

HITTING THE FAN: VOLKER'S TEXT MESSAGES RELEASED

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

Around 10:00 p.m. last night, House Democrats released partial transcripts of text messages between former U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine Kurt Volker and other officials, including:

- William B. “Bill” Taylor, Charge d’Affaires for the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine;
- Gordon Sondland, U.S. Ambassador to the European Union;
- Andrey Yermak, Aide to Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelensky;
- Rudy Giuliani, in his role as Trump’s agent;

and others.

The specific texts released had already been “leaked” out of context, according to the cover letter accompanying the partial transcripts sent to members of the Intelligence, Oversight and Reform, and Foreign Affairs Committees, subsequently shared at the Foreign Affairs Committee’s website.

You can read the letter and transcript at this [link](#).

The transcripts suggest the entire State Department knew about the quid pro quo – the release of delayed military and financial assistance in exchange for investigations intended to aid Trump’s personal political aims including re-election. The quid pro quo also looks obvious:

- **Volker Advises Yermak Ahead of Trump-Zelensky Call:** On the morning of July 25, 2019—*ahead* of the planned call between President Trump and President Zelensky—Ambassador Volker advised Andrey Yermak:

[7/25/19, 8:36:45 AM] Kurt Volker: Good lunch - thanks. Heard from White House—assuming President Z convinces trump he will investigate / “get to the bottom of what happened” in 2016, we will nail down date for visit to Washington. Good luck! See you tomorrow- kurt

Only one person recognized this effort as problematic: Bill Taylor, who assumed some of the responsibilities of recalled ambassador Marie Yovanovitch.

On September 1, Ambassador Taylor sought clarification of the requirements for a White House visit:

[9/1/19, 12:08:57 PM] Bill Taylor: Are we now saying that security assistance and WH meeting are conditioned on investigations?

[9/1/19, 12:42:29 PM] Gordon Sondland: Call me

There’s more than one quid pro quo outlined in the transcripts, not readily acknowledged in the media. Less obvious is the trade-off of an agreement to a scripted statement in exchange for an invitation to visit the White House. Such a visit would be a validation of support for Zelensky’s young presidency and a thumb in the eye to Vladimir Putin, bolstering Zelensky’s image with Ukraine’s public.

Community member harpie pointed to a statement on camera at 8:28 AM on August 9 by Trump which fits in the middle of the negotiations, suggesting Trump was fully aware of the exchange.

TRUMP: I think he’s [Zelensky] going to make a deal with President Putin, and he will be invited to the White House, and we look forward to seeing him. He’s already been invited to the White House and he wants to come. And I think he will. He’s a very reasonable guy. He wants to see peace in Ukraine. And I think he will be coming very soon, actually.

(source: Aaron Rupar)

The transcripts suggest that Zelensky’s aide/adviser Yermak has been identified as

ethically flexible – amenable to this quid pro quo and willing to present it to Zelensky. Yermak’s background is in film/TV production, similar to several of Zelensky’s administration. Only a couple of Zelensky’s team appear to be lawyers, one of which has been barred from holding public office (Andriy Bohdan, appointed to equivalent of Chief of Staff). In the text messages Yermak appears to keep Zelensky at arm’s length from the negotiations, but this may be due to the limited amount of texts released; Zelensky may have been wholly involved on a more direct basis.

~ ~ ~

Compounding the pressure on House Dems to act is Trump’s increasingly overt behavior, asking China yesterday on camera to investigate both of his 2020 political rivals, Joe Biden and Elizabeth Warren.

President Trump says he wants both Ukraine and China to investigate Joe Biden and his son
<https://t.co/61W3znhPM1>
<pic.twitter.com/dhC0tXKhww>

– CNN Politics (@CNNPolitics) October 3, 2019

China has now issued a statement in response:

“China will not interfere in the internal affairs of the US, and we trust that the American people will be able to sort out their own problems,” China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi said.
<pic.twitter.com/WZtdctzhex>

– Global Times (@globaltimesnews) October 4, 2019

Now that we know how this works in Trumplandia, we can interpret the unexpressed portion of this statement: China will not interfere in U.S.

domestic affairs and the U.S. should not interfere in China's domestic affairs – including Hong Kong.

We can only wonder at what else was in the text transcripts not yet disclosed, and how Trump will react if yesterday was just the beginning act of this program.