giuliani's efforts to try to get the investigations into Burisma ... I'm just trying to figure out what you thought you were actually opining to.

Gordon Sondland: 00:50:57 Look. The President directed us to work with Mr. Giuliani and the leadership of the state department were knowledgeable as was the NSC that we were working with Mr Giuliani, it's that simple.

Terri Sewell: 00:51:08 What's interesting is that Ambassador Taylor testified that he knew nothing about it. And clearly he would be in the chain of information if he was the Ambassador to Ukraine. At the end of the day, sir, with all due respect, you're the Ambassador to the European Union. Why would he not know about it? [crosstalk 00:51:25] He was the one who said that there was both a regular and irregular channel.

Gordon Sondland: 00:51:29 He should have known about it.

Terri Sewell: 00:51:32 Although we don't want, although you said that you did not want to work with Mr. Giuliani, you in fact did work with him.

Gordon Sondland: 00:51:38 That's correct.

Terri Sewell: 00:51:39 And do you think that the essence of what he was trying to achieve was accomplished?

Gordon Sondland: 00:51:48 I don't know what he was trying to achieve.

Terri Sewell: 00:51:49 You clearly had to have known, sir. If you think that this was actually going down the center lane is what you said, it was clearly important that we work with Mr. Giuliani to get what the President asked for because it was a directive and an order. Surely you must know whether or not mission was accomplished.

Gordon Sondland: 00:52:08 Well, I know what Mr. Giuliani communicated to us.

Terri Sewell: 00:52:12 And you thought that that was totally fine? Did you really think that it was okay for [crosstalk 00:52:15] Sure.

Gordon Sondland: 00:52:17 You asked what Mr. Giuliani was trying to achieve?

Terri Sewell: 00:52:20 No. I asked whether you thought that it was right for Mr. Giuliani to want to accomplish the efforts that he was involved in, which was to get them to investigate Burisma and the 2016 election as you said.

Gordon Sondland: 00:52:36 All I can testify to is what I know that Mr. Giuliani either told me directly or told Ambassador Volker and others that was relayed to me.

Terri Sewell: 00:52:46 Thank you. I yield back.

Adam Schiff: 00:52:49 Mr. Turner.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:52:51 Ambassador Sondland, I want to walk through some of the portions of your testimony because sometimes you seem to make direct connections and sometimes they seem to be dead ends. I kind of want to clear up what are the dead ends and what are the direct connections. Yesterday, Ambassador Volker, who I consider to be very talented and a man of integrity and I believe you think he's a man of integrity, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:53:14 I do.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:53:14 He testified that the President of United States did not tie either a meeting with the President, a phone call or any aid to investigations of Burisma 2016, or the Bidens. That the President did not do that. And you've testified that the President did not tell you that he tied them either. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:53:38 I did testify to that. Although when Ambassador Volker and I were working on the statement and negotiating with the Ukrainians, it was Burisma in 2016 that was very clear to Ambassador Volker.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:53:57 And how do you know that? What did he say to you? Because he says that was not clear to him. In fact, he says that's not the case. He was working on that. He knows that's what the President wanted, but he didn't have it as this was a requirement.

Gordon Sondland: 00:54:09 Oh, I strongly disagree with that portion of his testimony. It was absolutely a requirement, or we would have just had the meeting and been done with it.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:54:17 What about the aid? He says that they weren't tied, that the aid was not tied.

Gordon Sondland: 00:54:21 And I didn't say they were conclusively tied either. I was presuming it.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:54:25 Okay, so the President never told you they were tied. So your testimony, his testimony is consistent in the President and not tie aid to investigations?

Gordon Sondland: 00:54:33 That's correct.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:54:34 Okay. He also testified that he spoke to Giuliani and that Giuliani did not relate that he was tying on behalf of the President or on the President's behalf aid. And then in fact Giuliani never said to him that aid was tied to investigations.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:54:48 Now the question I have for you is did you ever have a conversation with Giuliani that did not involve Volker? Because your testimony is a lot of we's and us', so do you and Giuliani have a separate conference, separate phone call where Giuliani told you that the aid was tied? Because Volker says and if he was on all your phone calls, Volker says that never happened.

Gordon Sondland: 00:55:12 No, I did have a few conversations. I don't recall how many, because I don't have the records, with Mr. Giuliani directly when Mr. Volker wasn't available.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:55:21 Did Giuliani say to you, go ahead. What were you going to say?

Gordon Sondland: 00:55:24 I don't believe I testified that Mr. Giuliani told me that aid was tied.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:55:28 Oh, see, this is part of the problem Ambassador Sondland, and I just want to walk you through this. Is you've said to us, everyone was in the loop and everyone, no, hold on a second. Hold on a second. I've listened to you today as a lot of people, and not only are your answers somewhat circular, frequently you've contradicted yourself in your own answer.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:55:49 Now the text messages and emails that you put up there, Kurt Volker walked us through it. He has a completely different understanding of what you were saying then what you're saying, you were saying. So I'm a little confused as to how everyone's in the loop because if Giuliani didn't give you an express statement, then it can't be that you believe this from Giuliani. Now, let me tell you right now, is Donald Trump your friend?

Gordon Sondland: 00:56:14 No, we're not friends.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:56:16 Do you like the President?

Gordon Sondland: 00:56:17 Yes.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:56:18 Okay. Well after you testified, Chairman Schiff ran out and gave a press conference and said he gets to impeach the President of the United States because of your testimony, and if you pull up CNN today, right now their banner says Sondland ties Trump to withholding aid. Is that your testimony today Ambassador Sondland? That you have evidence that Donald Trump tied the investigations to the aid? Because I don't think you're saying that.

Gordon Sondland: 00:56:41 I've said repeatedly Congressman, I was presuming. I also said that President Trump, [crosstalk 00:56:49]

Rep Mike Turner: 00:56:49 Not just the President, Giuliani didn't tell you, Mulvaney didn't tell you. Nobody. Pompeo didn't tell you. Nobody else on this planet told you that Donald Trump was tying aid to these investigations. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:57:04 I think I already testified-

Rep Mike Turner: 00:57:05 No. Answer the question. Is it correct? No one on this planet told you that Donald Trump was tying this aid to the investigations. Because if your answer is yes, then the Chairman's wrong, and the headline on CNN is wrong. No one on this planet told you that President Trump was tying aid to investigations, yes or no?

Gordon Sondland: 00:57:23 Yes.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:57:24 So you really have no testimony today that ties President Trump to a scheme to withhold aid from Ukraine in exchange for these investigations.

Gordon Sondland: 00:57:36 Other than my own presumption.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:57:38 Which is nothing. I mean that's what I don't understand. So you know what hearsay evidence is Ambassador? Hearsay is when I testify what someone else told me. Do you know what made up testimony is? Made up testimony is when I just presume it. I mean you're just assuming all of these things and then you're giving them the evidence that they're running out and doing press conferences and CNNs headline is saying that you're saying that the President of the United States should be impeached because he tied aid to investigations. And you don't know that. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 00:58:04 I never said the President of the United States should be impeached.

Rep Mike Turner: 00:58:07 Nope. But you have left people with the confusing impression that you were giving testimony that you did not. You do not have any evidence that the President of the United States was tied to withholding aid from Ukraine in exchange for investigations, I yield back.

Adam Schiff: 00:58:24 Mr. Carson.

Andre Carson: 00:58:25 Thank you Chairman. Ambassador Sondland, I really want to better understand Mr. Giuliani's role in carrying out the President's demand for investigation, so on May the 23rd sir, during a meeting in the oval office to discuss the future of US Korean relations, President Trump told you and others to quote, "Talk to Rudy." Do I have that right, sir?

Gordon Sondland: 00:58:45 Correct.

Andre Carson: 00:58:47 Mr. Ambassador, did you listen to the President and talk to Rudy sir?

Gordon Sondland: 00:58:52 Did I talk to Rudy?

Andre Carson: 00:58:53 Yes sir.

Gordon Sondland: 00:58:53 Yes.

Andre Carson: 00:58:55 What did you understand to be Mr. Giuliani's relationship with President Trump?

Gordon Sondland: 00:58:59 I understood he was the President's personal lawyer.

Andre Carson: 00:59:04 What did you believe Mr. Giuliani was doing in the Ukraine for President Trump sir?

Gordon Sondland: 00:59:10 I don't know.

Andre Carson: 00:59:13 Ambassador Sondland, in August of this year, you and Ambassador Volker spoke with Mr. Giuliani about a draft statement to be issued by President

Zelensky. During those discussions it was Mr. Giuliani who suggested in fact, insisted that the statement include specific language about Burisma, correct, sir?

Gordon Sondland: 00:59:33 Correct.

Andre Carson: 00:59:34 And he insisted that the statement include the mention of the 2016 elections, and Mr. Volcker transmitted this message to a top Ukrainian official. Right sir?

Gordon Sondland: 00:59:45 Correct.

Andre Carson: 00:59:46 Mr Ambassador, and this statement was part of the deliverable that President Trump wanted correct, sir?

Gordon Sondland: 00:59:52 Correct.

Andre Carson: 00:59:54 To your knowledge, sir was pushing the Ukrainians to investigate Burisma 2016, or the Biden's part of some official state department policy sir?

Gordon Sondland: 01:00:02 I never testified that we were pushing anyone to investigate the Bidens. I said, Burisma.

Andre Carson: 01:00:08 You were involved in Ukrainian policy, right, sir?

Gordon Sondland: 01:00:12 I told you what my role was, which was quite limited and focused.

Andre Carson: 01:00:16 Was it your understanding, Mr. Ambassador, that Ukraine policy should involve investigations into Americans or debunk conspiracy theories about the 2016 election sir?

Gordon Sondland: 01:00:27 What I testified was that in order to get President Zelensky a White House visit, Mr. Giuliani conveyed the notion that President Trump wanted these announcements to happen.

Andre Carson: 01:00:41 Of course, it was not. It was a part of the President's political agenda and it was done to benefit the President personally and politically. Were you following the President's orders, Mr. Ambassador?

Gordon Sondland: 01:00:55 I was following the President's direction to speak with Mr. Giuliani.

Andre Carson: 01:00:59 Thank you, sir. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Adam Schiff: 01:01:01 I thank the gentleman for yielding. Just to want to point out a couple things Ambassador. In response to my colleagues, my colleagues seem to be under the impression that unless the president spoke the words Ambassador Sondland, I am bribing the Ukrainian president, that there is no evidence of bribery if he didn't say Ambassador Sondland, I'm telling you I'm not going to give the aid unless they do this. That there's no evidence of a quid pro quo on military aid.

Adam Schiff: 01:01:35 But nonetheless Ambassador, you've given us a lot of evidence of precisely that conditionality of both the White House meeting and the military assistance. You've told us Ambassador, have you not, that you emailed the Secretary of State and said that if these investigations were announced, the new justice person was put in place, that the Ukrainians would be prepared to give the President what he wants.

PART 2 OF 5 ENDS [01:02:04]

Adam Schiff: 01:02:00 The Ukrainians were prepared to give the president what he wants, and that would break the log jam. You've testified and showed us documents about this, have you not, Ambassador?

Gordon Sondland: 01:02:10 I have.

Adam Schiff: 01:02:11 And in your written statement, you say that the log jam you're referring to includes the log jam on security assistance, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:02:16 Correct, as my presumption.

Adam Schiff: 01:02:18 Yes. And we also have seen, and you testified, that you have also seen Ambassador ... or rather, acting Chief of Staff Mulvaney, himself, acknowledge that the military aid was withheld, in part, over the investigation into 2016 that you've talked about. You referenced that as well, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:02:39 Correct.

