

POLITICS

Former Russia Adviser Testifies She Was Alarmed About Ukraine Pressure

Fiona Hill's nine-hour testimony comes as Democrats examine Trump's effort to get Kyiv to investigate Bidens



Former White House adviser on Russia, Fiona Hill, center, testified for about nine hours before three House panels. PHOTO: MICHAEL REYNOLDS/SHUTTERSTOCK/EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY

By Aruna Viswanatha, Rebecca Ballhaus and Natalie Andrews

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WASHINGTON—President Trump's former top Russia adviser told House committees Monday that she and other White House officials grew so alarmed about the administration's efforts to push Ukraine to open certain investigations that they raised their concerns with a White House lawyer, according to people familiar with the matter.

Fiona Hill, who served on the National Security Council and left the administration in August, testified for about nine hours before three House panels as part of the impeachment inquiry examining the president, his administration and his allies' dealings with Ukraine, including a July call in which he pressed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden.

In her testimony, she detailed a July 10 meeting she attended with senior Ukrainian officials, then-National Security Adviser John Bolton, and other U.S. officials in which the U.S. ambassador to

the European Union, Gordon Sondland, raised the issue of the investigations, the people said.

People in the room took the comments to refer to an investigation that could implicate Mr. Biden and his son, the people said. Both Ms. Hill and Mr. Bolton left the meeting with concerns about what had transpired, and Ms. Hill said Mr. Bolton instructed her to talk to NSC lawyer John Eisenberg, the people said. A spokeswoman for Mr. Bolton didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

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A Ukrainian gas company paid Hunter Biden \$50,000 a month to sit on the board at a time when his father, President Obama's vice president, was pushing anticorruption efforts in Ukraine. Mr. Trump and his allies have described that as a corrupt arrangement. Ukrainian officials have produced no evidence of wrongdoing by either Biden, and they both deny they did anything

wrong.

Mr. Sondland also appeared to be coordinating his efforts with acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney, Ms. Hill testified, the people said. The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Mr. Sondland is set to testify before House committees on Thursday. Among other matters, he is expected to say that in a May meeting in the Oval Office that followed the inauguration of the Ukrainian president, he and others pushed for Mr. Trump to meet his new counterpart. Mr. Trump was reluctant to schedule a meeting and made clear that officials had to deal with the president's lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, to address his reservations about the meeting, according to a person familiar with Mr. Sondland's planned testimony.

Ms. Hill described to lawmakers efforts by Mr. Giuliani, which circumvented typical government procedures for foreign policy, to press Ukraine to mount investigations into the Bidens, as well as possible 2016 election interference, the people said. Mr. Giuliani has said he worked in conjunction with the State Department.

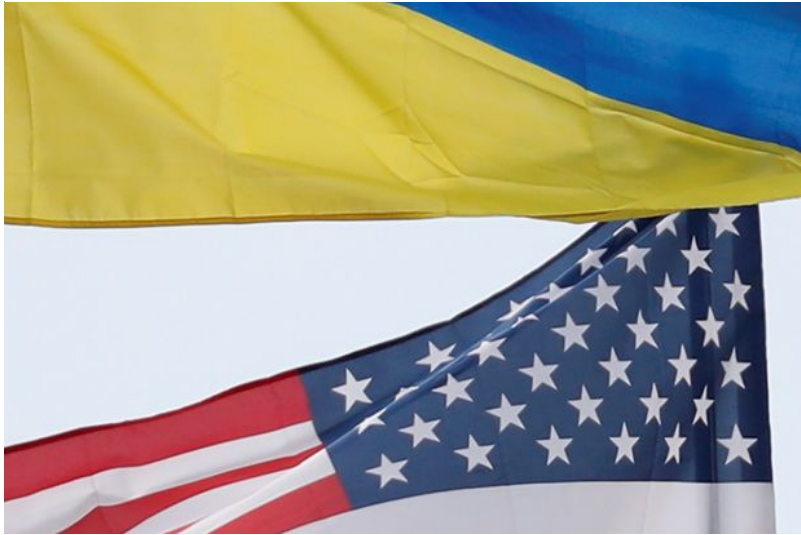
"There was an official foreign policy, which was attempting to counter corruption in Ukraine. And then there was Rudy Giuliani, and, you know, the gang that couldn't shoot straight who worked for him, who were...connected with corruption in Ukraine and promoting the corruption in Ukraine," said Rep. Jamie Raskin (D., Md.) as Ms. Hill's testimony concluded.

