

But President Trump did insist that President Zelenskyy go to a microphone and say he is opening investigations of “Biden and 2016 election interference,” and that President Zelenskyy should want to do this himself. Mr. Morrison said that he told Ambassador Bolton and the NSC lawyers of this phone call between President Trump and Ambassador Sondland.

The following day, on September 8, Ambassador Sondland and I spoke on the phone. He confirmed that he had talked to President Trump as I had suggested a week earlier, but that President Trump was adamant that President Zelenskyy, himself, had to “clear things up and do it in public.” President Trump said it was not a “quid pro quo.” I believe this was the same conversation between Ambassador Sondland and President Trump that Mr. Morrison had described to me on September 7.

Ambassador Sondland also said that he had talked to President Zelenskyy and Mr. Yermak and had told them that, although this was not a quid pro quo, if President Zelenskyy did not “clear things up” in public, we would be at a “stalemate.” I understood a “stalemate” to mean that Ukraine would not receive the much-needed military assistance. Ambassador Sondland said that this conversation concluded with President Zelenskyy agreeing to make a public statement in an interview on CNN.

Shortly after that call with Ambassador Sondland, I expressed my strong reservations in a text message to Ambassador Sondland, stating that my “nightmare is they [the Ukrainians] give the interview and don’t get the security assistance. The Russians love it. (And I quit.)” I was serious.

The next day, September 9, I said to Ambassadors Sondland and Volker that “[t]he message to the Ukrainians (and Russians) we send with the decision on security assistance is key. With the hold, we have already shaken their faith in us.” I also said, “I think it’s crazy to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign.”