

THREE THINGS: ONE IS NOT A TRANSCRIPT

[NB: Check the byline, thanks! /~Rayne]

“This thing, what is it in itself, in its own constitution? What is its substance and material? And what its causal nature (or form)? And what is it doing in the world? And how long does it subsist?”

– *Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, Book VIII, sect. XI*

I relied on Marcus Aurelius more than two years ago when looking at what we knew about the relationship between Michael Flynn and Donald Trump.

This same meditation provides a nice starting point after the release of a document purported by many to be a transcript (pdf) of the July 25 phone call by Trump to Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky.

~ 3 ~

What is this thing?


MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION
SUBJECT: (C) Telephone Conversation with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine
PARTICIPANTS: President Zelenskyy of Ukraine
Notetakers: The White House Situation Room
DATE, TIME: July 25, 2019, 9:03 - 9:33 a.m. EDT
AND PLACE: Residence

It says right there in black-and-white that it is a memorandum. It is NOT a transcript.

There's a caveat at the bottom of the same page, too, explaining that it is NOT a transcript:

CAUTION: A Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation (TELCON) is not a verbatim transcript of a discussion. The text in this document records the notes and recollections of Situation Room Duty Officers and NSC policy staff assigned to listen and memorialize the conversation in written form as the conversation takes place. A number of factors can affect the accuracy of the record, including poor telecommunications connections and variations in accent and/or interpretation. The word "inaudible" is used to indicate portions of a conversation that the notetaker was unable to hear.

~ 2 ~

We're told there was no *quid pro quo*. But what is this thing?

bigger partner than the European Union and I'm very grateful to you for that because the United States is doing quite a lot for Ukraine. Much more than the European Union especially when we are talking about sanctions against the Russian Federation. I would also like to thank you for your great support in the area of defense. We are ready to continue to cooperate for the next steps specifically we are almost ready to buy more Javelins from the United States for defense purposes.

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3 **UNCLASSIFIED**

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~ The President: I would like you to do us a favor though because our country has been through a lot and Ukraine knows a lot about it. I would like you to find out what happened with this whole situation with Ukraine, they say Crowdstrike... I guess you have one of your wealthy people... The server, they say Ukraine has it. There are a lot of things that went on, the

Zelensky said his country is ready for more military aid, and Trump said he wants a favor, though.

That's a *quid pro quo*. It's right there again, in print, something (like military aid) for something (like a favor).

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This last thing to be examined is a little more tricky. It does whatever it can to avoid being taken at face value.

Here is Rudy Giuliani, who is not a government official, saying on Fox & Friends that the transcript of Trump's call to president of Ukraine – one that's at the heart of a whistleblower complaint – was read to him. Congress still hasn't been able to see it.
pic.twitter.com/CpioFcAsqX

– Aaron Rupar (@atrupar) September 25, 2019

This is a member of Trump's legal team, Rudy Giuliani. He's been a member since April 2018.

He is not an ambassador to Ukraine. There is no current ambassador as one has not been nominated by Trump and approved with the advice and consent of the Senate according to Article II, section 2 of the Constitution.

Nor is he the Chargé d'Affaires as that role has been filled William B. Taylor, Jr. since June 2018. He is not the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv; that role has been filled by Kristina A. Kvien since May 2019.

Nor is he a State Department employee in some other capacity besides ambassador.

He is not an employee of the Department of Justice or Federal Bureau of Investigation, which are responsible for criminal investigations. He was not a member of the Special Counsel's Office.

He is not the White House Counsel; that role has been filled since December 2018 by Pat Cipollone.

Nor is he a member of Congress or a congressional staffer yet he says someone read to him the 'transcript' before any member of Congress received it.

Who or what is this thing? What is it doing? How does it subsist?

Because he's not working for the American public though he's been pushing for investigations into American citizens overseas.

Because he's not furthering the investigation into Paul Manafort or the hacking of the DNC in 2016 as part of the Special Counsel's Office investigation or as an employee of any other U.S. law enforcement.

Because he's not representing broader American ties with Ukraine, only whatever it is his client and the rest of his legal team have assigned to him.

We can't rule out that he's working for Trump's campaign in some capacity. It's not clear any news media outlet has asked him if he is.

What is he really?

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This is an open thread, but bring your comments about the whistleblower complaint and U.S.-Ukraine here.