

Fact-checking the House Republicans' impeachment report defending Donald Trump on Ukraine

Congressional Republicans argue that President Donald Trump did nothing wrong related to Ukraine and his July call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

They released a 123-page report on the impeachment inquiry to counter the majority report by the Democratic-led House Intelligence Committee, which the Judiciary Committee will likely use to craft articles of impeachment. The Republican report argues that the impeachment inquiry led by Democrats is merely "their obsession with re-litigating the results of the 2016 presidential election."

We found that the GOP report omits key facts and relevant testimony related to the inquiry. Here's a look at six points in the report that needed a fact-check or additional context.

Claim: There's no evidence that Trump directed anyone to pressure Ukraine

This claim is directly contradicted by [testimony](#) from Gordon Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union.

Sondland testified that he, along with Energy Secretary Rick Perry and former special envoy to Ukraine Kurt Volker, worked with Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani "on Ukraine matters at the express direction of the president."

Giuliani demanded that Zelensky publicly announce investigations into the 2016 election, the Democratic National Committee and Burisma Holdings in exchange for a White House meeting with Trump, Sondland said, calling Giuliani's requests a "quid pro quo."

"Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the president of the United States, and we knew these investigations were important to the president," he added.

Claim: The whistleblower report was misleading

This ignores that the whistleblower complaint has been backed up by the released summary of the phone call between Trump and Zelensky as well as the public testimony during the impeachment hearings.

The complaint said that when Trump spoke with Zelensky on July 25, he pressured Zelensky to initiate or continue an investigation into the activities of Joe Biden and his son, Hunter, a Burisma director. The readout of the call released by the White House shows Trump stating, "Biden went around bragging that he stopped the prosecution so if you can look into it." Trump and his allies have spread the falsehood that Biden pressured Ukraine to fire the prosecutor for investigating Hunter Biden's company, but that is not supported by evidence.

The whistleblower's report also said Trump asked Zelensky to uncover allegations that Russian interference in the 2016 election originated in Ukraine, and alluded to a theory that Ukraine controlled Hillary Clinton's email server. Fiona Hill, a former White House national security aide, testified that the theory that Ukraine interfered in the election was a "fictional narrative that has been perpetrated and propagated by the Russian security services themselves." (Here's more about the debunked [Crowdstrike conspiracy theory](#).)

Claim: Witnesses didn't say Trump should be impeached

This is misleading. The witnesses who testified in the impeachment inquiry did so as fact witnesses, speaking about what they saw, did, or knew related to inquiry matters. They were not there to make legal conclusions.

Schiff during one of the public hearings said that witnesses are not aware of all the facts gathered in the investigation, and that they testified because they were subpoenaed, "not because they are for or against impeachment."

U.S. Rep. John Ratcliffe, R-Texas, during the hearing with Taylor and George Kent asked "where is the impeachable offense" in Trump's call with the president of Ukraine. Taylor told him they were not there to decide on impeachment.

"That is not what either of us are here to do," Taylor said. "This is your job."

Claim: Mick Mulvaney's remarks were misunderstood

Mulvaney did cite Trump concerns of corruption and of European countries not helping out enough as driving factors on why security aid was withheld from Ukraine. But Mulvaney didn't stop there.

"Did he also mention to me in passing the corruption related to the DNC server? Absolutely. No question about that. But that's it. And that's why we held up the money," Mulvaney said at an October news conference.

A reporter asked Mulvaney to be precise: "But to be clear, what you just described is a quid pro quo. It is: Funding will not flow unless the investigation into the Democratic server happens as well."

"We do that all the time with foreign policy," Mulvaney said.

He added that there was a distinction between asking Ukraine about the DNC server and asking about the Bidens, saying that "the money held up had absolutely nothing to do with Biden."

Mulvaney retracted his remarks about the DNC server in a written statement after the press conference. Readers can draw their own conclusions by reading the [transcript and context of Mulvaney's words](#).

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