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POLITICS

‘Just Having Fun’: Giuliani Doubles Down on Ukraine Probes

Trump’s personal attorney escalates his push for investigations—the effort that helped spark impeachment inquiry

By Rebecca Ballhaus and Julie Bykowicz in Washington and Thomas Grove in Kyiv

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Some of Rudy Giuliani’s friends told him to keep a low profile.

Instead, Mr. Giuliani is escalating his push for Ukraine to conduct investigations, undeterred by federal prosecutors probing his business dealings and an impeachment inquiry into his client, President Trump.

In recent weeks, as a dozen witnesses told impeachment investigators that they were alarmed by Mr. Giuliani’s efforts, the president’s attorney has been working on a TV series about the need for investigations in Ukraine into former Vice President Joe Biden, his son Hunter and claims that Kyiv interfered in the 2016 U.S. election. Mr. Giuliani traveled to Kyiv—his first trip to Ukraine in two years—to interview officials and gather information this month, as the Democrats started to draft articles of impeachment.

When he returned to New York last Saturday, the president called him as his plane was still taxiing down the runway, Mr. Giuliani said. “What did you get?” he said Mr. Trump asked. “More than you can imagine,” Mr. Giuliani replied. He is putting his findings into a 20-page report.

On Friday, Mr. Giuliani met with the president at the White House, according to an administration official. Mr. Giuliani didn’t respond to questions about what they discussed.

Several friends have urged the 75-year-old once known as “America’s mayor” to lie low amid



Rudy Giuliani's trip to Kyiv this month, which he described as a "secret assignment," included a meeting with Ukrainian lawmaker Andriy Derkach. PHOTO: PRESS OFFICE OF ANDRIY DERKACH/ASSOCIATED PRESS

the congressional and federal investigations. One told him to stop going on television because "every time he goes on TV, he can't help but make the argument" for the Ukraine investigations, which in turn heightens the scrutiny on Mr. Giuliani himself. Others have urged Mr. Giuliani to forge ahead, and Republicans in Congress are echoing some of his points about Ukraine.

Mr. Giuliani says his efforts are justified to defend Mr. Trump and that he wouldn't be a good attorney if he were daunted by opposition. The pressure, meanwhile, is bolstering a relationship with the president that has boosted Mr. Giuliani's consulting business and returned him to the public spotlight. Friends say he is reveling in it.

"When he believes he's right, he loves taking on fights," said Tony Carbonetti, a longtime friend of Mr. Giuliani.

The impeachment inquiry was set off by efforts by Messrs. Trump and Giuliani to get Ukraine's government to conduct the investigations into the Bidens and alleged Ukrainian interference in the 2016 U.S. election, at the same time the White House was holding up nearly \$400 million in aid to the country.

Messrs. Trump and Giuliani say then-Vice President Biden engaged in corruption when he called for the ouster of a Ukrainian prosecutor who had investigated a Ukrainian gas company where Hunter Biden served on the board. The Bidens deny wrongdoing, and ousting the prosecutor was a goal at the time of the U.S. and several European countries. The allegations of Ukrainian election interference are at odds with findings by the U.S. intelligence community that Russia was behind the election interference.

Mr. Giuliani's work in Ukraine has also spurred an investigation by Manhattan federal prosecutors, who are examining the lawyer's business dealings in the country and reviewing whether Mr. Giuliani should have registered as a foreign agent. Two associates, Lev Parnas and

Igor Fruman, Soviet-born émigrés and Trump donors who assisted with his investigations in Ukraine, were arrested in October on campaign-finance charges. They have pleaded not guilty.



Lev Parnas outside federal court earlier this month. The businessman, who assisted Mr. Giuliani with his investigations in Ukraine, faces campaign-finance charges. PHOTO: STEPHANIE KEITH/GETTY IMAGES

Mr. Giuliani denies wrongdoing and said he has never lobbied.

