

Opening Statement of Christopher J. Anderson to the House of Representatives
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and
Committee on Oversight and Reform
October 30, 2019

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement today. I have served as a Foreign Service Officer in the State Department since 2005. I have spent most of my career serving in countries on the periphery of the Russian Federation including Mongolia, Armenia, and, most recently, Ukraine. For the last five years, I have worked in Kyiv and Washington to advance our national security interests by promoting a peaceful resolution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, countering Russian aggression, and defending the principles that international borders should not be changed by force. It has been a privilege to serve our country and promote our national interests on such an important foreign policy issue while working alongside dedicated and talented public servants. These efforts have benefited from strong bipartisan support.

My work in Ukraine began with a three-week temporary duty to Kyiv in March 2014 just after Russia invaded and occupied Crimea. I returned to Kyiv in September 2014 to serve as the External Unit Chief in the Political Section of our Embassy. I served in Kyiv from 2014–2017 and worked closely with Ambassador Yovanovitch from 2015–2017.

In August 2017 Ambassador Volker asked me to serve as Special Advisor for Ukraine Negotiations. I served in this position from late August 2017 until July 12, 2019. In this role, I helped develop negotiating positions, analyzed Russian and Ukrainian ceasefire proposals, and provided context on the history of the conflict and past negotiations. I also traveled with Ambassador Volker to the front lines of the conflict, to negotiate with the Russians, and to meet with European counterparts.

On November 25, 2018, Russia escalated the conflict further when its forces openly attacked and seized Ukrainian military vessels heading to a Ukrainian port in the Sea of Azov. While my colleagues at the State Department quickly prepared a statement condemning Russia for its escalation, senior officials in the White House blocked it from being issued. Ambassador Volker drafted a tweet condemning Russia's actions, which I posted to his account.

In December 2018, Ambassador Volker and I traveled to Brussels to meet

with EU officials and key NATO Allies to push for a more assertive European response to Russia's escalation. During this visit, we met with Ambassador Sondland, who hosted a lunch bringing together key EU officials for a discussion on coordinating our response to Russia's escalation.

When Volodymyr Zelenskyy was elected president in April, Ambassador Volker and I were hopeful that a newly empowered Ukrainian president could reinitiate high-level U.S. engagement. Before the inauguration in May, my colleagues and I saw a tweet by Rudolph Giuliani alleging that President-elect Zelenskyy was surrounded by enemies of President Trump. In an effort to counter the negative narrative sparked by Ambassador Yovanovitch's withdrawal and Giuliani's statements, we pushed for a high-level delegation to attend Zelenskyy's inauguration. Secretary Perry, Ambassador Sondland, Ambassador Volker, NSC Director Alexander Vindman, and Senator Ron Johnson, traveled to Kyiv as part of a Presidential delegation for the inauguration.

After the delegation returned, the participants wanted to brief the President on the trip. Ambassador Sondland was able to quickly arrange a meeting with the President for May 23. I participated in the preparatory meeting at the White House in which we discussed key deliverables that would demonstrate President Zelenskyy's commitment to reform. We focused on three key areas: 1) demonstrating Zelenskyy's independence from powerful vested interests and pursuing anticorruption reform as well as antitrust reform; 2) strengthening U.S.-Ukrainian energy cooperation; and 3) improving our bilateral security relationship which included Ukraine increasing its purchases of key U.S. military equipment. Ambassador Volker told me after the meeting that the President had agreed to invite President Zelenskyy to the White House for a meeting and would issue a letter shortly. The President signed a letter on May 29 that included an invitation for President Zelenskyy, but the letter did not include a specific date for the visit. On June 13, I accompanied Ambassador Volker to a meeting with National Security Advisor John Bolton. In that meeting, Bolton stated that he agreed with our three lines of effort and that he also supported increased senior White House engagement. However, he cautioned that Mr. Giuliani was a key voice with the President on Ukraine which could be an obstacle to increased White House engagement. He did suggest that perhaps the Vice President would be available to travel to Toronto to meet with President Zelenskyy in early July at the Ukraine Reform Conference that the Canadian government was hosting. We later learned that the Vice President would not attend the conference. The morning after the meeting, I sent a brief message to Deputy Assistant Secretary George Kent summarizing the meeting and relaying NSA Bolton's message about Mr. Giuliani.

I sent around a more formal summary later that day to my State Department colleagues.

On June 18, Secretary Perry hosted a follow-up meeting at the Department of Energy to discuss how to move forward on these three key areas. In preparation for that meeting, colleagues in different offices in the State Department, the Department of Energy, and our missions in Kyiv and Brussels worked to develop a joint list of policy outcomes that would demonstrate Zelenskyy's commitment to reform and improve the bilateral U.S.-Ukraine relationship.

In the meeting at the Department of Energy on June 18, there was broad agreement on the interagency framework regarding policy deliverables. There were some initial discussions about how to delineate the lines of effort among the Department of Energy, the State Department, Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Sondland, and Ambassador Taylor (who joined by phone from Kyiv). There was also general agreement that it would be important to schedule a White House visit quickly, even if the actual date of the visit was after the Ukrainian parliamentary elections. There were some vague discussions in the meeting about how to address Mr. Giuliani's continued calls for a corruption investigation. After the meeting I spoke with Ambassador Taylor in a phone call to discuss the atmospherics of the meeting and next steps. We agreed on the importance of not calling for any specific investigations, but otherwise agreed the three lines of effort were useful. Ambassador Volker then led a delegation to the Ukraine Reform Conference in Toronto July 1–2. We met with several Ukrainian officials including President Zelenskyy. In the meeting, President Zelenskyy highlighted progress in some of the key areas we had identified and pushed for a date for a White House visit. Volker urged him to schedule a call with President Trump in order to start building a relationship and thereby increase the chance of securing a date for the White House visit.

I was scheduled to complete my assignment as Special Advisor for Ukraine Negotiations on July 12, 2019. In the few remaining days of my assignment, I continued to push my Ukrainian counterparts for concrete progress in key reform areas. The Ukrainians remained focused on scheduling a White House visit—seeing such a visit as a critical step in empowering Zelenskyy in his negotiations with the Russians. My last day with Ambassador Volker was July 12. Catherine Croft was my successor.

In closing, I want to reiterate that my colleagues and I in the Foreign Service are non-partisan and advance the foreign policy set by our duly elected

leaders. I take that commitment as well as my oath to defend the Constitution seriously. Working abroad to advance the interest of the United States has at times led to harassment and intimidation by hostile intelligence services, death threats, and other significant challenges for my family and I. I have accepted these burdens because I believe we are advancing a cause greater than ourselves and are working to promote the general welfare.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this statement, and I welcome your questions.