<div style="border:1px solid black;">

Dispelling The Myth That President Trump's Ukraine Aid Freeze Was Rooted In His Desire To Combat Corruption

Prepared by the Office of Senator Leahy, Vice Chairman, Senate Appropriations
January 27, 2020

</div>

After President Trump's illegal Ukraine aid freeze scheme was exposed, he has claimed that he froze the aid out of a desire to fight corruption. **That is a myth. There is no evidence that he cares about fighting corruption in Ukraine or anywhere else**. The Trump administration has sought to *gut* foreign aid accounts that help fight corruption, ***including in Ukraine***; has *not* sought to freeze aid to governments widely considered to have more corruption challenges than those in Ukraine; and is *actively* seeking to undermine our nation's premier foreign corruption law, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

President Trump has proposed draconian cuts to aid specifically intended to fight corruption overseas. Republicans and Democrats in Congress have repeatedly rejected those cuts:

- In fiscal year 2020, the Trump administration proposed a 37 percent cut (roughly $550 million) to the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement account (INCLE), one of the central purposes of which is to combat "weak rule of law and widespread corruption." ***The White House specifically sought to cut INCLE funding to Ukraine from $30 million to $13 million.*** Congress *rejected* those proposed cuts.

- In fiscal year 2020, the Trump administration proposed a 32 percent cut (roughly $2.5 billion) to economic and development aid programs, which include programs to address "poor governance, corruption…and weak institutions." That proposal included a 42 percent cut (roughly $1 billion) to democracy and governance programs, which seek to build "transparent and accountable governments." Congress *rejected* that cut.

President Trump has not sought to freeze aid to governments widely considered to be more corrupt than Ukraine:

- The United States has important national security and foreign policy reasons to provide aid to foreign countries, including many of the 54 countries ranked as more corrupt than Ukraine in Transparency International's 2019

Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)[1]. To mitigate the risk to taxpayer funds, Congress has included restrictions and other controls on such aid, including for Ukraine.

- For example, in 2018, the United States allocated more than $400 million in foreign aid to Iraq (ranked #162 on the CPI), more than $650 million to Nigeria (ranked #146 on the CPI), and more than $150 million to Somalia (ranked worst in the world). ***President Trump did not seek to freeze any of this aid.***

- If President Trump were really motivated by a desire to fight corruption when he froze military aid to Ukraine, it raises the questions: ***Why hasn't President Trump frozen aid to other countries with significantly greater corruption challenges? Why did he single out Ukraine? Given that Ukraine had corruption challenges when he came into office, why did he wait until 2019 to freeze the aid?***

Rather than fighting corruption, President Trump is trying to weaken the nation's premier foreign anti-corruption law, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA):

- In 2017, President Trump is reported to have said "**It's just so unfair that American companies aren't allowed to pay bribes. . . We're going to change that.**"

- Now, reports indicate the Trump administration wants to *gut* the FCPA, a vital anti-corruption law that since 1977 has made it illegal for Americans and American companies to pay bribes to foreign government officials. ***It's hard to think of a more effective way to encourage corruption than by weakening the FCPA.***

---

[1] The CPI is a composite index based on international surveys and assessments of corruption from outside institutions. A minimum of three different sources is needed to rank any country. The CPI uses thirteen different surveys from independent institutions; the scores from each survey are standardized by subtracting the mean score of the data set and dividing by the standard deviation, and then adjusted to fit the Transparency International scale.