

1. United States policy towards Ukraine remains unchanged, despite the manufactured hysteria surrounding the President’s July 25th phone call. (p. 147)

Q: So, Ambassador, indeed, the U.S. Ukraine policy has not changed?

A: That’s correct.

Q: And our policy towards Ukraine in terms of aid to Ukraine has actually become more robust over time. Is that correct?

A: I don’t know that I’ve watched it long enough to say it’s been more robust, but it’s certainly very robust.

Q: Okay. So if Ambassador Taylor was alleging that he wanted to resign and suggesting that he would resign if Ukrainian --- U.S.-Ukrainian policy shifted, and it was with those three points, I think it’s --- would it be correct to assume that, one, the policy hasn’t changed, and, two, the issues that he raised there were really not issues that would warrant his resignation? Is that correct?

A: That’s correct.

2. President Trump initiated a foreign assistance review in September 2018 because he did not want to take a “business as usual” approach to foreign aid as the President wants to ensure that taxpayer money is being effectively and efficiently spent outside the US. (p. 81-83)

Q: Okay. You mentioned that there was a foreign assistance review undergoing ---

A: Yes.

Q: --- at that time. What can you tell us about that?

A: Well, it had been going on for quite a while, and the concept, you know, the administration did not want to take a, sort of, business-as-usual approach to foreign assistance, a feeling that once a country has received a certain assistance package, it’s a --- it’s something that continues forever. It’s very difficult to end those programs and to make sure that we have a very rigorous measure of why we are providing the assistance. We didn’t go to zero base, but almost a zero-based concept that each assistance program and each country that receives the program had to be evaluated that they were actually worthy beneficiaries of our assistance; that the program made sense; that we have embarked on, you know, calling everything that we do around the world countering violent extremism, but, rather, that’s actually focused on tangible and proven means to deal with extremist problems; that we avoid nation-building strategies; and that we not provide assistance to countries that are lost to us in terms of policy, to our adversaries.

Q: And do you know if the President also had concerns about whether the allies of Ukraine, in this example, were contributing their fair share?

A: That’s another factor in the foreign affairs review is appropriate burden sharing. But it was not, in the deputies committee meeting, OMB did not really explain why they were taking the position other than they had been directed to do so.

Q: Okay. You are aware of the President's skeptical views on foreign assistance? Right?
A: Absolutely.
Q: And that's a genuinely held belief, correct?
A: It is what guided the foreign affairs review.
Q: Okay. It's not just related to Ukraine?
A: Absolutely not. It's global in nature.

3. Ambassador Hale was very clear that he was not aware of any conditionality on the foreign assistance funds, and that the Ukrainian government did not give any deliverable, other than showing progress by passing numerous anti-corruption bills in late August, to ultimately receive the aid.

(p. 183-84)

Q: ...foreign aid, for a variety of reasons, is subject to holds. Is that not a true statement?
A: That's true.
Q: And the holds come from a variety of places. Sometimes they are generate form the Hill; sometimes not. But as a general matter, aid is often held?
A: It happens. As I said, it was happening on Lebanon as well. As I said earlier, there was speculation in an email between Assistant Secretary --- well, the Assistant Secretary got back to me and said that he and his OSD counterpart had been speculating on the Lebanon aid and the fact that this was having on Ukraine, whether this was a new normal in terms of --- I think the context was, is this the way we are going forth with our foreign assistance review? But we didn't know.
Q: And oftentimes the holds or the freezes, whatever you want to call it, gets resolved?
A: Right. Correct.
Q: And in this particular instance, were you hopeful or confident that the hold would be resolved?
A: I very much hoped so. I believed that because of what we learned from OMB during that meeting, that the only thing that could be done about it was to convince the President. And I was hoping --- very hopeful that the Secretary of State would be persuasive and convince the President that this was the right thing to do, to release the money.
Q: And ultimately it was?
A: It was.
Q: And to your knowledge, there was no strings attached to that aid?
A: Right. I never knew that.
Q: But, ultimately, you're not aware of any conditions being attached to the aid?
A: As I said, all I saw is what was exposed to the media of these various things that people were saying about it, but, no, if you're asking in the conduct of my job, no.