Adam Schiff: 01:02:43 Now, they also seem to say that, "Well, they got the money. The money may have been conditioned, but they got the money." Yes, they got caught. They got caught. Now, they still don't have the White House meeting. They made no statement. They got no meeting. The statement on the investigations was the condition to get the meeting. They didn't make the statement, they got no meeting. But they got caught. You're aware, aren't you, Ambassador, that two days before the aid was lifted, this inexplicable aid was lifted, Congress announced it was investigating this scheme? You're aware of that, aren't you, Ambassador?

Gordon Sondland: 01:03:25 I am now, yes.

Adam Schiff: 01:03:28 Dr. Wenstrup.

Brad Wenstrup: 01:03:28 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to address something, a claim that you made this morning, claiming that Republicans deny Russian attempts to influence our elections. That is false, and you know it. In this committee, the intel committee, not the impeachment committee, but in this committee, time and time again, we all agreed that Russia has tried to influence American elections as far back as the Soviet Union. So I wish you would quit making that comment.

Brad Wenstrup: 01:03:55 Yesterday, we established with Minister Volker something quite obvious. More than one country can try to influence our elections. See, Mr. Schiff, we didn't agree with your Russian collusion narrative, your DNC Clinton campaign coup attempt, that occurred in conjunction with members of the FBI and DOJ and foreign sources, something that you have conveniently ignored as Chairman of the intelligence committee, as you became the chairman of the impeachment committee.

Brad Wenstrup: 01:04:24 But in this process today, I'm interested in facts. I'm not a prosecutor or a defense attorney. I'm not an attorney like Mr. Turner. Ambassador Sondland, you honestly have used the words "presumed," "presumption," "presuming," some form of the verb to presume, repeatedly today. And today, you said that was the problem, Mr. Goldman. "No one ever told me the aid was tied to anything. I was presuming it was." You see, in mathematic fact, two plus two does equal four. But in reality, two presumptions, plus two presumptions, does not equal even one fact. And the fact is the president did tell you, Ambassador Sondland, no quid pro quo. That's a fact. And another fact, no quid pro quo occurred. This time, I'd like to yield to Mr. Conaway.

Mike Conaway: 01:05:25 Thank you, gentlemen. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to [inaudible 01:05:26] consent to enter in the record a Washington Post articles from today that's headlined "Schiff's Claim That The Whistleblower Has A Statutory Right to Anonymity Received Three Pinocchios," Pinocchios meaning that ... Well, we all know what Pinocchios mean. The interpretation of that would be that, two interpretations, one that my colleagues from the other side would argue, is they were trying to protect the whistleblower. An equally valid, incredible interpretation is that there's nothing to hide and that this un-level playing field that's been created by the Chairman's insistence that there is a statutory right to anonymity, maintains that un-level playing field and the advantages that gives them. Now, the Chairman also announces at every-

Mike Conaway: 01:06:09 Let's explore that one. Our own colleague, Congressman Earl Blumenauer from Oregon, has in fact called for a boycott of your hotel chains, or your hotels in Oregon. I'm assuming he believes that that will harm you to the point that you will then be bullied into doing whatever he wants done. Now, my colleagues and I know that using the word "bully" and Earl Blumenauer in the same sentence is a bit over the top. But nevertheless, he intended to harm you and your businesses. Is that what you would surmise?

Gordon Sondland: 01:06:38 That's my understanding.

Mike Conaway: 01:06:39 And that his call for boycott gave rise to demonstrations in front of your hotels that made your customers have to weave in and out of the demonstrators to try to actually get into the hotels?

Gordon Sondland: 01:06:49 As I understand, they're going on as we speak.

Mike Conaway: 01:06:52 Well, the words are better put by a couple of other Oregonians. It says, "Congressman Blumenauer's irresponsible attempt to hurt a homegrown business that supports hundreds of jobs in our local economy is just shameful and ought to be an outrage to all Oregonians." Some fellow named McDermott. And then the lady named Ellen Carmichael, who I believe works for you, said, "We are saddened to have our Congressman, Earl Blumenauer, call for a boycott that would put the livelihoods of thousands of his constituents in peril. The attack on our employees is unwarranted."

Mike Conaway: 01:07:20 And I couldn't agree more, Mr. Ambassador. Mr. Blumenauer should not be using the vast influences that we, as members of Congress, has to bully you and your businesses, and to harm the hundreds or thousands of employees that operate in your business by trying to take business away from you, to force you into doing something that they wanted you to do, which [inaudible 01:07:40] testify. And you actually have done that. But that's a shame for that. And I'm hopeful that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will join me in saying, Mr. Blumenauer, you really shouldn't be using your congressional influence to try to bully

and threaten a witness before these proceedings. That is just wrong. And I'm looking forward to my colleague's response. And I yield back.

Gordon Sondland: 01:07:58 Thank you, Congressman.

Adam Schiff: 01:07:59 Ms. Speier.

Jackie Speier: 01:08:02 I was somewhat humored by your request that Mr. Blumenauer not bully to get something done when all we're talking about is the president bullying to get something he wants done. But having said that, I'd like to clarify one point about the whistleblower protection from the article that Mr. Conaway just provided.

Jackie Speier: 01:08:23 The law reads "... expressly restricts the Inspector General's office from disclosing whistleblowers' identities. It says, 'The inspector general shall not disclose the identity of the employee without the consent of the employee, unless the Inspector General determines that such a disclosure is unavoidable during the course of the investigation, or the disclosure is made to an official of the Department of Justice responsible for determining whether a prosecution should be undertaken.' That appears to be the lone statutory restriction on disclosing a whistleblower's identity, applicable only to the Inspector General's office. We found no court rulings on whether whistleblowers have a right to anonymity under the ICWPA, or related statutes. Vladeck said it is, nonetheless, a best practice to avoid disclosure of the Ukraine whistleblower's identity given the concerns about retaliation. McCullough said, 'We've stepped into bizarro land when senior policymakers are trying to yank a CIA employee into the public spotlight in retaliation for making a whistleblowing complaint, especially when they are credible threats to that employee's personal safety.'"

Jackie Speier: 01:09:46 And I don't know why our colleagues on the other side of the aisle-

Mike Conaway: 01:09:50 Does the [crosstalk 01:09:50] yield? [inaudible 01:09:51] lady yield?

Jackie Speier: 01:09:51 No, I'm afraid I only have three minutes, and I have some other issues. But thank you.

Mike Conaway: 01:09:54 Well, the end of the article does go through that. And it also says the three Pinocchios, in spite of that conversation.

Jackie Speier: 01:10:01 The president of United States has five Pinocchios on a daily basis, so let's not go there.

Jackie Speier: 01:10:13 Ambassador Sondland, in your deposition, you lamented, "I was truly disappointed that the State Department prevented me, at the last minute, from testifying earlier on October 8th, 2019. But your issuance of a subpoena has supported my appearance here today, and I'm pleased to provide the following testimony."

Jackie Speier: 01:10:35 So it is clear that the White House, the State Department, did not want you to testify at that deposition. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:10:43 That's correct.

Jackie Speier: 01:10:44 And since then, you have on numerous occasions during your opening statement today indicated that you have not been able to access documents in the State Department. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:10:56 Correct.

Jackie Speier: 01:10:57 So you have been hampered in your ability to provide testimony to this committee. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:11:02 I've been hampered to provide completely accurate testimony without the benefit of those documents.

Jackie Speier: 01:11:08 In terms of your conversations with the president of the United States, what percentage of your conversations were about Ukraine, as compared to your other duties?

Gordon Sondland: 01:11:19 I don't recall.

Jackie Speier: 01:11:21 Well, and you've only had six conversations or seven conversations with the president, you said, so-

Gordon Sondland: 01:11:27 About Ukraine, I think.

Jackie Speier: 01:11:29 So you've had many other conversations?

Gordon Sondland: 01:11:31 Oh yeah, about unrelated, completely unrelated matters.

Jackie Speier: 01:11:34 So how many conversations with the president of the United States have you had?

Gordon Sondland: 01:11:36 Again, I don't want to give you a number because it's going to be wrong if I don't have the records.

Jackie Speier: 01:11:40 Is it less than 20?

Gordon Sondland: 01:11:42 It's probably in that range.

Jackie Speier: 01:11:44 All right. Would you say that delay in military aid and the lack of a meeting in the White House works to the benefit of Russia?

Gordon Sondland: 01:11:56 Repeat the question again, please.

Jackie Speier: 01:11:58 Would you say that the delay in military aid to Ukraine and the reluctance to have a White House meeting, has a benefit to Russia?

Gordon Sondland: 01:12:08 I think it could be looked that way, yes, looked at that way, yes.

Jackie Speier: 01:12:13 All right. I'm going to just speak very briefly about code. When Michael Cohen was before the Oversight Committee, he was asked, "You suggest the president sometimes communicates his wishes indirectly. For example, you say, 'Mr. Trump did not

directly tell me to lie to Congress. That's not how he operates. It would be different, he said ... He doesn't give you questions, he doesn't give you orders. He speaks in code. And I understand the code because I've been around him for a decade.”

Jackie Speier: 01:12:50 So do you think that the president was speaking in code when he would talk about wanting investigations?

Gordon Sondland: 01:12:58 I don't. I can't characterize how the president was speaking. Every conversation I've had with the president has been fairly direct and straightforward.

Jackie Speier: 01:13:07 All right. I yield back.

Adam Schiff: 01:13:09 Mr. Stewart.

Chris Stewart: 01:13:10 Mr. Chairman, I have a unanimous consent request.

Adam Schiff: 01:13:14 You may state your request.

Chris Stewart: 01:13:15 The DOE responds to Ambassador Sondland's comments before the House Intelligence Committee attributable to the DOE secretary of ... the press secretary, "Ambassador Sondland's testimony today misrepresented both Secretary Perry's interaction with Rudy Giuliani and direction the secretary received from President Trump. As previously stated, Secretary Perry spoke to Rudy Giuliani only once at the president's request. No one else was on that call. At no point before, during, or after the phone call, did the words 'Biden' or 'Burisma' ever come up in the presence of Secretary Perry." Again, I ask that that be entered into the record.

Adam Schiff: 01:13:56 Without objection. Although, I would note that they've also refused to come and testify under oath.

Chris Stewart: 01:14:01 The American people expect a lot of things out of politics, arguments, protests, we certainly see that, clash of principles and ideas, I think sometimes, eventually, they actually would like to see some compromise. But I think something they expect above everything else, fundamental, they expect that there is a sense of fairness about it. And I want to read part of a text I received from someone that I have tremendous respect for, just a few hours ago. She wrote, "Crafting a story to hurt another human being can never be right. The means of destroying and hurting another individual just does not justify the end. And politics does not give anyone a free pass to destroy other people."

Chris Stewart: 01:14:43 Now, you can say a lot about the treatment of President Trump over the last three years. But I think one thing you cannot argue is that it has been fair. There were those calling for his impeachment literally before he was inaugurated. For two and a half years, we were told every single day, "He has betrayed our country. He is a Russian asset. He has committed treason," accusations that we know now are not true, and for which we never had any evidence to support that. He was accused of obstruction.

Chris Stewart: 01:15:13 And now here we are actually impeaching the president over, well, first, quid pro quo, until we found out that didn't pull very well with focus groups. And then it was bribery, until virtually every witness before us who was asked the question said they had no evidence of bribery. And now it's extortion. And again, the American people expect some sense of fairness. So when Nancy Pelosi goes, before she has seen a shred of evidence, and she announces

the president has betrayed his oath of office, he has betrayed the American people, he betrayed national security, without seeing any evidence, again, the American people say, “Well, what is fair about that?” So the question before us now is again extortion. That’s the latest version of the charges against the president. I’m not an attorney. Extortion sounds pretty scary. It’s kind of serious. I had to look it up, what it means. It means obtaining money or property by threat to a victim’s property or loved ones.

Chris Stewart: 01:16:10 Mr. Ambassador, I’m going to read you a couple of quotes from president Zelensky and then ask you a question. First, from a Ukrainian press release, “Donald Trump is convinced that the new Ukrainian government will be able to quickly improve the image of Ukraine, complete investigation of corruption, which inhibited the interaction with Ukraine and the USA.” Does that sound like president Zelensky is being bribed or extorted in that comment?