Ms. Hill couldn't be reached for comment.

Ms. Hill is the latest administration official to testify as part of the impeachment inquiry, following hearings with Marie Yovanovitch, the former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, and Kurt Volker, the former U.S. envoy for Ukraine negotiations, in recent weeks.

House Intelligence Committee chairman Rep. Adam Schiff (D., Calif.) on Monday called Ms. Hill “courageous” for her testimony and said of her and Ms. Yovanovitch: “These are two of the most impressive women to testify in front of Congress.”

Trump and Ukraine: A Guide to the Key Players



VALENTYN OGIRENKO/REUTERS

In addition to Mr. Sondland’s testimony, House committees will hear this week from two more key witnesses. Michael McKinley, a top aide to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who resigned last week amid growing concern at the State Department over the treatment of career staff amid the Ukraine inquiry, will testify on Wednesday, according to a person familiar with the matter. Laura Cooper, the deputy assistant secretary of defense overseeing Ukraine, will testify

on Friday, the person said.

Democrats allege that Mr. Trump’s efforts to get Ukraine to launch the investigations marked an improper use of the president’s office to benefit his own re-election hopes. A whistleblower complaint filed in August, which set off the impeachment inquiry last month, alleged that following the July call there was an effort within the White House to “lock down” all records related to the call. Mr. Trump has denied wrongdoing and on Twitter Monday morning called the Democrats’ probe a “total impeachment scam.”

The closed-door hearing with Ms. Hill got off to a rocky start after Rep. Matt Gaetz (R., Fla.), who is not a member of one of the three committees interviewing Ms. Hill, tried to participate and was subsequently ordered to leave by Mr. Schiff.

Mr. Gaetz refused to leave, and Democrats brought the matter to the parliamentarian, who sided with Mr. Schiff, Mr. Gaetz said in an interview. The back-and-forth held up the hearing for about 45 minutes, he said.

“It’s not like, you know, I’m on the Agriculture Committee,” he told reporters after he left. Mr. Gaetz is on the Judiciary Committee, which historically has led impeachment proceedings.

In a letter to Ms. Hill last week, House lawmakers requested her testimony and documents, including those related to Mr. Trump’s phone calls with his Ukrainian counterpart in April and July, communications between administration officials about those calls, and records related to Mr. Giuliani.

House lawmakers also sought from Ms. Hill documents related to Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman, two associates of Mr. Giuliani who were arrested last week on criminal charges stemming from their alleged efforts to funnel foreign money into U.S. elections and influence U.S. politics on behalf of at least one unnamed Ukrainian politician.

A lawyer for Ms. Hill tweeted Monday morning that his client had received a congressional subpoena for her testimony.

Ms. Hill, a Russia expert and staunch critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, joined the NSC in March 2017. She was succeeded by Tim Morrison, who previously headed the NSC’s office of nonproliferation.

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U.S. diplomats working with Mr. Giuliani to push for a phone call between Mr. Trump and Mr. Zelensky in July invoked Mr. Morrison in text messages

released by House committees earlier this month.

Mr. Volker said he had a “call into Fiona’s replacement” and would call Mr. Bolton “if needed” to tell him that Mr. Giuliani was supportive of a call between the two leaders. Mr. Sondland replied: “I talked to Tim Morrison Fiona’s replacement. He is pushing but feel free as well.”

The call between Mr. Trump and Mr. Zelensky took place on July 25.

Mr. Sondland, who told another U.S. diplomat in September that there was no quid pro quo between the president’s decision to hold up nearly \$400 million in aid to Ukraine and his desire for Kyiv to mount certain investigations, is expected to tell lawmakers when he testifies later this

week that he made that assertion based off the president's word, according to a person familiar with the ambassador's planned testimony.

Marie Yovanovitch, the former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine whom Mr. Trump ousted this spring amid pressure from Mr. Giuliani and others, told House lawmakers on Friday that she experienced a "concerted campaign" against her by allies of the president, including Mr. Giuliani.

—Andrew Duehren, Jesse Naranjo and Tyler Blint-Welsh contributed to this article.

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