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<b>To:</b>	(b)(6)
<b>Subject:</b>	FW: Latest Western media reports on Ukraine, Amb. Y, former VP Biden, etc. (Vanity Fair, Washington Post, Diplopundit)
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**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 9, 2019 2:24 AM  
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**Subject:** Latest Western media reports on Ukraine, Amb. Y, former VP Biden, etc. (Vanity Fair, Washington Post, Diplopundit)

Flagging a few new Western media articles/columns relating to Ukraine – from Vanity Fair, Washington Post, and Diplopundit. (The Vanity Fair one, in particular, has some new details I haven't seen in other media reports, such as a comment that President Trump is personally aware of the situation with Amb Y, and that the decision to recall her came directly from the White House.)

**VANITY FAIR: "THERE IS NO OTHER REASON": SOURCES BLAME THE WHITE HOUSE, AND A FOX NEWS-FUELED CONSPIRACY THEORY, FOR THE SUDDEN OUSTER OF MASHA YOVANOVITCH**

The U.S. ambassador to Ukraine is abruptly leaving her post following a concerted effort by Rudy Giuliani and Trump's media allies to connect Yovanovitch to a wide-ranging conspiracy theory involving Hillary Clinton, Paul Manafort, and Joe Biden's work in Ukraine.

A convoluted, Fox News-fueled story involving the Clinton campaign and the Biden family's potential conflicts of interest in Ukraine appears to have claimed its first victim: **Masha Yovanovitch**, a career diplomat and the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. This week, Yovanovitch was suddenly recalled from her post, months before she was expected to end her three-year assignment this July, following increasingly feverish accusations in Trumpworld that Yovanovitch has demonstrated disloyalty to the president. **Donald Trump** has alluded to a "Ukrainian plot to help Clinton." Democrats are calling Yovanovitch's ouster a "political hit job." According to two congressional sources familiar with the situation, the decision to recall Yovanovitch two months early did not come from the seventh floor of the State Department, but directly from the White House.

The strange circumstances surrounding Yovanovitch's early exit provide a window into what is becoming a new front in a wide-ranging information war between Democrats and Republicans that could have a significant impact on the 2020 election. The official story coming out of Foggy Bottom is that Yovanovitch's departure is timed to the arrival of a new administration in Kiev and "as planned." But few believe it. "There is no other reason for her early departure," one of the congressional aides told me, adding that the president is "aware" of the situation. In fact, Secretary of State **Mike Pompeo** had previously asked Yovanovitch to stay on beyond the three-year mark, the other source said.

The trouble for Yovanovitch can be traced, in part, to a speech she gave in March, during which she took a firm stand against political corruption in Ukraine and called for the ouster of **Nazar Kholodnytskyy**, the chief of the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office. Those remarks, notable for their asperity, outraged Ukrainian Prosecutor General **Yuriy Lutsenko**. Two weeks later, he gave an interview to *The Hill*'s **John Solomon** in which he alleged, without evidence, that Yovanovitch had given him "a list of people whom we should not prosecute" during their first meeting, presumably to shield Obama-Clinton allies.

The State Department bluntly dismissed the allegation at the time as an "outright fabrication." And in April, Lutsenko walked back his remarks entirely. (In this new telling, it was Lutsenko who asked for a "do-not-prosecute list," and Yovanovitch who said no.) But by that point, the allegation had already been injected into the bloodstream of the conservative media.

The same day the Solomon-Lutsenko interview was published, frequent Fox News guest **Joseph diGenova** called for Yovanovitch's removal as ambassador to Ukraine in an interview with Trump confidant **Sean Hannity**, saying she "has bad-mouthed the president of the United States to Ukrainian officials and has told them not to listen or worry about Trump policy because he's going to be impeached." Later that week, Fox News host **Laura Ingraham** piled on, revealing a May 2018 letter former congressman **Pete Sessions** had sent to Secretary of State Pompeo, which accused Yovanovitch of having "reportedly demonstrated clear anti-Trump bias." Two days after Ingraham's show, **Donald Trump Jr.** tweeted a Daily Wire roundup of conservative attacks on the diplomat. "We need more @RichardGrenell's and less of these jokers as ambassadors," the president's eldest son wrote on Twitter, referencing the current U.S. ambassador to Germany.

Among veterans of Foggy Bottom, Yovanovitch has an impressive reputation and the allegations against her ring false to many. "Very much a role-model female diplomat," one former high-ranking State Department official said. "Admired, respected, liked. Very professional." Another former senior U.S. official echoed the sentiment. "She's everyone's idea of the best kind of professional diplomat," they told me. But it appears she made enemies in high places—and became a convenient scapegoat.