Gordon Sondland: 01:16:35 As I testified previously, I’m not a lawyer either, and I don’t want to characterize-

Chris Stewart: 01:16:40 Well, okay-

Gordon Sondland: 01:16:41 ... any legal terms. I really don’t.

Chris Stewart: 01:16:43 That’s fine. I think most people would read that and say, “That doesn’t sound like he’s under severe pressure.” He makes it very clear in his own words then. Ukrainian President Zelensky told reporters during a joint press conference with Donald Trump that he was not pressured by the US president. “Again, I was not pressured.” He used another time, “There was no blackmail.” I would ask you, do you think he felt like he was being extorted by the president, based on these comments?

Gordon Sondland: 01:17:08 I really think that’s for the committee and the Congress to-

Chris Stewart: 01:17:11 Well, you know what, Mr. Ambassador, it’s really for the American people.

Gordon Sondland: 01:17:15 I agree.

Chris Stewart: 01:17:16 And the American people aren’t stupid. And the American people can hear that and they can say, “I don’t think he was under duress. I don’t think he was being extorted. I don’t think there was an exchange of a bribe.” And I would conclude with this last observation, it is common for our national policy to withhold aid for various reasons. You know that that’s true, as an ambassador. Is that not true?

Gordon Sondland: 01:17:41 That’s true.

Chris Stewart: 01:17:41 It’s frequent, isn’t it, that we will withhold aid for various reasons?

Gordon Sondland: 01:17:46 That’s correct.

Chris Stewart: 01:17:46 It is a policy. I mean, for example, President Bush did it. He suspended military aid to 35 countries over their lack of support for the International Criminal Court. I’ll bet that helped his political standing back home. But I don’t remember anyone suggesting we should impeach him for it. President Trump did it last year with Afghanistan over

corruption. We did it with Pakistan over much the same thing. And no one suggested that we impeach them for it. This is a common occurrence in international relations. It is hardly an impeachable offense.

Adam Schiff: 01:18:19 The time of the gentleman has expired. Mr. Quigley.

Mike Quigley: 01:18:28 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, sir, for being here today. There are things we can agree with our colleagues on, things we can disagree. I can agree with my colleague that we should turn over, all the documents should be turned over. Mr. Ambassador, I think you agree that it would have helped your testimony, helped you understand that the State Department, the White House hasn't turned over a single document. The White House [inaudible 01:18:54] the president's April phone conversation, but millions more out there. So on that, we can agree.

Mike Quigley: 01:19:01 On others, we can disagree, as to, particularly as it relates to the whistleblower. It distresses me because I begin to wonder about the motivations. In the final analysis, the way I look at this is, if we were investigating an arson, you all would indict the person who pulled the fire alarm. That person's job is done. And we've seen the smoke, and we've seen the fire. Whatever the whistleblower did, doesn't change the president's actions, doesn't change the president's own words, which are in our testimony, or in our our body of evidence. It doesn't change Mr. Mulvaney's own words. It doesn't change the body of evidence here. All it does is put this person at risk.

Mike Quigley: 01:19:57 Back to the documents and what you know, and clearly, Mr. Ambassador, you seem to have your memory jogged by documents. Let's talk about May 23rd and see if this one helps you. Senator Johnson, in referencing the May 23rd meeting, in his letter, sir, says: "I have no recollection of the president saying that during the meeting. It is entirely possible he did, because I do not work for the president. If made, the comment [inaudible 01:20:28] did that register with me." He also says: "I also remember Sondland staying behind to talk to the president as the rest of the delegation left the Oval Office."

Mike Quigley: 01:20:39 Sir, do you recall this later conversation, and what you and the president discussed?

Gordon Sondland: 01:20:45 I do.

Mike Quigley: 01:20:46 And what was that?

Gordon Sondland: 01:20:47 Just again, recapping what ... It was sort of a free-for-all conversation, and I wanted to tie down exactly what we agreed to do and what we didn't.

Mike Quigley: 01:20:56 And in that subsequent ... he reinforced, "Talk to Rudy," and did he-

Gordon Sondland: 01:21:00 "Talk to Rudy. You guys should work on this."

Mike Quigley: 01:21:02 Did he go into any more detail about what that meant?

Gordon Sondland: 01:21:04 No.

Mike Quigley: 01:21:05 Just said, "Talk to Rudy"?

Gordon Sondland: 01:21:07 It was a very short conversation.

Mike Quigley: 01:21:08 And the second part, you said there was something besides just, "Talk to Rudy"?

Gordon Sondland: 01:21:12 Yeah. To reconfirm that the three of us would be working on the Ukraine file, and so on.

Mike Quigley: 01:21:21 Back to Rudy in this seemingly contradictory messages here, you now recall the prerequisite mentioned in the July 10th meeting, right, that when you were having this discussion, the first meeting in John Bolton's office, sir-

Gordon Sondland: 01:21:38 Yes.

Mike Quigley: 01:21:39 ... that you referenced that there was a condition. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:21:43 I believe someone else testified that I raised that, and I didn't dispute that testimony that I said, "It's my understanding that in order to get this visit done, there needs to be an announcement about ..." and I don't know if I said "investigations," or said, specifically, "Burisma and [crosstalk 00:20:00]-

Mike Quigley: 01:22:00 Sure. But in your opening, you mentioned, at the very same time that, apparently, there was a meeting with Rudy Giuliani and the message you got was underscored, "Very concerned about what Lutsenko told them, that according to RG, Rudy Giuliani, the ZE-POTUS meeting will not happen," which is not conditioned. It's just not going to happen. Your understanding of the difference here?

Gordon Sondland: 01:22:27 I think what you're saying is, this meeting I was talking about in my opening statement was apparently a meeting that Rudy Giuliani was having-

Mike Quigley: 01:22:37 At the same time.

Gordon Sondland: 01:22:38 ... at the same time in Ukraine, unbeknownst to us.

Mike Quigley: 01:22:41 Right. But he's saying something different. He's saying it's not going to happen. There's no notice in here that it's conditioned in any way.

Gordon Sondland: 01:22:48 Well, that was Ambassador Volker's point. This was really an exchange with Ambassador Taylor and Ambassador Volker. Ambassador Volker is saying, "Don't let other people speak for the US government." That was his point.

Mike Quigley: 01:23:01 But if Rudy is following the directions and he's saying what he's saying here, and you're also following directions, right, and you're saying it's conditioned, who's given you the instructions to say what you're saying?

Gordon Sondland: 01:23:12 That's why we thought it was problematic to work with Mr. Giuliani.

Mike Quigley: 01:23:15 Exactly. But who did you work with to say the things that you said? Did you have conversations with the Chief of Staff, with Secretary Pompeo, to say what you were saying? You didn't [crosstalk 01:23:28]-

Gordon Sondland: 01:23:27 Are you talking about in the July 10th meeting?

Mike Quigley: 01:23:30 That's correct.

Gordon Sondland: 01:23:31 Oh, yeah. With Ambassador Volker, because at that point, Ambassador Volker was the one in touch with Mr. Giuliani, not me.

Mike Quigley: 01:23:38 But you had no direct conversations with Mr. Mulvaney about this, or Secretary Pompeo, to make this condition statement?

Gordon Sondland: 01:23:44 Only the texts and emails that I've already reviewed.

Mike Quigley: 01:23:49 Thank you. My time is up.

Adam Schiff: 01:23:56 Ms. Stefanik.

Elise Stefanik: 01:23:57 Thank you, Ambassador Sondland, for your service. And I also want to thank you for your recognition in your opening statement of your hardworking staff at the US Mission to the EU. Mr Sondland, you testified that you never received any direct confirmation or specific information as to why there was a hold on aid.

Gordon Sondland: 01:24:15 That's correct.

Elise Stefanik: 01:24:16 And in fact, you testified, "President Trump never told me directly that the aid was conditioned on the investigations."

Gordon Sondland: 01:24:24 That's correct.

Elise Stefanik: 01:24:25 You said, "Never heard those words from the president," correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:24:29 Correct.

Elise Stefanik: 01:24:30 Instead, you testified that in your September 9th call with president Trump, the president said, "No quid pro quo. I want nothing. I want nothing. I want President Zelensky to do the right thing, do what he ran on." Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:24:46 That's correct.

Elise Stefanik: 01:24:48 And the fact is the aid was given to Ukraine without any announcement of new investigations.

Gordon Sondland: 01:24:54 That's correct.

Elise Stefanik: 01:24:55 And President Trump did, in fact, meet with President Zelensky in September at the United Nations. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:25:01 He did.

Elise Stefanik: 01:25:02 And there was no announcement of investigations before this meeting?

Gordon Sondland: 01:25:05 Correct.

Elise Stefanik: 01:25:06 And there was no announcement of investigations after this meeting?

Gordon Sondland: 01:25:09 That's right.

Elise Stefanik: 01:25:10 And you've been very clear when Chairman Schiff has asked you broadly about investigations, you've corrected that to say specifically your understanding of investigations are, investigation into the 2016 elections and investigations into Burisma. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:25:25 That's correct.

Elise Stefanik: 01:25:26 And are you aware that during the Obama administration, the US partnered with the UK and Ukraine on an investigation into the owner of Burisma as part of Ukraine's anti-corruption efforts?

Gordon Sondland: 01:25:40 I became aware of it today during the hearing.

Elise Stefanik: 01:25:42 Other witnesses have testified, but yes. And in fact, the Obama administration's State Department was concerned about the potential appearance of conflict of interest with Hunter Biden serving on the board of Burisma because they raised this as they were preparing Ambassador Yovanovitch for her Senate confirmation. Are you aware of that?

Gordon Sondland: 01:26:02 I'm not aware of it.

Elise Stefanik: 01:26:03 She testified when I asked her that question both in the open hearing and the closed deposition. And I've asked most of our witnesses this, and every witness I've asked has said yes, and I want to ask you this today. Do you believe that Hunter Biden having a position on the board of Burisma has the potential appearance of a conflict of interest?

Gordon Sondland: 01:26:24 I don't want to characterize Hunter Biden's service on the board one way or another. I just don't know enough.

Elise Stefanik: 01:26:29 So you disagree with every other witness that has answered, "Yes, there is a potential appearance of a conflict of interest"?

Gordon Sondland: 01:26:35 Well, you asked if there was a conflict or an appearance of [crosstalk 01:26:39]-

Elise Stefanik: 01:26:38 My quote was "the potential appearance of a conflict of interest."

Gordon Sondland: 01:26:42 I didn't hear the word "appearance." Well, clearly, it's an appearance of a conflict.

Elise Stefanik: 01:26:45 Correct. Clearly, it is an appearance of conflict of interest. Again, this is something that every witness has answered yes to, or agreed with. It could have a potential appearance. And yet, we are not allowed to call Hunter Biden to answer questions in front of this committee. Thank you again for your truthful testimony today. And I yield back.

Gordon Sondland: 01:27:02 Thank you.

Elise Stefanik: 01:27:06 Mr. Swalwell.

Eric Swalwell: 01:27:06 Ambassador Sondland, you were told by the president and others to not show up. You showed up. I think that says a lot about you. And I think history will look kindly on you doing that. But there are consequences to that. And just a couple of hours ago, President Trump was asked about you, and he said, "I don't know him well. I have not spoken to him much. This is not a man I know well." Is that true?

Gordon Sondland: 01:27:37 It really depends on what you mean by "know well." We are not close friends, no. We have a professional, cordial working relationship.

Eric Swalwell: 01:27:44 And in that working relationship, he knows who you are?

Gordon Sondland: 01:27:47 Yes.

Eric Swalwell: 01:27:47 And he has spoken to you often?

Gordon Sondland: 01:27:50 What's often?

