**Article 2: What is the Accusation
Against President Trump?**

**‘Do Us a Favor’: Call Shows Trump’s Interest in Using U.S. Power for His Gain**

The New York Times, Sept. 26, 2019

WASHINGTON — It did not take long for President Trump to see an opening during his July 25 call with Volodymyr Zelensky, the young new president of Ukraine.

Just after 9 a.m. in Washington, Mr. Zelensky was heaping praise on the American president for bragging about helping Ukraine in its years long war with Russian-backed separatists. “You are absolutely right. Not 100 percent, but actually 1,000 percent,” Mr. Zelensky gushed, according to [a reconstructed transcript of the call](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/09/25/us/politics/trump-ukraine-transcript.html?module=inline) the White House released on Wednesday.

When Mr. Zelensky said Ukraine was almost ready to purchase American Javelin anti-tank missiles so it could better repel armored assaults by Russian-supported fighters, Mr. Trump pounced.

“I would like you to do us a favor though,” Mr. Trump responded, beginning a series of pointed requests. The president pressed Mr. Zelensky to use the help of Attorney General William P. Barr in opening an investigation of a company involved in the beginnings of the F.B.I. inquiry of Russia’s 2016 election interference. He also wanted a corruption investigation connected to former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., a Democratic rival.

Both held the potential to benefit Mr. Trump politically. And in case Mr. Zelensky needed reminding, Mr. Trump was quick to point out that “the United States has been very, very good to Ukraine.”

Mr. Trump’s suggestion that American law enforcement be directly involved and in contact with Ukraine’s government marks the first evidence that the president personally sought to harness the power of the United States government to further a political investigation.

The exchange, revealed in a declassified, five-page “memorandum of telephone conversation,” prompted an unidentified whistle-blower to accuse the president of a quid pro quo, trading a promise of foreign assistance for help in legitimizing an unsubstantiated conspiracy theory and gathering dirt on a political rival.

Mr. Trump insisted on Wednesday that the reconstructed transcript offered no evidence that he pressured Mr. Zelensky. Questioned by reporters before the two met at the United Nations, Mr. Zelensky said that “we spoke about many things and so I think — you read it — that nobody pushed me.”

Mr. Trump jumped in: “In other words, no pressure.”

But critics seized on the conversation as proof that the president violated his oath of office by coercing another world leader into supporting his personal political agenda.

The document provided a rare opportunity to review a private conversation between the United States president and another leader.



It included a note cautioning that it was “not a verbatim transcript” but was based on “notes and recollections of Situation Room duty officers” and national security staff. Voice recognition software was also used in preparing the document, which included long, direct quotations, senior administration officials said.

An American official translated Mr. Zelensky’s statements into English, officials said. The document included three ellipses indicating that part of Mr. Trump’s comments may be missing, though it is unclear how much was left out. Administration officials said the ellipses indicated when Mr. Trump trailed off or was inaudible.

The release of the conversation’s details marked a culmination of an extraordinary series of revelations that began in recent weeks with the whistle-blower’s private expressions of concern about Mr. Trump’s actions and prompted Democrats in Congress to officially [begin an impeachment inquiry](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/24/us/politics/democrats-impeachment-trump.html?module=inline).

And unlike most Washington memos, Wednesday’s document was written like a movie script.

“There is a lot of talk about Biden’s son, that Biden stopped the prosecution, and a lot of people want to find out about that,” Mr. Trump said to Mr. Zelensky, referring to unfounded allegations that the former vice president tried in 2015 to stop a prosecution of a company that his son worked for at the time.

“So whatever you can do with the attorney general would be great,” the president said, referring to his desire that Mr. Zelensky should be in touch with both Mr. Barr and the president’s personal lawyer Rudolph W. Giuliani.

Mr. Zelensky’s response appeared to reassure Mr. Trump. Mr. Zelensky said that since his party recently won an absolute majority in parliament, he would have no problem ensuring that Ukraine’s new top prosecutor would conduct the investigations that Mr. Trump wanted.

“The next prosecutor general will be 100 percent my person, my candidate,” Mr. Zelensky assured the president. “He or she will look into the situation.”

Mr. Trump specifically asked his Ukrainian counterpart to look into the unsubstantiated theory pushed by Mr. Giuliani holding that Ukrainians had some role in the emails stolen from the Democratic National Committee.

“I would like to have the attorney general call you or your people and I would like you to get to the bottom of that,” Mr. Trump said on the call, which took place a day after the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, testified to lawmakers about his report on Russia’s election sabotage and the president’s efforts to impede the inquiry.

Mr. Trump told Mr. Zelensky that Mr. Mueller had delivered an “incompetent performance” and again pressed the Ukrainian president to pursue investigations for him. “Whatever you can do, it’s very important that you do it, if that’s possible.”

The Justice Department said Wednesday that Mr. Barr was unaware that Mr. Trump had told Mr. Zelensky that the attorney general would contact him. The department said that Mr. Barr had never spoken with Mr. Trump about working with Ukraine to investigate anything related to the Bidens and that he had never spoken with Mr. Giuliani about “anything related to Ukraine.”

Mr. Trump’s call with Mr. Zelensky took place on a sunny day just before the president made the short trip to the Pentagon for the ceremonial swearing-in of Mark T. Esper, his new defense secretary. Later, the White House released an anodyne statement noting that the two leaders discussed “ways to strengthen the relationship between the United States and Ukraine, including energy and economic cooperation.”

The president’s mentions of Mr. Barr and Mr. Giuliani were the most striking parts of a half-hour conversation in which the two men discussed a series of issues.

The president and Mr. Giuliani have long pushed for Ukrainian officials to examine whether there was any improper overlap between Mr. Biden’s dealings with Ukraine while in office and his son’s position on the board of a Ukrainian energy company.

As vice president, Mr. Biden embraced his role as the Obama administration’s leader in pressing Ukraine’s notoriously corrupt government to clean up its act. He once publicly threatened to withhold $1 billion in United States loan guarantees if Ukraine’s leaders did not dismiss a prosecutor accused of ignoring corruption.

Mr. Giuliani said in an interview that Mr. Trump would have been shirking his duty to enforce the laws of the United States had he not asked the Ukrainian government to pursue the allegations against Mr. Biden and his son. “The only person that can raise that is the president of the United States,” he said. “The president of Ukraine is not going to take a call from the head of the F.B.I.”

There was no explicit reference during the call to $391 million in military assistance to Ukraine that Mr. Trump had told Mick Mulvaney, the acting White House chief of staff, to put a hold on several days before the call took place.

In the reconstructed transcript of the call, Mr. Trump complained to Mr. Zelensky that the United States spends more to help Ukraine than European countries, citing specifically the lack of action by Angela Merkel, Germany’s chancellor.

“When I was speaking to Angela Merkel, she talks Ukraine, but she doesn’t do anything,” Mr. Trump said.

Mr. Zelensky repeatedly lavished praise on Mr. Trump, employing a strategy of ego-stroking that world leaders often use with the president. He called Mr. Trump a “great teacher” for draining “the swamp” of corrupt officials and thanked Mr. Trump for revealing to him that his country’s ambassador to the United States was “a bad ambassador.”

“She admired the previous president and she was on his side,” Mr. Zelensky said. “She would not accept me as the new president well enough.”

Mr. Trump replied: “Well, she’s going to go through some things,” but did not elaborate on what that meant. Near the end of the call, Mr. Trump invited Mr. Zelensky to visit the White House and Mr. Zelensky said he is “looking forward to our meeting.”

*Reporting was contributed by Katie Benner, Nicholas Fandos, Sharon LaFraniere and Kenneth P. Vogel.*