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## **Chairman Schiff Releases Opening Statement for Open Hearing With David Hale and Laura Cooper**

**Washington, DC** — Today, Chairman Adam Schiff released his opening statement for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence’s open hearing with Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia Laura Cooper as part of the impeachment inquiry into President Donald J. Trump.

### **Full statement below as prepared:**

This afternoon, the American people will hear from two witnesses who are both veteran national security professionals, one at the Department of State and the other at the Defense Department. David Hale is the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, the third-most senior official in the department and the most senior Foreign Service Officer. Laura Cooper serves Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia and is responsible for a broad range of countries in the former Soviet Union and the Balkans.

Between them, they have several decades of national security experience, serving both Republican and Democratic presidents and, as we have heard from other dedicated public servants like former Ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent, Ambassador Bill Taylor, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman, and Jennifer Williams, their only priority has been the security of the United States of America.

Under Secretary Hale was witness to the smear campaign against Ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, and the efforts by some in the State Department to help her.

In late March, Yovanovitch reached out to Hale for help, telling him in an email “that the tempo of social media and other criticisms of her were such that she felt she could no longer function unless there was strong statement of defense of her from the State Department.” Hale pushed to get the State Department to put out a “robust full-page statement of defense and praise” for Ambassador Yovanovitch, sadly to no avail.

That silence continues today.

In late April, as we heard in riveting testimony last Friday from Ambassador Yovanovitch, she was recalled to Washington and informed that she had lost the confidence of the President. The Secretary of State did not meet with her. His subordinates dealt with her instead.

With the departure of Yovanovitch, Hale watched as three new players moved in to assume a prominent role in Trump's Ukraine policy. The Three Amigos were nominally led by Energy Secretary Rick Perry, but it "would be Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Sondland, presumably working with Ambassador Taylor, who would be the ones really doing the continual effort here."

In mid-summer, Trump ordered a suspension of military aid to Ukraine, despite the fact that the aid had been authorized and appropriated by Congress and that the DoD, in consultation with State, had certified that Ukraine had meet all the necessary requirements to receive the aid, including anti-corruption reform.

The aid was in the national interests of the United States, and critical to Ukraine's security, a country that had been invaded by Russia.

From her office in the Pentagon, Ms. Cooper oversaw a significant amount of security assistance flowing to Ukraine and was involved in efforts to understand and reverse the suspension of nearly \$400 million in U.S. aid.

Cooper, along with others, learned about the freeze during a series of interagency meetings in the last two weeks of July. At the first meeting, on July 18, an OMB representative relayed that "the White House chief of staff has conveyed that the President has concerns about Ukraine and Ukraine security assistance," and that a hold on aid had been ordered by the President. No explanation was provided.

All of all the agencies responsible for Ukraine policy supported security assistance and advocated for the lifting of the hold. The only dissenting voice was OMB, who was following the orders of President Trump. And still no good explanation for the hold was provided.

While the aid suspension had not been made public, word was getting out. Catherine Croft, Special Advisor for Ukraine Negotiation who worked closely with Ambassador Volker and who testified before this committee at a deposition, received two separate calls in July or August from officials at the Ukrainian Embassy who "approached me quietly and in confidence to ask me about an OMB hold on Ukraine security assistance." Croft was "very surprised at the effectiveness of my Ukrainian counterparts' diplomatic tradecraft, as in to say they found out very early on or much earlier than I expected them to." The Ukrainians wanted answers, but Croft did not have a good response.

But then, in late August, Cooper met with Kurt Volker, with whom she had met many times in the past. During that meeting, in which they were discussing the hold on security assistance,

Volker revealed that he was engaged in an effort to have the government of Ukraine issue a statement that would “commit to the prosecution of any individuals involved in election interference.” Cooper understood that if Volker’s effort were successful, the hold might be lifted.

Unbeknownst to Cooper, no such statement was forthcoming. But the aid was abruptly restored on September 11, days after the three Committees launched an investigation into the Trump-Giuliani Ukraine scheme.

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