Eric Swalwell: 01:27:51 Well, you said at least 20 times.

Gordon Sondland: 01:27:53 Okay. If that's often, then it's often.

Eric Swalwell: 01:27:55 And you donated a million dollars to his inaugural committee, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:28:03 I bought a V-VIP ticket to the inauguration.

Eric Swalwell: 01:28:08 That's a lot of money, isn't it?

Gordon Sondland: 01:28:09 It's a lot of money.

Speaker 2: 01:28:10 That's an expensive ticket.

Eric Swalwell: 01:28:11 And after that, the president makes you ambassador to the European Union. Eventually, the ambassador to Ukraine is removed. And as you told us in your deposition, you become a central figure as it relates to Ukraine. That's a pretty big responsibility, right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:28:29 Well, I don't know that I said I was a central figure. I was one of several people who were tasked to work on the Ukraine file.

Eric Swalwell: 01:28:36 And would you ever, in that big responsibility, take any actions that were not authorized by President Trump?

Gordon Sondland: 01:28:44 Well, by President Trump or the leadership in the State Department.

Eric Swalwell: 01:28:49 Were you ever hauled into the leadership of the State Department for any actions you had taken around your work on Ukraine?

Gordon Sondland: 01:28:56 No.

Eric Swalwell: 01:28:58 As to Rudy Giuliani, on May 23rd, the president told you, "Talk to Rudy." You talked to him a couple times. You, as you told us, in September, talked to the president a couple of times. Did the president ever say to you, "Stop talking to Rudy"?

Gordon Sondland: 01:29:12 No.

Eric Swalwell: 01:29:13 Did he ever say, "Don't any longer talk to Rudy"?

Gordon Sondland: 01:29:15 No.

Eric Swalwell: 01:29:17 On Ukraine, you said that you were playing the hand, you were dealt. President Trump was the dealer, wasn't he?

Gordon Sondland: 01:29:26 President Trump was what?

Eric Swalwell: 01:29:27 The dealer. In your metaphor, you were playing the hand you were dealt. The dealer is president Trump. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:29:36 I'll re-characterize your question by saying we followed the direction of the president because that was the only pathway to working with Ukraine.

Eric Swalwell: 01:29:46 On page four of your testimony, you said, "Given what we know, given what we knew at the time, what we were asked to do, did not appear to be wrong." And you would agree now, Ambassador, knowing what you know now, what you did not know at the time, there are some things around Ukraine that were wrong?

Gordon Sondland: 01:30:04 I agree.

Eric Swalwell: 01:30:05 So let's take out any leveraging of security assistance over the Ukrainians and a White House visit. Would you agree that it is wrong for the president of the United States to ask the leader of a foreign government to investigate the president of the United States' political opponent?

Gordon Sondland: 01:30:24 Yes.

Eric Swalwell: 01:30:25 Would you agree that, in addition to making that request for an investigation, leveraging a visit at the White House that a foreign government leader desperately needs, is also wrong?

Gordon Sondland: 01:30:36 Leveraging in what respect?

Eric Swalwell: 01:30:37 A meeting at the White House. If someone really needs a meeting at the White House to show their legitimacy to their people, that leveraging that meeting and asking for an investigation would be wrong.

Gordon Sondland: 01:30:47 Well, to be candid, Congressman, every meeting at the White House has conditions placed on it. I've never worked on a meeting at the White House that doesn't have a host of conditions placed-

Eric Swalwell: 01:30:55 But if one of those conditions is to investigate a political opponent, you would agree that would be wrong?

Gordon Sondland: 01:30:59 The political opponent, yes. But making announcements or investigations per se, no.

Eric Swalwell: 01:31:06 And if you asked a foreign government leader to investigate your political opponent and leveraged a White House meeting, and leveraged security assistance, in this hypothetical, you would agree all three of those are wrong?

Gordon Sondland: 01:31:17 In the hypothetical, yes, I would agree.

Eric Swalwell: 01:31:19 Now, you, before becoming an ambassador, worked as a businessman. And I presume you worked on a lot of deals. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:31:25 Correct.

Eric Swalwell: 01:31:26 Involving millions of dollars?

Gordon Sondland: 01:31:27 Correct.

Eric Swalwell: 01:31:28 You work for a guy now who wrote a book called Art of the Deal. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:31:32 I do.

Eric Swalwell: 01:31:33 And State Department employees have told us that they don't want to make legal definitions around what occurred with the White House meeting being leveraged against the investigations. But you plainly call it a quid pro quo. Is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:31:46 I did.

Eric Swalwell: 01:31:47 And finally, one final hypothetical, if someone walks through those two doors wearing rain boots, a rain coat, and holding an umbrella with raindrops falling off of them, do you have to see outside that it's raining, to presume or conclude that it might be raining outside?

Gordon Sondland: 01:32:09 I understand your hypothetical.

Eric Swalwell: 01:32:11 I yield back.

Gordon Sondland: 01:32:12 Thank you.

Adam Schiff: 01:32:14 Mr. Hurd.

Will Hurd: 01:32:19 Thank you. Mr. Ambassador, good to see you.

Gordon Sondland: 01:32:21 Good to see you.

Will Hurd: 01:32:24 My colleague from California basically implied that you've been supported of president Trump's campaign. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:32:30 I'm having a very hard time hearing you, sir.

Will Hurd: 01:32:33 My colleague from California indicated that you were supportive of the president's campaign. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:32:39 I actually donated to the inaugural committee in order to secure tickets.

Will Hurd: 01:32:47 So let me ask this question. Did you participate in or overhear any conversations about the potential information collected by Ukrainians on the Bidens, would be used for political gain?

Gordon Sondland: 01:33:03 Did I-

PART 3 OF 5 ENDS [01:33:04]

Will Hurd: 01:33:00 ... On the Bidens would be used for political gain?

Gordon Sondland: 01:33:03 Did I personally hear that? No.

Will Hurd: 01:33:05 Did you participate in any conversations when this was being discussed?

Gordon Sondland: 01:33:08 Not that I recall.

Will Hurd: 01:33:10 In your statement on page five you said, "Mr. Giuliani's request were a quid pro quo for arranging a White House visit for President Selensky." Then you also recounted your conversation with President Trump where he says, "I want nothing. No quid pro quo." How do you reconcile these two statements?

Gordon Sondland: 01:33:33 They're hard to reconcile. We were working along Mr. Giuliani's direction for a period of time. We still didn't have a White House meeting, aid was now held up. There were lots of reasons being given by various people as to why those weren't moving forward and I finally got exasperated by receiving Ambassador Taylor's latest text and I just picked up the phone. I got through to the president and I said, what do you want?

Will Hurd: 01:34:04 Sure. Are you aware of any specific conversations Mayor Giuliani had with the president between your May 23rd conversation and September, 11, 2019?

Gordon Sondland: 01:34:19 I don't recall if Mayor Giuliani, when I was directly talking to him either through a conference call or on a direct call, whether he quoted from the president or

said I just talked to the president. Most of the communications, as I said, went through Ambassador Volker initially. So I don't want to opine on what may or may not have been said.

Will Hurd: 01:34:42 On page 11 of your testimony, you said "Mr. Giuliani had been communicating with Ukrainians without our knowledge." I'm assuming you're believing you, Mr. Volker and Ambassador Taylor. Which Ukrainians was Rudy Giuliani communicating with?

Gordon Sondland: 01:34:59 Well, I was specifically referring to this text that I received from Ambassador Volker where Mr. Giuliani was apparently telling the Ukrainians something that frustrated Ambassador Volker.

Will Hurd: 01:35:13 Sure. So who specifically? We know that ...

Gordon Sondland: 01:35:16 Mr. Lutsenko, the old prosecutor.

Will Hurd: 01:35:18 And do you think Mr. Lutsenko has any groggy tasks within this Selensky regime?

Gordon Sondland: 01:35:25 I don't know. He was the old attorney general.

Will Hurd: 01:35:27 And ultimately got fired in August when the new ...

Gordon Sondland: 01:35:31 I think so. Yeah.

Will Hurd: 01:35:32 ... Group came in. Okay. So we know Rudy Giuliani has met with Mr. Yurmach on the fringes of meetings and I think it was Spain. Do you know any other Ukrainian official within this Selensky regime that Mayor Giuliani was meeting with?

Gordon Sondland: 01:35:47 I don't know who Mr. Giuliani was meeting with.

Will Hurd: 01:35:50 Had you had any conversations with Ukrainian officials within the Selensky regime that came to you and said, hey, I just got off the phone with Giuliani. What the hell is he talking about?

Gordon Sondland: 01:36:02 I don't recall.

Will Hurd: 01:36:04 Would that be normal? In all your interactions with ambassadors and heads of states and governments, if there is some element of the US Government that they have spoken to, isn't it usually the step that they come in, talk to the ambassador to try to clarify what that statement was? Is that a true characterization of how elements of diplomacy work?

Gordon Sondland: 01:36:24 I think that's a reasonable possibility. Things work all kinds of different ways these days.

Will Hurd: 01:36:30 When you met with President Selensky after the July 25th phone call, so you met him on July 26, did the investigations or Joe Biden come up in that meeting?

Gordon Sondland: 01:36:41 I don't recall Joe Biden coming up.

Will Hurd: 01:36:43 Was there any frustration expressed to you by the phone call that happened the day before?

Gordon Sondland: 01:36:47 No. As I testified, everyone said it was a good call.

Will Hurd: 01:36:51 Is in your opinion, your interactions with President Selensky, is he a straight shooter? Is he a liar or is he a liar?

Gordon Sondland: 01:36:58 He impressed me greatly and that's why I wanted to get he and President Trump together as soon as possible.

Will Hurd: 01:37:03 And so when he makes express statements you tend to believe them?

Gordon Sondland: 01:37:07 Yeah. With my limited interaction with him, he seems very honorable.

Will Hurd: 01:37:11 Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. I hope you make your plane.

Gordon Sondland: 01:37:13 Thank you Mr. Hurd.

Will Hurd: 01:37:14 I yield back.

Mr. Chairman: 01:37:17 Mr. Castro.

Rep. Castro: 01:37:18 Thank you, Chairman. Good afternoon, Ambassador. Welcome. Others close to President Trump have made it clear that investigations were in fact part of the conditions for US assistance to Ukraine, including Rudy Giuliani and Mick Mulvaney, the acting chief of staff. So a Mr. Sondland at a press conference on October 17th, acting White House Chief of Staff, Mick Mulvaney discussed his belief that it's entirely appropriate to politicize US foreign policy. Ambassador, how often did you speak or meet with Mr. Mulvaney?

Gordon Sondland: 01:37:52 Again, based on my lack of of records, I'm going by a bad memory.

Rep. Castro: 01:37:58 Just based on your memory.

Gordon Sondland: 01:37:59 I only think I had one formal meeting with Mr. Mulvaney and it had nothing to do with Ukraine. It had to do with a completely unrelated matter.

Rep. Castro: 01:38:07 So did you have a chance to talk with Mr. Mulvaney about your efforts in the Ukraine?

Gordon Sondland: 01:38:11 I think most of our communication were through the stream of emails, which others were on generally, and I may have seen him at the White House casually and said hello and kept in touch. But we didn't have a back and forth.

Rep. Castro: 01:38:27 Well, let me ask you this. Was it your sense of Mr. Mulvaney had a direct line to President Trump? He must have as acting chief of staff, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:38:35 Of course.

Rep. Castro: 01:38:36 Let us look at what Mr. Mulvaney said during his October 17th press conference.

Mr. Mulvaney: 01:38:46 Those were the driving factors. Did he also mentioned to me in past the corruption related to the DNC server? Absolutely. No about that. But that's it. And that's why we held up the money. Now there was a report ...

Speaker 3: 01:39:01 So the demand for an investigation into the Democrats was part of the reason that he was going to withhold funding to Ukraine?