(p. 184-85)

Q: And so I want to follow up there, Mr. Ambassador, because the majority, you know, they want to document The New York Times, Washington Post, and have us look backwards to have you opine on all of these nefarious motivations as it relates to the aid. And from your testimony, I think it's been very clear. You're actually one of the few people that work on the seventh floor at the State Department. Is that correct?

A: As a principal, correct.

Q: As a principal. And so Ambassador Hale, your testimony here today is that you were aware of no connection of the aid being held up in exchange for investigations into anything. Is that correct?

A: That's correct. I had no knowledge of that.

Q: And to your knowledge, you're not aware of Secretary Pompeo having any direct knowledge of a connection between investigations and the aid being held up. Is that correct?

A: He never discussed it with me.

Q: All right. And so, as a person who would know at the seventh floor, no matter how informed The Washington Post Editorial Board may or may not be --- and I would put the emphasis on the "may not be" --- as a person who should know, you're saying your sworn testimony today is that you were not aware of connections to withhold foreign aid to Ukraine. Is that correct?

A: Not aware of any what?

Q: Any nefarious motivations to withhold aid to Ukraine.

A: That's correct. I did not know that. We did not know why this had occurred. It was not explained to us. The context, of course, as we knew, A, the President was skeptical of assistance, generally, and, B, he was skeptical of the corruption environment in Ukraine.

(p. 185-86)

Q: And so, as we look back through all of this, it was your belief, I believe you testified not once, but several times today, that it was your belief that the aid would ultimately get unsuspended and released, and that the Ukrainian aid that you deemed as very necessary would ultimately arrive at its destination and be deployed efficiently and effectively. Is that correct?

A: I believe in our system, sometimes it is very convoluted; sometimes there are delays. It is normal to have delays and differences of opinion as that process is unfolded, but I had confidence that the argument in favor of this assistance was so strong that, in the end, it would prevail and we would be able to resume the assistance.

(p. 189)

Q: Let me go ahead and have a followup against Mr. Chairman's cross. Are you aware of anything that the Ukrainian government has done other than fighting corruption and passing bills to fight corruption as it relates to the aid? I mean, was there a leverage? I mean, was there a deliverable? Are you aware of any deliverable the Ukrainians gave the United States Government other than passing anticorruption bills that happened in late August 2019?

A: I don't know of anything that the Ukrainians have done in that nature, no.

4. Ambassador Hale testified that, contrary to what the Democrats want the public to believe, it's not unprecedented for the President to use private citizens for diplomacy. (p. 71-72)

Q: Just in your experience as a State Department official, how common or uncommon is it that a President might lean on a private person for public diplomacy?

A: Well, it's not unprecedented.

Q: Can you give any examples or ---

A: Well, throughout history, I mean --- I'm trying to think of a recent example. It's hard to think of an example that quite matches this particular one. But I do believe that it's safe to say that Presidents have relied upon people who he trusts or --- he trusts to --- for certain initiatives. But it's true. I can't think of someone. It's not leaping in my mind right now.

Q: To the extent the President had involved Mr. Giuliani, that's not necessarily in and of itself concerning?

A: No. I will give you an example. I wasn't expecting the question, so forgive my pauses. But we've had private citizens, former government officials, who have been emissaries for the President to North Korea, to Cuba. I remember President Carter, Representative Richardson, others, who performed tasks like that.

Q: Okay. And Mr. Giuliani as the former mayor of New York during 9/11 had a relatively high public profile?

A: Correct.

Q: And so if the President had trust in him given his role in U.S. history, that's not entirely surprising that the President might lean on somebody of that stature for these issues?

A: Not unprecedented.

5. Ambassador Hale has no problem with the so-called irregular channel. (p. 90)

Q: When he [Ambassador Taylor] testified, and with his statement, you know, he really went through what he viewed as this irregular channel. As you look at this issue, did you have any issue with the irregular channel?

A: I didn't have an issue with what I heard, based on the readout from the President's meeting and guidance on May 23rd. I had no problem with that. It was the President's decision, first of all. Second, we had pros doing it. And the policy goals were totally in line with our policy objectives.