Mr. Giuliani has contacted the lawyers for Messrs. Parnas and Fruman several times in recent weeks and said he has spoken to one of the men with a lawyer present, but declined to identify which.

In pressing ahead on Ukraine, Mr. Giuliani has replaced the translation skills of Messrs. Parnas and Fruman with an app he downloaded that allows him to read Russian documents by holding his phone over them. But on his recent trip, he said, “despite whatever else you can say, I missed them.”

He has been reading “Ike and McCarthy,” an account of how former President Dwight Eisenhower campaigned against Sen. Joseph McCarthy. Mr. Giuliani in an interview compared Mr. McCarthy’s demagoguery to the Democrats’ impeachment campaign.

“There’s nobody in the whole world that could possibly think they are treating the president fairly,” he said.

The White House didn’t respond to a request for comment on Mr. Giuliani’s relationship with the president.

In the impeachment hearings, witnesses accused Mr. Giuliani of conducting a shadow foreign policy and orchestrating the ouster of the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. He was described as “problematic” and “disruptive” and, in testimony that cited former national security adviser John Bolton, likened to a “hand grenade that’s going to blow everybody up.” Mr. Giuliani has

said he kept the State Department apprised of his efforts and that he was working at the president's behest.

Mr. Giuliani in recent weeks dispatched a former Ukrainian diplomat to gather information from politicians there and ask them to participate in the documentary series, which is being produced by the conservative One America News Network. The series tries to make a case for investigating the Bidens and the gas company Burisma Holdings, as well as alleged election interference.

“Just having fun while Dems and friends try to destroy my brilliant career,” Mr. Giuliani wrote in a text message during his trip, which he described as a “secret assignment.”

Mr. Giuliani said he also has expanded his search for information about Burisma beyond Ukraine to Latvia, where the gas company had bank accounts, and Cyprus, where it is registered.

The former diplomat, Andriy Telizhenko, said the plan for the series was hatched during the impeachment hearings and intended to let Mr. Giuliani tell his side of the story. He flew to Washington on Nov. 20 to film with Mr. Giuliani, and in early December, he joined Mr. Giuliani on the Kyiv trip, which included stops in Budapest, Vienna and Rome. They interviewed former Ukrainian prosecutors—including Viktor Shokin and Yuriy Lutsenko—who are supportive of a Biden probe as part of the documentary series.

In Kyiv, Mr. Giuliani met with a member of Ukraine's parliament to discuss the creation of a group called “Friends of Ukraine STOP Corruption.”

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When he returned, Mr. Giuliani says Mr. Trump instructed him to brief the attorney general and Republican lawmakers. Moments later, Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House that his lawyer would deliver a report to the Justice Department and Congress, saying, “I hear he has found plenty.” Mr. Giuliani says he has been in contact with several Republican lawmakers, but not the Justice Department, and won't hold any briefings until he finishes the report.

In the weeks since the impeachment inquiry launched in September, Mr. Giuliani says his relationship with the president has only strengthened. The two speak by phone at least several

times a week, Mr. Giuliani says, with Mr. Trump calling him more often because “I don’t want to bother him.”

Mr. Giuliani rejects the notion that Mr. Trump would cast him aside, calling it “bullshit.” “He has a hard time getting rid of people,” he said.

Mr. Trump has praised Mr. Giuliani in recent weeks, calling him “one of the greatest and most famous crime-fighters anywhere in the entire world.” But, he told former Fox News host Bill O’Reilly of Mr. Giuliani’s efforts in Ukraine: “I didn’t direct him.”

The attention has appeared to delight Mr. Giuliani. Weeks after the probe began, Mr. Giuliani sat in bumper-to-bumper traffic in New York City with his lawyer at the time, Jon Sale. When construction workers waved to him, Mr. Giuliani on two occasions rolled down his window to high-five them, Mr. Sale said.