Mr. Mulvaney: 01:39:08 The look back to what happened in 2016 certainly was part of the thing that he was worried about in corruption with that nation, and that is absolutely appropriate.

Rep. Castro: 01:39:20 He said that President Trump in that clip had an interest in the investigations. Did he not?

Gordon Sondland: 01:39:29 Apparently. Yes.

Rep. Castro: 01:39:30 He's the chief of staff. He's somebody that sees the president and has conversation with the president every single day. Wouldn't you expect that?

Speaker 4: 01:39:37 It's described as a quid pro quo.

Gordon Sondland: 01:39:40 I would expect he has a direct line to the president.

Rep. Castro: 01:39:43 Ambassador Sondland, when did you first learn from Mr. Mulvaney that the investigations were holding up the security assistance? If at any time?

Gordon Sondland: 01:39:50 I don't know that I heard it from Mr. Mulvaney.

Rep. Castro: 01:39:53 Okay. Ambassador Sondland, I know that you're not a career foreign service officer. Is it your understanding that the US Government conditions security assistance on an investigation into a political rival all the time?

Gordon Sondland: 01:40:11 I've already testified I didn't think that would be proper.

Rep. Castro: 01:40:15 All right. Well let us also see what Mr. Mulvaney had to say about that at the same press conference.

Mr. Mulvaney: 01:40:35 Those were the driving factors. Did he also mention to me in past the corruption related to the DNC server? Absolutely. No question about that. But that's it. That's why we held up the money. Now there was a report.

Rep. Castro: 01:40:49 I'll just go ahead and read it for you because this thing. I'll read it. He says that I have news for everybody. Get over it. There's going to be political influence in foreign policy. Knowing what you know now about what was intended with Ukraine. Do you agree with Mr. Mulvaney that there's just going to be political influence and foreign policy or that we should all just get over it and allow a president now or later to investigate a political rival and ask a foreign government to do that? Do you agree with Mr. Mulvaney?

Gordon Sondland: 01:41:25 I think there's a big difference between political influence and investigating a rival because politics enters into everything relating to foreign policy.

Rep. Castro: 01:41:33 But you disagree that the president ... You agree that the president should not be allowed to ask for the investigation of a political rival.

Gordon Sondland: 01:41:43 In the context of what was going on in Ukraine, I believe that the president should not investigate a political arrival in return for a quid pro quo.

Rep. Castro: 01:41:53 And part of the way that you figured that all of this stuff that was going on, that you were part of something that was basically wrong is because in the July 25th phone call, the president himself, he didn't tell you, we don't know if he told Rudy Giuliani or not because Rudy Giuliani won't come in here. He said directly to the president of Ukraine that he wanted the Bidens investigated. Wasn't that your reading of the call?

Gordon Sondland: 01:42:19 First of all, I don't believe that I was a part of something that was wrong because based on what I knew, I thought we were operating well within the center lane of proper US diplomacy.

Rep. Castro: 01:42:30 I yield back.

Mr. Chairman: 01:42:32 Mr. Ratcliffe.

John Ratcliffe: 01:42:34 Chairman, thank you. Ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a statement issued this morning from the Office of the Vice President by Chief of Staff, Mark Short.

Mr. Chairman: 01:42:43 Without objection.

John Ratcliffe: 01:42:46 Ambassador Sondland, I'll be brief. In anticipation of Mr. Holmes' testimony tomorrow about this July 26 phone call that he overheard at a cafe in Kiev that you had with President Trump. He overheard that even though the call was not on speaker phone, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:43:10 I don't believe so.

John Ratcliffe: 01:43:12 Was it an open air cafe?

Gordon Sondland: 01:43:14 It was outdoors.

John Ratcliffe: 01:43:17 One of the points that my Democratic colleagues keep making is that David Holmes' prior testimony, which he'll apparently confirm tomorrow is that President Trump said that he doesn't give a blank about Ukraine. You heard that earlier?

Gordon Sondland: 01:43:35 That was not on the phone call. I don't think he testified that was on the phone call. I think he was testifying that I summarized the phone call and I don't recall saying that.

John Ratcliffe: 01:43:45 And you have no recollection of that?

Gordon Sondland: 01:43:47 I don't, yeah.

John Ratcliffe: 01:43:50 Even if it was true, there's nothing wrong with that to have an opinion about.

Gordon Sondland: 01:43:54 He can have whatever opinion he wants about Ukraine.

John Ratcliffe: 01:43:56 It's all part of the narrative that President Trump is a bad guy, that he doesn't care about the Ukrainians, but it seems to me, Ambassador Sondland, that nothing says you care more about the Ukrainians than sending javelin anti-tank missiles. Do you agree with me?

Gordon Sondland: 01:44:12 I agree that sending javelin anti-tank missiles is something that Ukraine wanted and needed.

John Ratcliffe: 01:44:17 Certainly, those work a lot better at stopping Russian tanks than the blankets that were sent by the Obama Administration.

Gordon Sondland: 01:44:24 Your point is taken.

John Ratcliffe: 01:44:26 I'll yield back.

Gordon Sondland: 01:44:27 Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: 01:44:30 Mr. Heck.

Rep. Heck: 01:44:31 Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ambassador, thank you for your stamina, sir. Have a few quick fairly easy questions. You would agree, would you not sir, that foreign interference in our elections is or can be a threat to our democracy?

Gordon Sondland: 01:44:45 Under certain conditions, yes.

Rep. Heck: 01:44:48 There are conditions under which their interference is not a threat?

Gordon Sondland: 01:44:51 I'm sorry. Did you say foreign interference?

Rep. Heck: 01:44:53 Yes.

Gordon Sondland: 01:44:54 Always, sorry.

Rep. Heck: 01:44:55 And do you also agree that identifying and preventing that interference should be a priority of the federal government?

Gordon Sondland: 01:45:00 It should be one of its priorities.

Rep. Heck: 01:45:02 And when were assisting President Trump in his effort to obtain those investigations, did you at all realize that those investigations could in fact impact the 2020 election?

Gordon Sondland: 01:45:13 No.

Rep. Heck: 01:45:14 Do you believe, sir, that it is ever appropriate to invite, press, bribe or coheres foreign interference in our elections?

Gordon Sondland: 01:45:26 No.

Rep. Heck: 01:45:28 Thank you. I want to refer to something that you said in your opening statement. As I previously testified, had I known of all of Mr. Giuliani's dealings or of his associations with individuals now under criminal indictment, I would not have acquiesced to his participation. It's hard to read that without believing that you thought that what he was doing was either wrong or that he was not reputable. Fair?

Gordon Sondland: 01:45:55 Well with 20/20 hindsight that's fair.

Rep. Heck: 01:45:58 Yes. You've testified here today that you also came to believe that the requests for investigations into Burisma was in fact a request to investigate the Bidens, both former vice president and Hunter and indeed the transcript of the July 25th call makes specific reference to that including Hunter Biden and today even the ranking members said we could clear all this up if we could have Hunter Biden and I have a simple question. What Ukrainian law did Hunter Biden violate?

Gordon Sondland: 01:46:31 I'm not aware.

Rep. Heck: 01:46:33 What evidence is there that he may have violated any Ukrainian law.

Gordon Sondland: 01:46:37 I'm not aware.

Rep. Heck: 01:46:38 That's because there is none, sir. Finally, also from your opening statement, you said, as you know, I have already provided 10 hours of deposition testimony. I did so despite directives from the White House and the State Department that I refuse to appear as many others have done. I agreed to testify because I respect the gravity of the moment and I believe I have an obligation to account fully for my role in these events. Did by obligation you mean simply your legal obligation or did you mean something bigger?

Gordon Sondland: 01:47:17 Well, both my legal obligation and my moral obligation.

Rep. Heck: 01:47:19 Your moral obligation. I actually want to present an alternative theory. Your family came here escaping the Holocaust via Uruguay and your parents moved Lucy and later you here where frankly you've been an American success story. Through dent of hard work and innovation, good idea, a knack to hire the right people and some luck, you've built a considerable successful business. One that I know for a fact would make your parents proud. They came here because they knew that it was here that they could have freedom that they had not enjoyed, security that they had not enjoyed, and opportunity that they had not enjoyed.

Rep. Heck: 01:48:14 And no doubt on some level you're grateful and it's created a sense of patriotism in you. Is that fair to say?

Gordon Sondland: 01:48:24 Very fair.

Rep. Heck: 01:48:26 Why then, sir, with your courage to come before us, does that same standard not apply to Mr. Mulvaney, Mr. Duffy, Mr. Polmpeo, Mr. Bolton, Mr. Vote, Mr.

Giuliani? Why shouldn't those same sentiments beat within their hearts to do their patriotic duty and do what you have done, sir? Indeed, why doesn't that same standard apply to the President of the United States?

Gordon Sondland: 01:48:56 I wish I could answer.

Rep. Heck: 01:48:59 I suspect you can't because there is no good answer. But I do appreciate your willingness to come here today. With that, I yield back, Mr chairman.

Gordon Sondland: 01:49:07 Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. Chairman: 01:49:09 Mr. Jordan.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:49:10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I asked unanimous consent to enter into the record a statement from Chief of Staff, Mick Mulvaney.

Mr. Chairman: 01:49:18 Without objection. We haven't seen all these statements, but I presume they are accurate and no objection.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:49:23 Thank you. Ambassador, President Trump's not a big fan of foreign aid, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:49:29 I don't know if that's a fair characterization. I think he's careful.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:49:32 He's expressed concerns about foreign aid going to certain countries.

Gordon Sondland: 01:49:34 Yeah.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:49:34 Okay, fair enough. And he knew Ukraine was corrupt, is that right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:49:38 He believed Ukraine was corrupt.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:49:39 Yeah, and he wanted Europe to do more?

Gordon Sondland: 01:49:41 Definitely.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:49:42 Definitely wanted Europe to do more. And the president had a belief that Ukrainian government officials, some senior Ukrainian government officials supported his opponent in 2016. I won't go into all the details, but I think of the one member of parliament who said that majority of Ukrainian politicians want Hillary Clinton to win. So he had that belief as well, and obviously he understood what was happening. We've got a brand new guy in Ukraine. This Selensky guy wins, right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:50:08 Right.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:50:08 And his party takes over and President Trump wants to see with all these other things that are concerned him, he wants to see if this new guy's actually, as I like to say, the real deal, a real reformer and actually going to deal with the corruption problem. So

aid gets held up for 55 days, gets held up on June 18th or excuse me, July 18th and then is released on September 11th. But it seems to me more important than the 55 day pause is the 14 days when Ukraine realized aid was held up on the 29th. We've now had you testify to that. The two witnesses yesterday testified that, the political article.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:50:45 So aid gets held up on August, excuse me, Ukraine leans aid is held on August 29th and then of course released on September 11th. In those 14 days, there are three important meetings with senior government officials and President Zelenskyy. There's the August 29th meeting between Ambassador Bolton and Presidents Zelenskyy. There's the meeting September 1st that you're a part of, Vice President Pence meets with President Zelenskyy and then there's a meeting on September 5th where US Senators Murphy and Johnson meet with President Zelenskyy.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:51:17 None of those meetings, none of those meetings did any linkage to security assistance dollars and an announcement or start of any investigation ever come up. None of them, but it seems to me the one that's the most important is probably the one we've talked least about and that's the September 5th meeting. Because that's actually a meeting where there is no one, well, it's much more congressional-focused than White House-focused. This is the meeting where Senators Murphy and Johnson bipartisan meet with president Zelenskyy and what's interesting is what both senators in the last two days have given us letters recounting what happened in that meeting. Senator Murphy said, "I broached the topic of pressure on Zelenskyy from Rudy Giuliani and the president's other emissaries to launch investigations of Trump's political rival." Murphy brought it up. You got two senators who both strong supporters of money going to Ukraine, these guys are all for it and Senator Murphy, the Democrat, even brings up the issue everyone's been talking about. It seems to me if ever there was going to be a time where the President of Ukraine says, guys, you don't know what I'm dealing with. I'm getting pressure from the President of the United States.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:52:36 He wants me to do this. I got to make it. It seems if ever there was a time that the President of Ukraine, the new guy who now knows the aid has been on on hold, if ever there was a time to bring it up, that would have been the time, but guess what? At no time, Senator Johnson tells us, at no time during this meeting or on any other meeting on this trip was there any mention by Zelenskyy or any other Ukrainian that they were feeling pressure to do anything in return for military aid. Not even, Senator Johnson says, not even after Murphy warned them about getting involved in the election.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:53:17 So Murphy gave this big deal on Giuliani and nothing. Nothing. And guess what Murphy also said. "I do not dispute any of Senator Johnson's factual representations regarding the meeting." If ever it was going to happen, September 5th was a day. No one from the White House there, not Ambassador Bolton, not vice president, no one there. But even that it didn't happen. And we got all kinds of other meetings when it didn't happen. And of course, as you testified earlier, there was never an announcement. You said there were three quid pro quos, but there weren't because there was never an announcement.