Behind the scenes, Trump allies have been developing a labyrinthine counter-theory of collusion, designed to distract from and deflect the Mueller report. One aspect involves allegations that Ukrainian officials sought to boost **Hillary Clinton's** candidacy in 2016 by questioning Trump's fitness for office and leaking damaging information about former Trump campaign chairman **Paul Manafort**—

information that ultimately made its way to **Robert Mueller**. Another aspect involves allegations that **Joe Biden** abused his position as vice president to engineer the ouster of **Viktor Shokin**, Lutsenko's predecessor, to kill an investigation into Burisma, a Ukrainian energy company that was paying Biden's son **Hunter Biden** up to \$50,000 a month to sit on the board. (Hunter Biden told *The New York Times* he had "no role whatsoever in relation to any investigation of Burisma, or any of its officers.") Lutsenko has reportedly reopened the investigation into Burisma, and told Solomon that he has opened an investigation into whether Ukrainian law enforcement worked in favor of Clinton, too. (On Tuesday, citing a Ukrainian official, Bloomberg reported the Burisma case has not been reopened. The *Times* is standing by its reporting.)

Of course, Lutsenko has not been working alone. Trump's personal lawyer **Rudy Giuliani** has met with Lutsenko multiple times over the past year and has discussed the Burisma case with him, according to the *Times*. Lutsenko's decision to reopen the investigation was reportedly interpreted by some as an attempt "to curry favor" with the Trump administration on behalf of his boss, President **Petro Poroshenko**. (Poroshenko lost his re-election bid last month; incoming president **Volodymyr Zelensky**, a television comedian, has said he intends to replace Lutsenko as prosecutor general.)

Giuliani told the *Times* that he has discussed the Burisma affair with Donald Trump on multiple occasions, and has called on the Justice Department to investigate the Bidens' involvement in Ukraine. Trump himself recently suggested that Attorney General **William Barr** should look into materials gathered by Lutsenko. "I would imagine [Barr] would want to see this," he told Hannity in an April 25 interview. "It sounds like big stuff, very interesting with Ukraine. . . . But that sounds like big, big stuff, and I'm not surprised." (The White House did not respond to a request for comment.)

It is unsurprising that Yovanovitch was quickly ensnared in this narrative. Despite the fact that she was first nominated as a U.S. ambassador by **George W. Bush**, she was appointed to her post in Ukraine by **Barack Obama** at the tail end of his presidential term. As a result, she has been cast by Fox News talking heads and allies of the president as an "Obama holdover" and a "deep state" agent.

As the attacks on Yovanovitch were escalating, Congressmen **Eliot Engel**, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and **Steny Hoyer**, the House majority leader, privately called on Pompeo to publicly defend Yovanovitch. "It is disappointing that certain political actors within Ukraine have criticized Ambassador Yovanovitch, given her anti-corruption efforts that touch on their interests," the lawmakers wrote in an April 12 letter. "It is critical that State Department leadership support ambassadors and foreign service officers in the field and make clear that they will not be subjected to any politically motivated attacks. We urge you to make public statements personally defending your team and those who represent our country from these spurious disparagements."

Less than a month later, Yovanovitch is on her way out. An internal management notice sent to embassy staffers in Kiev and shared with me reveals that there is no succession plan in place, suggesting the decision was abrupt. Yovanovitch's last day as ambassador to Ukraine will be May 20. "We expect the Department to appoint a long-term Charge d'Affaires to lead the Mission until a new Chief of Mission is nominated and confirmed," the notice reads. During the transition, **Joseph**

**Pennington** will serve as the charge d'affaires and acting deputy chief of mission until **Kristina Kvien** arrives at the embassy on May 28.

**WaPo column: Why the alleged Joe Biden 'Ukraine conspiracy' doesn't hold up**

By Oliver Bullough

*Oliver Bullough, a frequent contributor to the Guardian, is the author of "Moneyland: The Inside Story of the Crooks and Kleptocrats who Rule the World."*

Ukraine recently held a democratic election that ushered in a peaceful transfer of power; it is stubbornly resisting an onslaught by Russian-backed troops; it is making small but significant steps toward restraining corruption. With democracy on the retreat worldwide, Ukraine may be the closest thing the West has to a foreign policy win.

To cement that victory, Ukraine needs more of what it has received since its 2014 revolution: Western money, Western support and sustained Western insistence that its rulers keep their promises to clean up their country.

What it does not need is underinformed dinosaurs wading into its sensitive political ecosystem to make points for domestic American consumption. Unfortunately, this is precisely what is now happening — thanks to President Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani.

Almost as long as there have been questions over Trump's Russian dealings, there have been rival questions about former vice president Joe Biden's role in post-revolutionary Ukraine. To sort out the truth, it's imperative to understand two things. The first is that Biden's son Hunter took a job at a Ukrainian oligarch's gas company, known as Burisma, shortly after the 2014 revolution, which was unwise, greedy and rightly criticized at the time.

The second is that Joe Biden was the White House's Ukraine enforcer, and it was in this capacity that he forced Ukraine's president to sack an at-best ineffectual prosecutor general as a condition for a billion dollars' worth of loans. Biden has himself boasted of this episode, and most Ukrainians are perfectly content about it, since they saw prosecutor Viktor Shokin as incapable of the investigations needed to uncover the previous regime's crimes.

