



Whistleblower complaint says White House tried to "lock down" Ukraine call records

UPDATED ON: SEPTEMBER 26, 2019 / 12:30 PM / CBS NEWS



The House Intelligence Committee has released an unclassified version of the whistleblower complaint ahead of testimony by the director of national intelligence.

The complaint reported an "urgent concern" about President Trump's request for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate former Vice President Joe

Biden, as well as how records of the call were handled and the role of Mr.

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U.S. election. This interference includes, among other things, pressuring a foreign country to investigate one of the President's main domestic political rivals."

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The individual, who wasn't a direct witness to most of what's laid out in the complaint said that over "half a dozen U.S. officials" had informed the whistleblower of these efforts.

Read the unclassified whistleblower complaint released today

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The phone call

The whistleblower pointed to the president's July 25 call with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky and to efforts by the White House to shut down access to the call afterward. There were, according to the complainant, about a dozen White House officials listening to the call.

"The officials I spoke with told me that participation in the call had not been restricted in advance because everyone expected it would be a 'routine' call with a foreign leader," the whistleblower wrote. Afterward, the whistleblower describes a sense from some in the White House that the president had crossed the line into abusing his office. Here's what the complaint says:

The White House officials who told me this information were deeply disturbed by what had transpired in the phone call. They told me that

there was already a 'discussion ongoing' with White House lawyers

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WHAT THE WHISTLEBLOWER WROTE ABOUT THE CALL.

Multiple White House officials with direct knowledge of the call informed that, after an initial exchange of pleasantries, the President used the remainder of the call to advance his personal interests. Namely, he sought to pressure the Ukrainian leader to take actions to help the President's 2020 reelection bid. According to the White House officials who had direct knowledge of the call, the President pressured Mr. Zelenski to...:

- initiate or continue an investigation into the activities of former Vice President Joseph Biden and his son, Hunter Biden;
- assist in purportedly uncovering that allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election originated in Ukraine, with a specific request that the Ukrainian leader locate and turn over servers used by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and examined by the U.S. cyber security firm CrowdStrike, which initially reported that Russian hackers had penetrated the DNC's networks in 2016; and
- meet or speak with two people the President named explicitly as his personal envoys on these matters, Mr. Giuliani and Attorney General Barr, to whom the President referred multiple times in tandem.

White House tried to "lock down" records of call

The complaint raised concerns about White House efforts to restrict access to the

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In the days following the phone call, I learned from multiple U.S.

officials that senior White House officials had intervened to 'lock down' all record of the phone call, especially the official word-for-word transcript of the call that was produced—as is customary—by the White House Situation Room. This set of actions underscored to me that the White House officials understood the gravity of what had transpired in the call.

- White House officials told me that they were 'directed' by White House lawyers to remove the electronic transcript from the computer system in which such transcripts are typically stored for coordination, finalization, and distribution to Cabinet-level officials. Instead, the transcript was loaded into a separate electronic system that is otherwise used to store and handle classified information of an especially sensitive nature. One White House official described this act as an abuse of this electronic system because the call did not contain anything remotely sensitive from a national security perspective.

Trump orders Pence to cancel Ukraine trip

The complainant said that around May 14, according to U.S. officials, Mr. Trump directed Vice President Mike Pence to cancel his trip to Ukraine for Zelensky's inauguration, and these officials said the president "made clear" that he did not want to meet with Zelesnky until he saw how Zelensky "chose to act" in office:

I do not know whether this action was connected with the broader understanding, described in the unclassified letter, that a meeting or a

phone call between the president and President Zelensky would

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match about the 2016 election, including allegations that two of his political rivals interfered in the election on behalf of the Democratic National Committee, and that U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch had "blocked Ukrainian prosecutors from traveling to the United States expressly to prevent them from delivering their 'evidence' about the 2016 U.S. election."

Yovanovitch was recalled from her post at the end of April. Giuliani said in an interview in May that she was removed "because she was part of the efforts against the president." Mr. Trump insulted Yovanovitch in his call with Zelensky.

First published on September 26, 2019 / 8:45 AM

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