Rep Jim Jordan: 01:53:53 I mean this is as clear as it gets, but these guys want to keep stirring it up based on no direct evidence whatsoever. And the best direct evidence we have is actually what the president told you. I want nothing. There is no quid pro quo. I want Zelenskyy to do exactly what he campaigned on and when that became clear to us, guess what? They got the money. They got the money. God bless America. It all worked out. Right? This is crazy what we're going through because the facts are so darn clear. I yield back.

Mr. Chairman: 01:54:29 Mr. Welch.

Rep. Welch: 01:54:30 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ambassador, I'm impressed with your career and very successful in business. I'm impressed with your commitment to public service and I was very impressed with your forthright statement, so thank you for that. You said it was the highest honor for you to have this opportunity to have this appointment to serve as ambassador to the EU. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:54:55 Correct.

Rep. Welch: 01:54:56 And you quickly became very involved in the Ukraine policy. And that policy has been described by you and others was really very clear, help Ukraine fight internal corruption and resist external aggression. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:55:11 Correct.

Rep. Welch: 01:55:12 And this Congress, I think with the support of everybody up here, Republicans and Democrats, and in fact with a significant amount of Republican leadership authorized the release of military aid. Right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:55:26 Right.

Rep. Welch: 01:55:27 And you and others who are working with you believed it was very important to the new government, President Selensky, to have that white house meeting to show our support and send a signal to Russia. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:55:40 That's correct.

Rep. Welch: 01:55:41 And from hearing you and from hearing our other witnesses, Ambassador Yovanovitch, Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Taylor, there was a concerted team effort on your part to get that meeting and release that aid. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:55:58 Well, there was always a concerted effort on my part to get the meeting. That was my singular narrow focus was to get the meeting.

Rep. Welch: 01:56:06 Right. And that was shared by all of the colleagues I just mentioned, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:56:11 Yes.

Rep. Welch: 01:56:12 All right. And incredibly urgent, Ambassador Taylor described going to the front where Ukrainians who were dying at the Donbass. 14,000 had died, and it was an existential issue for them that they get the aid. And you were well aware of that and shared, I'm sure Ambassador Taylor's concern. Is that correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:56:35 I did.

Rep. Welch: 01:56:36 Right. And in your forthright testimony, you've testified, and it's really with the benefit of hindsight because you couldn't piece it all together, Giuliani knew in real time what you were trying to figure out as you went along. Is that a fair statement?

Gordon Sondland: 01:56:52 I think so.

Rep. Welch: 01:56:53 When you testified that you acted on the orders of the president, that was you acting on his orders, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:56:59 Correct.

Rep. Welch: 01:57:00 And you said quite explicitly there was a quid pro quo.

Gordon Sondland: 01:57:05 Relating to the meeting and the Burisma DNC.

Rep. Welch: 01:57:09 That's exactly right. No meeting, no meeting unless there is an investigation. Right?

Gordon Sondland: 01:57:16 That's what we were told by Mr. Giuliani.

Rep. Welch: 01:57:18 All right. And Mr. Giuliani, you absolute ...

Gordon Sondland: 01:57:20 Wait, no meeting unless there was an announcement of an investigation.

Rep. Welch: 01:57:23 Okay. Thank you. And I asked ... By the way, did the efforts of Mr. Giuliani authorized by the president impede the efforts that you and others were making to try to advance what you thought was that Ukraine policy?

Gordon Sondland: 01:57:41 Not initially. We were just working ...

Rep. Welch: 01:57:43 Ultimately?

Gordon Sondland: 01:57:44 Well ultimately nothing happened.

Rep. Welch: 01:57:46 Right. And Giuliani was the one who was absolutely insistent on the meeting, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:57:51 Giuliani was insistent on the ...

Rep. Welch: 01:57:53 The investigation.

Gordon Sondland: 01:57:54 ... Investigation.

Rep. Welch: 01:57:55 All right. Now I asked this of Ambassador Taylor or Ambassador Volker, if the mayor of Portland said to the police chief, I'm not going to authorize your budget unless you agree to do an investigation into my political opponent. Would that be wrong?

Gordon Sondland: 01:58:18 Of course.

Rep. Welch: 01:58:18 And likewise, if it were the governor of the state of Oregon doing the same thing, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 01:58:24 Correct.

Rep. Welch: 01:58:25 And would that same rule apply to the President of the United States?

Gordon Sondland: 01:58:31 To investigate a political opponent? Yes.

Rep. Welch: 01:58:33 That's correct.

Gordon Sondland: 01:58:33 Yes.

Rep. Welch: 01:58:34 All right. So that's the question here. The president, in his phone call, he asked President Zelenskyy who desperately needed the release of that aid, who desperately needed the White House meeting to do an investigation, and it was focused on the Bidens and Hunter Biden and Burisma and CrowdStrike. You don't have to answer that. The president's words speak for themselves. Do you feel as a person who went into public service to serve, who had a team of people to share your desire to help Ukraine, do you feel in any way betrayed by the double dealing of the president?

Rep. Welch: 01:59:17 It's a real question.

Gordon Sondland: 01:59:20 I don't want to characterize ...

Rep. Welch: 01:59:22 You don't have to characterize him. I'm just, we all, if we get a chance to do something useful, we'd like to do it and there's no better joy than when you're doing it with other people.

Gordon Sondland: 01:59:31 Mr. Welch, let me answer your question this way. I would have preferred that and I'm sure everyone would have preferred that the president simply met with Mr. Zelenskyy right away. Our assessment of Mr. Zelenskyy was that he and the president would get on famously. He was smart, he was funny, he was charming, he was the kind of person the president would like. And once the two of them got together, we thought the chemistry would take over and good things would happen between the US and Ukraine relationship. That's why we were pushing for a quick unconditional meeting.

Rep. Welch: 02:00:04 So it's unfortunate that he was ...

Gordon Sondland: 02:00:05 That it didn't happen.

Rep. Welch: 02:00:06 ... Unwilling to meet without the commitment on the investigation. Thank you, Ambassador.

Gordon Sondland: 02:00:10 Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: 02:00:11 Mr Maloney.

Rep. Maloney: 02:00:12 Mr. Ambassador, let's pick up right there. You would have preferred a if they just had the meeting with the President of Ukraine without these conditions. Is that what you're saying?

Gordon Sondland: 02:00:22 Yes.

Rep. Maloney: 02:00:24 But there were these conditions and it involved an investigation. Right? You've said that many times.

Gordon Sondland: 02:00:29 Well remember the initial invitation that the president sent to President Selensky had no conditions.

Rep. Maloney: 02:00:36 But, that didn't last very long. Did it? And then there were conditions. This is not controversial at this point, I don't believe, sir. There were conditions that president wanted investigations. Right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:00:44 Right.

Rep. Maloney: 02:00:45 And you thought they were Burisma and the 2016 election?

Gordon Sondland: 02:00:48 Correct.

Rep. Maloney: 02:00:48 We now know, of course that Burisma means Bidens. Right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:00:52 Today we do.

Rep. Maloney: 02:00:53 And we can probably from today until the end of time set aside any confusion that when somebody is asking for an investigation of Burisma over the summer, what they really meant was Bidens, right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:01:04 With 20/20 hindsight. Yes.

Rep. Maloney: 02:01:06 Right. With hindsight. And of course on the day after the president's famous call, you're having lunch with David Holmes, we've covered this and he overhears your conversation. And I said, I know you said you have no reason to dispute what Mr. Holmes said. And I think you said you wouldn't have any reason to think he didn't speak about investigations with the president. The president raised investigations with you, right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:01:29 Correct.

Rep. Maloney: 02:01:30 On the 26th?

Gordon Sondland: 02:01:31 Correct.

Rep. Maloney: 02:01:31 And we now know, of course, that was about the Bidens and Burisma and 2016 right? I mean, I know you didn't know that at the time, that's your testimony, but we ...

Gordon Sondland: 02:01:40 I understood it meant to mean Burisma.

Rep. Maloney: 02:01:41 Mr. Holmes says, you said Biden's right after that, but I know you don't recall that, right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:01:45 That's correct.

Rep. Maloney: 02:01:46 Do you dispute it?

Gordon Sondland: 02:01:48 I do.

Rep. Maloney: 02:01:49 Okay. But you don't recall it, but we know that's what the president meant. Right? And you do confirm that he wanted to talk about investigations with you?

Gordon Sondland: 02:01:56 Well now with the complete picture, what he said 24 hours before. Yes, it makes sense.

Rep. Maloney: 02:02:01 I understand. And you said it's wrong to investigate political opponents. We've agreed on that today, haven't we, sir?

Gordon Sondland: 02:02:07 Yes.

Rep. Maloney: 02:02:08 And yet of course that's what we know the president was asking for. Let me ask you something. Who would have benefited from an investigation of the president's political opponents?

Gordon Sondland: 02:02:20 I don't want to characterize who would have and who would not have.

Rep. Maloney: 02:02:23 I know you don't want to, sir. That's my question. Would you answer it for me?

Gordon Sondland: 02:02:27 Restate your question.

Rep. Maloney: 02:02:28 Who would benefit from an investigation of the president's political opponent?

Gordon Sondland: 02:02:34 Well, presumably the person who asked for the investigation.

Rep. Maloney: 02:02:38 Who was that?

Gordon Sondland: 02:02:40 If the president for the investigation, it would be he.

Rep. Maloney: 02:02:42 Well, it's not a hypothetical, is it, sir? We just went around this track, didn't we? The president asked you about investigations. He was talking about the Bidens. When he asked you about the Biden investigation, who was he seeking to benefit?

Gordon Sondland: 02:02:57 He did not ask me about the Biden investigation ...

Rep. Maloney: 02:03:00 When he asked you about investigations.

Gordon Sondland: 02:03:00 I said that about 19 times, Mr. Maloney.

Rep. Maloney: 02:03:02 Sir, we just went through this. When he asked you about investigations, which we all agree now means the Bidens. We just did this about 30 seconds ago. Right? It's a pretty simple question, isn't it? I guess I'm having trouble why you can't just say ...

Gordon Sondland: 02:03:17 When he asked about investigations, I assumed he meant ...

Rep. Maloney: 02:03:20 I know what you assumed.

Gordon Sondland: 02:03:21 ... Company.

Rep. Maloney: 02:03:21 But who would benefit from an investigation of the Bidens?

Gordon Sondland: 02:03:26 There are two different questions.

Rep. Maloney: 02:03:27 I'm just asking you one. Who would benefit from an investigation of the Bidens?

Gordon Sondland: 02:03:31 I assume President Trump would benefit.

Rep. Maloney: 02:03:33 There we have it, see. Didn't hurt a bit, did it? Didn't hurt a bit. But let me ask you something ...

Gordon Sondland: 02:03:43 Mr. Maloney.

Rep. Maloney: 02:03:44 Hold on, sir.