The trouble began when right-wing bloggers sought to meld these two points into a single conspiracy in which Joe Biden had the prosecutor sacked to protect his son's business interests. I may be an outsider to the bewildering mess that is Ukrainian politics, but, on this particular issue, I have a genuine insight into what happened, having written extensively about Hunter Biden's ex-employer, Mykola Zlochevsky.

As a result, when journalists seek the fire behind the smoke in the Biden-Ukraine tale, they often call to ask my opinion. Many are eager to flesh out what seems a satisfyingly simple conspiracy, but I have to tell them: It isn't true. The timeline doesn't work. The investigation into Burisma, Hunter Biden's employer, had ground to a halt long before the prosecutor was sacked. A subsequent probe into the company's owner was opened because of a request from Ukrainian legislators, not because of prosecutorial initiative. There is, in short, no there there; the bloggers are putting two and two together — and coming up with 22.

Hunter Biden should not have taken the job; Joe Biden should probably not have boasted about bullying the president of another country. But those are judgment matters for them personally, not proof of conspiracy, and certainly not an affair worth destabilizing the fragile democracy of a new U.S. ally.

But that has not stopped Giuliani, who tweeted last week: "how deep and how high did the alleged Ukraine conspiracy go?" He was responding to a story in the New York Times (the Times apparently not "failing" on this occasion, since Trump retweeted the paper's story), which analyzed the theories around the Bidens' Ukraine connection. The article ticked all the journalistic boxes, giving father and son space to deny wrongdoing, but still raised a cloud of smoke for those shouting "fire." If a major newspaper devotes 2,500 words to conflict-of-interest questions, then those questions presumably exist. How often do *you* beat your wife?

This non-scandal appears to have already wrecked the career of the U.S. ambassador in Kiev, a respected career diplomat who is leaving her post this month. That will inevitably affect the continuity of U.S. anti-corruption efforts in Ukraine. It is also emboldening oligarchs opposed to the activists who have led the fight against corruption, because they also campaigned for Shokin to be sacked and risk being blackened by association.

President-elect Volodymyr Zelensky is assembling his team, and it is imperative that the West stay as firm with him as it was with his predecessor on fulfilling the conditions that went with its loans. One official he should consider jettisoning is current General Prosecutor Yuriy Lutsenko, who has not only been as ineffective as Shokin at prosecuting the crooks of the past, but has also been feeding Giuliani the partial information that underpins his conspiracy.

We are all resigned to the fact that U.S. politicians will do their utmost to divide their nation still further over the next two years. But Giuliani must stop using Ukraine as a political piñata. It is a country of 44 million people who are defending their freedom at the cost of much blood. There was a time that all Americans would have applauded them for that, regardless of party. It is shameful that petty political considerations have blinded Trump's allies to that truth.

#### **Diplopundit: State Dept Recalls Amb. Marie Yovanovitch from Ukraine after Persistent Campaign for Removal**

The U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovich has reportedly been recalled and now expected to depart post on or about May 20. This development followed a persistent campaign for her removal

among conservative media outlets in the United States as well as allegations by Ukrainian Prosecutor-General Lutsenko concerning a do not prosecute list.

The State Department reportedly told RFE/RL on May 6, that Ambassador Yovanovitch “is concluding her 3-year diplomatic assignment in Kyiv in 2019 as planned.” And that “her confirmed departure date in May aligns with the presidential transition in Ukraine,” which elected a new president in April.

While that may well be true – she was confirmed in 2016, a 3-year tour is a typical assignment; the new Ukraine president takes office on June 3rd — it is hard to ignore the louder voices calling for the ambassador’s removal from post for political reasons. It doesn’t help that there is no Senate confirmed EUR Assistant Secretary or that the Secretary of State did not see it fit to come forward to defend his top representative in a priority country in Europe.

Ambassador Yovanovich is a career diplomat and a Senate-confirmed Ambassador representing the United States in Ukraine. She previously served as Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia (2008-2011) under President Obama and to the Kyrgyz Republic (2005-2008) under President George W. Bush. We’ve seen people calling career diplomats “holdovers”. If they were political appointees, they would be called “holdovers” or “burrowers,” but they are career public servants; that term does not apply to them. If some folks insists on calling them “holdovers,” then the least that these folks can do is to accurately enumerate all the public servants’ prior presidential appointments, some going back 30 years at the start of their careers in the diplomatic service.

Perhaps it is helpful to point out that as career appointees, ambassadors like Ambassador Yovanovich do not go freelancing nor do they go rogue; they do not make their own policy concerning their host country. They typically get their marching orders from their home bureau, in this case, the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (EUR) at the State Department, under the oversight of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, who report to the Secretary of State. And they follow those orders. Even if they disagree with those orders or the administration’s policies. Career diplomats who do not follow their instructions do not have lengthy careers in the diplomatic service.

After all that, if the United States is taking the word of a foreign official over our own ambassador, it’s open season for our career diplomats. Will the “you want a U.S. ambassador kicked out from a specific country go on teevee ” removal campaign going to become a thing now? Will the Secretary of Swagger steps up?

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