6. Foreign aid holds were also placed this year on Lebanon, the Northern Triangle countries, and Pakistan. (p. 94-95)

Q: Ambassador, you mentioned earlier, that at the time, on June 21, you learned that the hold was placed on Ukraine. There was also a hold placed on Lebanon; is that right?

A: Correct.

Q: Any other countries over the last several months, or in the calendar year where there has been a hold on assistance?

A: The northern triangle countries of South America.

Q: Honduras?

A: Yeah. Pakistan, this goes back to my tenure. The President suspended the vast majority of our military assistance to Pakistan because of their failure to conform to our concerns about terrorist activity on the proxies that were operating in the border area of Afghanistan. I'm just trying to go across the globe and try to remember what else.

Q: Several.

A: Several.

7. Ambassador Hale confirmed the testimony of many other witnesses that President Trump was skeptical about the issue of corruption. (p. 93)

Q: Did you ever come to learn in, you know, during the course of these meetings on 7-23 and 7-26 and some of the earlier meetings, that there was a concern about the corruption environment in Ukraine and that might be related to the hold?

A: We knew that the President was a skeptic about the issue of corruption.

Q: Did you know what was the source of his deep-rooted views about the corruption environment in Ukraine?

A: I couldn't comment on that.

8. Ambassador Hale agrees that ambassadors serve at the pleasure of the President. (p. 61-62)

- Q: Ultimately, the decision not to do a statement in the March-April timeframe was made because the assessment --- correct me if I'm wrong --- the State Department officials thought it might make things worse. Right?*
- A: Correct.*
- Q: So a public statement of support would be good for the Ambassador on one hand, but on the other hand, it could end up being very bad. Right?*
- A: that was the --- precisely, I think the reasoning.*
- Q: And the President can bring home an Ambassador at any time for any reason or no reason. Right?*
- A: That is correct.*
- Q: This particular President has a --- sometimes he asks people to leave their duties. Right?*
- A: We've seen that, yes.*
- Q: Okay. So he has had a number of different senior people at various posts through the government. Correct?*
- A: correct.*
- Q: So the concept of a President, this President, deciding to bring someone home or relieving somebody of their duties is certainly not unusual. Correct?*
- A: Correct. You know, I have been an Ambassador three times. We all know that we serve at the pleasure of the President.*

9. Ambassador Hale had recommended removing the phrase “as planned” from the State Department press guidance about Yovanovitch’s transition, but he was traveling and responded too late so the change wasn’t made (p. 50-51)

- Q: So what happened, after this meeting it was decided that Ambassador Yovanovitch would be called back. Did you have any more involvement in that process after this April 25 meeting?*
- A: I left on a trip on April 26. I left for a long trip to Asia and I was gone until May 6. I will stop there.*
- Q: So you did not meet with Ambassador Yovanovitch when she returned?*
- A: no, I was out of town for the whole period she was back.*
- Q: And do you know what ultimately was decided by the Department in dealing with this issue related to Ambassador Yovanovitch?*
- A: Yeah, I mean, in general, the Deputy Secretary met with her and I had the conversation that I think all --- he discussed himself during his confirmation hearing the other day, and the gist of the plan was that she would go back to Kyiv and relatively quickly pack up her personal effects, meet with her staff, and find a graceful way to leave. And we were going to issue a --- did issue a statement that was --- didn't refer to the issue of confidence and just said that she was rotating out of Ukraine.*

- Q: And that statement actually indicated that her return was planned. Was that accurate though?*
- A: No, in fact, I was, again, traveling at that time, so I was sort of at times behind the curve and the press guidance and whatnot, and I have, again, in researching documents available to me for this deposition, I reread an email exchange on that where my chief of staff was reminding me that I had not cleared on this press statement. So I looked at it, and I said, please delete the words "as planned." It's too cute, and it's not exactly accurate. It went out with those two words in it. I don't know why. My guess is that I was too late. You know, press guidance has to go. Sometimes you just have to get it out. And it just went forward without my input.*