Gordon Sondland: 02:03:45 Excuse me. I've been very forthright and I really resent what you're trying to do.

Rep. Maloney: 02:03:49 Fair enough. You've been very forthright. This is your third try to do so, sir. Didn't work so well the first time. Did it? We had a little declaration come in after you remember that. And now we're here third time or we got a doozy of a statement from you this morning. There's a whole bunch of stuff you don't recall. So all due respect.

PART 4 OF 5 ENDS [02:04:04]

Rep. Maloney: 02:04:00 You got a doozy of a statement from me this morning. There's a whole bunch of stuff you don't recall. So all due respect, sir, we appreciate your candor, but let's be really clear on what it took to get it out of you.

Rep. Maloney: 02:04:12 So my question is, when the president's putting pressure on the Ukrainians withholding a meeting to get this investigation that you and I agree would benefit him politically, what kind of position does that put the Ukrainians in, sir?

Gordon Sondland: 02:04:28 A terrible position.

Rep. Maloney: 02:04:29 Terrible position. Why?

Gordon Sondland: 02:04:32 Why does it put them in a terrible position?

Rep. Maloney: 02:04:34 Why?

Gordon Sondland: 02:04:36 Well, obviously they're not receiving ultimately what they thought was coming to them and they're put in a position that jeopardizes their security.

Rep. Maloney: 02:04:50 A position that jeopardizes their security and they're being asked to do an investigation to help their security essentially, that would benefit the president politically. In other words, you might say they're being asked to give him a personal benefit in exchange for an official act. Is that a fair summary?

Gordon Sondland: 02:05:09 In your hypothetical that's correct.

Rep. Maloney: 02:05:11 That's not a hypothetical, sir. This is real life. Were they asked to give him a personal benefit-

Gordon Sondland: 02:05:18 By whom?

Rep. Maloney: 02:05:18 in exchange for an official act.

Gordon Sondland: 02:05:20 Sir, I am not going to go around in circles with you. Please be clear about what you're asking me.

Rep. Maloney: 02:05:25 My time is expired, sir. Thank you for your appearance.

Adam Schiff: 02:05:28 Ms. Deming's

Demings: 02:05:33 Good afternoon, ambassador. It's Good to see you again.

Gordon Sondland: 02:05:36 Thank you.

Demings: 02:05:38 Do you have any knowledge of a possible meeting on or around May 7th, involving then president elect Zelensky and several of his aides to discuss how to handle pressure from President Trump and Mr. Giuliani about investigating the Bidens?

Gordon Sondland: 02:06:00 I don't recall such a meeting.

Demings: 02:06:02 You don't recall such a meeting? You don't recall hearing anything about such a meeting? If you don't have firsthand knowledge.

Gordon Sondland: 02:06:08 Well, if I don't have records, schedules... right now I don't recall anything about such a meeting. Is this a meeting among the Ukrainians?

Demings: 02:06:21 The meeting among the Ukrainians involving then President Elect's Zelensky. So this would have been early on in his presidency with several aides to discuss how to handle pressure from President Trump and Mr. Giuliani about investigating the Bidens.

Gordon Sondland: 02:06:38 Yeah. I don't recall such a meeting.

Demings: 02:06:39 You don't remember that. Ambassador, in the May, I believe it was the May 23rd meeting, you talked about how the president categorized Ukraine, what he thought about Ukraine. I believe that meeting was on May 23rd. Did you ever hear president Zelensky relay any concerns about you, about how he felt about how the United States viewed him, whether he was being taken seriously or any concerns about being used as a tool for political reasons?

Gordon Sondland: 02:07:12 Well, I saw that in an email from Ambassador Taylor. We obviously tried to relay to President Zelensky the glass half full version of how the United States felt about Ukraine, not the glass half empty version, which is we're here for you, we support you and we're trying very hard to get you the meeting with President Trump.

Demings: 02:07:34 So after hearing that from Ambassador Taylor, you relayed... you tried to reassure president Zelensky that America was truly on their side. Is that what you just said?

Gordon Sondland: 02:07:43 I think we've been trying to assure President Zelensky throughout his entire term as a president.

Demings: 02:07:49 Ambassador, I know you said you don't quite remember exactly when you came to the realization that Burisma actually meant Bidens. But back on May 6, when asked about a news report about the role of former vice president's son on Burisma, President Trump told Fox News that it was, and I quote, "A major scandal, major problem." On May 9th, the New York Times reported that Rudy Giuliani planned to travel to Ukraine and quote, "Shortly to meet with president Zelensky to urge him to pursue the 2016 election and the involvement of Hunter Biden in Burisma" unquote. Are you saying that you did not realize at that time, we're talking about on May 9th, of this year that Mr. Giuliani wanted to urge President Zelensky to pursue the 2016 election and the involvement of Hunter Biden of Burisma?

Gordon Sondland: 02:08:48 I do now, but I did not then.

Demings: 02:08:50 You did not know that even... and I believe you said earlier that you did not pay any attention or much attention at all to any of the numerous news reports of the person you were directed by the president to work with, when he was on television over and over and over again talking about Hunter Biden and Burisma.

Gordon Sondland: 02:09:10 No, I did not.

Demings: 02:09:12 On September 9th, in a text from Ambassador Taylor, he said something to the effect, are we now saying that aid is tied to investigations, and I believe you text back, call me. Then you had a conversation with President Trump and President Trump said something to the effect that there is no quid pro quo. Do you know what prompted him to say that? You asked him what do you want and he goes directly to there is no quid pro quo as opposed to going directly to the list of things that he wanted. What prompted him to use that term?

Gordon Sondland: 02:09:48 I have no clue.

Demings: 02:09:49 Did you discuss your text from Ambassador Taylor with President Trump before he made that statement?

Gordon Sondland: 02:09:57 I did not. I asked a very open ended question, what do you want from Ukraine?

Demings: 02:10:00 And you remember that directly, although there are several other conversations that you cannot recall because you don't have your notes or your documents or your emails or other information, but you remember that call specifically exactly what the president said to you in response to your question about what do you want, why is that?

Gordon Sondland: 02:10:20 I remember the first girl I kissed. I mean I remember-

Demings: 02:10:22 You kissed the... well, I won't say, but anyway.

Gordon Sondland: 02:10:29 I remember that conversation because, as I said, it was a pretty intense short conversation.

Demings: 02:10:33 And tell me again about the conversation you had at the restaurant that was overheard by Mr. Holmes because that was a conversation with the president. Tell me about that conversation with the president. What was said on the phone?

Gordon Sondland: 02:10:47 Again, I don't remember the specifics. I'm being guided by what Mr. Holmes testified to. I said I didn't dispute the basic subject of the conversation. As I said, we were talking primarily about ASAP Rocky. That was a completely unrelated matter and I think the president may have brought up, how'd it go with Zelensky or is he going to do the investigations, which we'd been talking about for weeks and then as I said, I dispute the... is it Mr. Holmes characterization of what I said afterwards?

Demings: 02:11:22 Thank you ambassador. Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Adam Schiff: 02:11:23 Mr. Krishnamoorthi.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:11:27 Good afternoon, ambassador. I'm going to pick up on that September 9th, conversation in which the president allegedly said, "I want nothing. I don't want a quid pro quo." I presume that on this September 9th conversation, the president did not mention that that was the same day that we launched a congressional investigation into whether there was a quid pro quo. Did he say that to you?

Gordon Sondland: 02:11:53 Again, I know all of that today, but he did not. We didn't have time to talk about things like that.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:11:57 And I presume he also didn't mention the whistleblower complaint that also alleged that there was a quid pro quo that day.

Gordon Sondland: 02:12:03 He did not.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:12:04 Okay. So you can't rule out the possibility that the reason why he started talking that way on that day is because of the congressional investigation.

Gordon Sondland: 02:12:12 I can't rule that out.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:12:15 The inauguration of President Zelensky was on May 20th, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 02:12:19 Correct.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:12:20 As you stated, you attended this inauguration with Senator Johnson, Secretary Perry, Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, and others, right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:12:28 Correct.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:12:28 But Vice President Pence was supposed to originally attend that, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 02:12:34 I believe so.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:12:35 We learned from Jennifer Williams, a witness who testified, that it was at the president's direction on May 13th, that the vice president not attend. She said, quote "That according to the vice president's chief of staff, the president determined that the vice president would not go." Do you know why the vice president did not attend the inauguration?

Gordon Sondland: 02:12:56 No clue.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:12:57 I want to point to a New York Times article from last week that says that Lev Parnas' attorney, if you've heard of this gentleman Lev Parnas, an associated Rudy Giuliani.

Gordon Sondland: 02:13:08 Only what I've read very recently.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:13:09 He was recently indicted.

Gordon Sondland: 02:13:11 Yeah.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:13:12 Mr. Parnas told a representative of of the incoming government, the Zelensky government, that it had to announce an investigation into Trump's political rival, Joseph R. Biden and his son, or else Vice President Mike Pence would not attend the swearing in of the new president and the United States would freeze aid. Did the vice president not attend possibly because this investigation had not yet been initiated by the Zelensky government?

Gordon Sondland: 02:13:39 I have no idea.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:13:41 You can't rule it out, right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:13:42 Again, I have no idea.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:13:44 You have no basis for ruling it out, however. Correct?

Gordon Sondland: 02:13:48 All I know is that the leader of the delegation was Secretary Perry who invited me along.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:13:55 Interestingly, Ambassador Sondland, since you came forward in these proceedings, others in the administration have tried to distance themselves from you. And on October 14th, Rudy Giuliani told the Washington Post that Sondland quote, "Seemed to be in charge," close quote of the effort to get Ukrainian officials to publish or to publicly announce investigations. Of course, that's false correct?

Gordon Sondland: 02:14:23 If I had been in charge, I would have asked President Trump to have the meeting without preconditions and the meeting would have occurred long time ago.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:14:30 That's exactly right. The president is the one that wanted these investigations as we learned later on and in reading the July 25th call transcript. Isn't that right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:14:41 The president through Mr. Giuliani, as conveyed through Mr. Giuliani wanted the investigations.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:14:46 Mr. Tim Morrison came in yesterday and in his deposition testimony, as well as yesterday, disparaged you, too. He called you quote unquote “the Gordon problem.”

Gordon Sondland: 02:14:57 That’s what my wife calls me. Maybe they’re talking. Should I be worried?

Krishnamoorthi: 02:15:07 Maybe. You know on October 8th of this year, the president tweeted that you are “a really good man and a great American” and of course on November 8th one month later he said, “Let me just tell you, I hardly know the gentleman.”

Gordon Sondland: 02:15:25 Easy come, easy go.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:15:27 You know what I’m concerned about, you were part of the three amigos. But what I’m really concerned about, Ambassador Sondland, is that the president and the good folks over here, my republican colleagues are now casting you as the one amigo, the one lonely amigo they’re going to throw under the bus. But the truth is that, as you said in your opening statement, the suggestion that you were engaged in some rogue diplomacy or irregular channel of diplomacy is quote unquote “absolutely false.” Isn’t that right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:16:09 That’s correct.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:16:11 The presumption that military aid was conditioned on investigations was based on Mulvaney’s statement that we saw on the video. Isn’t that right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:16:20 Well, I didn’t have the benefit at that time of Mulvaney’s statement.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:16:24 But you would stand by the presumption that you had based on what you know now, right?

Gordon Sondland: 02:16:28 Correct.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:16:29 And on September 1, when you told Andrii Yermak your presumption, which you’ve told us about military aid being conditioned on the investigations, you then told Mr. Morrison what you told Yermak and Morrison did not try to dispute your presumption, correct?

Gordon Sondland: 02:16:48 I don’t recall him disputing it. I think I went right over to him and just repeated the conversation. And when you told Vice President Pence your concerns, he did not dispute that as well.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:17:00 He didn’t respond. He just listened.