Mr. Giuliani agreed to become Mr. Trump’s attorney in April 2018 to help navigate special counsel Robert Mueller’s probe into Russian interference in the 2016 election. He took on the task pro bono and resigned from the Greenberg Traurig law firm. “This’ll be like a month or two,” Mr. Giuliani told one person.

During the heat of the Mueller investigation, Mr. Giuliani frequently visited the White House, usually meeting with the president weekly, sometimes alone, and often in the evenings in the residence without other White House officials present, former administration officials said.

Meetings would start out discussing the Mueller probe and then veer into other subjects, like Ukraine, one of the former officials said. Mr. Giuliani often brought lists of requests for the president, according to the former official, and sought out meetings at the State Department and other agencies on behalf of clients.

“He trusts Rudy, and Rudy just kept putting this shit in his head,” the former official said of the president.

After Mr. Mueller concluded his probe in March without calling for charges against Mr. Trump, Mr. Giuliani celebrated with the rest of the president’s legal team and Mr. Parnas at the Trump hotel in Washington.

When an associate asked what he planned to do next, Mr. Giuliani replied, referring to the president: “Whatever he needs me to do.”

— *Joe Palazzolo in New York and Byron Tau in Washington contributed to this article.*

Write to Rebecca Ballhaus at Rebecca.Ballhaus@wsj.com, Julie Bykowicz at julie.bykowicz@wsj.com and Thomas Grove at thomas.grove@wsj.com

GIULIANI AND TRUMP: A TIMELINE

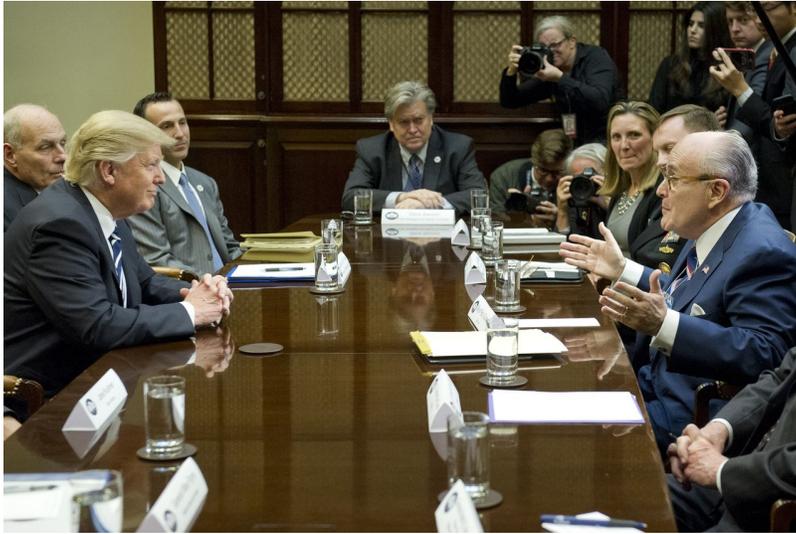


PHOTO: RON SACHS/ZUMA PRESS

- • January 2017: Rudy Giuliani, who said he wanted to serve as attorney general or secretary of state, is appointed by President Trump as a cybersecurity adviser (pictured).
- • 2017: Mr. Giuliani's consulting business picks up and he travels widely for it, including trips in June and November to Ukraine.
- • April 2018: Mr. Giuliani joins Mr. Trump's legal team to deal with special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation.
- • Mid-2018: Soviet-born U.S. businessman Lev Parnas's company starts paying Mr. Giuliani, ultimately disbursing \$500,000. The two begin working and traveling together.
- • January 2019: Mr. Giuliani meets with Yuriy Lutsenko, then Ukraine's prosecutor general, to discuss possible investigations into the Bidens and election interference.
- • March 2019: Mr. Giuliani speaks to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Mr. Trump about ousting Marie Yovanovitch, the ambassador to Ukraine. She is recalled the following month.
- • May 2019: Mr. Trump directs administration officials to work with Mr. Giuliani on Ukraine.

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