Adam Schiff: 02:17:02 The time of gentleman is expired.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:17:02 And when you told Secretary Pompeo that wasn't disputed as well?

Gordon Sondland: 02:17:06 I don't recall.

Krishnamoorthi: 02:17:10 Thank you.

Adam Schiff: 02:17:10 That concludes the member questioning. Mr.. Nunes, do you have any closing remarks?

Devin Nunes: 02:17:16 Just briefly. Ambassador, I know you want to get on a plane. So I want to thank you for your indulgence today. Once again, the American people have seen another failure of their preposterous conspiracy theory, which that's if their conspiracy theory doesn't change between now and our next hearing, which is in a few hours from now or another hour or so, and it keeps changing every day.

Devin Nunes: 02:17:42 The claim, ambassador, that you were accused of having an irregular channel, drug deals, now supposedly you're one amigo, nobody on this side of the aisle claimed that you were one amigo.

Gordon Sondland: 02:17:56 I lost my amigos.

Devin Nunes: 02:17:58 Yeah, not from us. Not from us. No bribes given to... that you've made any bribes to the Ukrainian people or to the Ukrainian president. Your co-conspirator, Kurt Volker, I find it remarkable and troubling how the democrats and their collaborators in the press have been able to vilify ambassador Volker, who was supposed to work on these matters in Ukraine. Like you, ambassador, it was a very regular channel and no amount of storytelling by the left and the Democrats on this dais will change that. It was the regular channel.

Devin Nunes: 02:18:44 Testimony received today was far from compelling, conclusive and provides zero evidence of any of the crimes that have been alleged. In fact, Ambassador Sondland testified that he presumed the temporary pause in military aid was conditioned on Ukraine carrying out the investigations the democrats are desperate to portray as nefarious. The democrats have, as their custom, seized on this presumption as proof they can use it against the president.

Devin Nunes: 02:19:14 However, Ambassador Sondland testified in his deposition that when he asked President Trump, "What do you want from Ukraine?" President Trump replied, "I want nothing. There is no quid pro quo." Let me repeat. President Trump said, "I want nothing. There is no quid pro quo." This comes on the Heels of the testimony by Ambassador Volker that he saw no evidence of bribery, extortion, quid pro quo or treasonous actions. We didn't get to ask him about obstruction of justice because we didn't know that was on the table until today.

Devin Nunes: 02:19:53 Like the president's call with President Zelensky, democrats want the American people to believe, as one democrat on this committee put it, that hearsay is much better than direct evidence. And I think Mr. Ratcliffe from Texas laid out the direct evidence that we have from your testimony today. Nothing we have heard establishes a claim that the president acted improperly in his dealings with Ukraine. And certainly nothing has been presented to support anything near impeachment.

Devin Nunes: 02:20:24 In the meantime, Mr. Chair, we continue to have no answers to the questions that only you know, starting with who was the whistleblower who gave birth to this hoax and what was the nature of his coordination with the democrats on this committee. Second, what is the full extent of Ukraine's election meddling against the Trump campaign in 2016 and finally, why did Burisma hire Hunter Biden? What did he do for them and did his position impact any U S government actions under the Obama administration? another hearing in the books and no answers to basic three material actual questions that we need answers to. Yield back and thank you, ambassador, for being here.

Gordon Sondland: 02:21:10 Thank you.

Adam Schiff: 02:21:11 I thank the ranking member for his remarks. Mr. Sondland, thank you for your testimony today. This is a seminal moment in our investigation and the evidence you have brought forward is deeply significant and troubling. It's been a long hearing and I know Americans watching you throughout the country may not have had the opportunity to watch all of it. So I'm going to go through a few of the highlights and I'm not going to try to paraphrase what you said. I'm going to refer to your opening statement.

Adam Schiff: 02:21:44 "We all understood that if we refused to work with Mr. Giuliani, we would lose an important opportunity to cement relations between the United States and Ukraine. So we followed the president's orders. Mr. Giuliani's requests were a quid pro quo for arranging a White House visit for President Zelensky. Mr. Giuliani demanded that Ukraine make a public statement announcing investigations of the 2016 election, DNC server, and Burisma. Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the President of the United States and we knew that these investigations were important to the president." Later, you testified, "I tried diligently to ask why the aid was suspended, but I never received a clear answer. In the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I later came to believe that the resumption of security aid would not occur until there was a public statement from Ukraine committing to the investigations of the 2016 election and Burisma as Mr. Giuliani had demanded. I shared concerns of the potential quid pro quo regarding the security aid with Senator Ron Johnson and I also shared my concern with the Ukrainians." So much for the Ukrainians didn't know. You can't have a quid pro quo unless the Ukrainians know and you have testified today, ambassador, the Ukrainians knew.

Adam Schiff: 02:23:26 You further testified, "Mr. Giuliani emphasized that the president wanted a public statement from president Zelensky committing Ukraine to look into corruption issues. Mr. Giuliani specifically mentioned the 2016 election including the DNC server and Burisma as two topics of importance to the president. In reference to the July 10th meeting at the White House, which you attended with Ambassador Bolton and others and Ukrainian delegation, you said, "I recall mentioning the prerequisite of investigations before any White House call or meeting."

Adam Schiff: 02:24:13 You further testified, "Again, Mr. Giuliani's demand that President Zelensky make a public statement about investigations, I knew that the topic of investigations was important to President Trump." You testified later, "I know that members of this committee have frequently framed these complicated issues in the form of a simple question. Was there a quid pro quo? As I testified previously with regard to the requested White House call and White House meeting, the answer is yes. We all understood these prerequisites for the White House call and White House meeting reflected president Trump's desires and requirements."

Adam Schiff: 02:25:07 Later, on the subject of security aid, you testified "In the absence of any credible explanation for the hold, I came to the conclusion that the aid, like the

White House visit, was jeopardized in preparation for the September 1 meeting in Warsaw. I asked Secretary Pompeo whether a face to face conversation between Trump with Zelensky could help break the log jam.” And this is from an email that the state department refuses to provide to us, but you have provided to us, ambassador. It reads, “Should we block time in Warsaw for a short pull aside for POTUS to meet Zelensky? I would ask Zelensky to look him in the eye,” that is the president, “and tell him that once Ukraine’s new justice folks are in place in mid September, that Z should be able to move forward publicly with confidence on those issues of importance to POTUS and to the United States. Hopefully that will break the log jam.”

Adam Schiff: 02:26:08 And secretary Pompeo’s reply, “Yes.” Not what issues importance to the POTUS. Not what are you talking about Ambassador Sondland? because Secretary Pompeo was on the July 25th phone call, he knew what issues were important to POTUS and there were two of them. The investigation into 2016 and the DNC server and the investigation into the Bidens.

Adam Schiff: 02:26:40 By the end of August you testified, “My belief was that if Ukraine did something to demonstrate a serious intention to fight corruption, specifically addressing Burisma and the 2016 server, then the hold on military aid would be lifted. I mentioned to Vice President Pence before the meetings with Ukrainians that I had concerns that the delay in aid had become tied to the issue of investigations.” And as you testified, he gave you no response. No what are you talking about, ambassador? How could that be, ambassador? How do we clear this up, ambassador? He merely nodded his head or took it in. And of course the record of that 25th call between President Trump and Zelensky was in the vice president’s reading book earlier. Then you testified, “My goal at the time was to do what was necessary to get the aid released, to break the log jam. I believe that the public statement we had been discussing for weeks was essential to advancing that goal.”

Adam Schiff: 02:27:46 Now, my colleagues seem to believe, and let me add, too, about this call you had with the president you have confirmed today, in addition to claiming there was no quid pro quo, the president was adamant that President Zelensky had to quote “Clear things up and do it in public.” That’s what you have confirmed. That is what you also told Ambassador Taylor. So he would deny there was a quid pro quo, but he was adamant that Zelensky had to quote “Clear things up and do it in public.”

Adam Schiff: 02:28:22 Now, I’ve said a lot of things about President Trump over the years, I have very strong feelings about President Trump, which are neither here nor there. But I will say this on the president’s behalf, I do not believe that the president would allow himself to be led by the nose by Rudy Giuliani or Ambassador Sondland or anybody else. I think the president was the one who decided whether a meeting would happen, whether aid would be lifted, not anyone who worked for him. And so the answer to the question, who was refusing the meeting with Zelensky that you believed should take place and Ambassador Volker believed should take place and everybody believed should take place, the only question was when? Who was the one standing in the way of that meeting? Who was the one refusing to take that meeting? There’s only one answer to that question and it’s Donald J. Trump, 45th president of the United States.

Adam Schiff: 02:29:20 So who was holding up the military assistance? Was it you Ambassador Sondland? No, it wasn’t. Was it ambassador Volker? No. Was it Ambassador Taylor? No. Was it Deputy Secretary Kent? No. Was it Secretary of State Pompeo? No. Who had the decision to release the aid? It was one person, Donald J. Trump, President of the United States.

Adam Schiff: 02:29:46 Now my colleagues seem to think unless the president says the magic words that I hear by bribe Ukrainians, that there's no evidence of bribery or other high crimes or misdemeanors, but let's look to the best evidence of what's in the president's head. What's his intent? What's the reason behind the hold on the meeting and on the aid? Let's look at what the president has to say. Let's look at what's undisputed about what the president has to say. And you know how we know what the president has to say, not because what you have represented or others have represented, but because we have a record of his conversation and with who? The one who really matters with the other president, Zelensky. and this is what he says. He says, "Rudy very much knows what's happening and he is a very capable guy." This is after he says he wants a favor and he goes into CrowdStrike in 2016 he says, "Rudy very much knows what's happening and is a very capable guy. If you could speak to him, that would be great. The former ambassador from the United States, the woman was bad news and the people she was dealing with in Ukraine were bad news. So I just want to let you know that the other thing, 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, that would be great. Biden went about bragging that he stopped the prosecution. So if you could look into it, it sounds horrible to me."

Adam Schiff: 02:31:21 So what's in the president's mind when he has placed this otherwise inexplicable hold on the aid, when he refuses to take the meeting. What's on his mind? Biden. He makes that abundantly clear. I understand, ambassador, you said you didn't make the connection between Burisma and Biden. I will let the American people judge the credibility of that answer, but there's no mistaking what Donald Trump's interest was. There's no mistaking about what Donald Trump meant when he had that call with you on an unsecure phone as you're sitting there at an outdoor terrace in Ukraine. When the president said an investigation, he meant Biden. He made that abundantly clear to the president of Ukraine the day before.

Adam Schiff: 02:32:07 The question is not what the president meant. The question is not whether he was responsible for holding up the aid. He was. The question is not whether everybody knew it. Apparently they did. The question is, what are we prepared to do about it? Is there any accountability or are we forced to conclude that this is just now the world that we live in? When a President of the United States can withhold vital military aid from an ally at war with the Russians, an ally fighting our fight too, to defend our country against Russian aggression. Are we prepared to say in the words of Mick Mulvaney "Get over it or get used to it?"

Adam Schiff: 02:32:53 We're not prepared to say that. We're not prepared to say that. And I appreciate Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Sondland, I appreciate the fact that you have not opined on whether the president should be impeached or not be impeached or whether the crime of bribery or the impeachable offense of bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors has been committed. That is for us to decide in consultation with our constituents and our conscience. That is for us to decide. And much as my colleagues have said otherwise, this is not an easy decision for any of us. And much as my colleagues may say otherwise, this is not something we relish

Adam Schiff: 02:33:34 For over a year I resisted this whole idea of going down the road to impeachment, but it was made necessary. And not by the whistle blower, but by the actions of the president. I'm continually struck how my colleagues would suggest that because the president got caught, we should ignore the fact that he was conditioning official acts in order to get political favors, in order to get an investigation against his rival. Getting caught is no defense, not to a violation of the constitution or to a violation of his oath of office. And it certainly doesn't give us a reason to ignore our own oath of office. We are adjourned.