

Despite Impeachment Bombshells, Democrats Don't Want to Battle for Additional Witnesses

By Luke Johnson

House Democrats called witnesses who implicated other Trump Administration officials in the impeachment inquiry this week, revealing striking new evidence that those senior officials had knowledge of efforts to pressure a foreign government to damage President Donald Trump's domestic political rivals.

But such officials, including former National Security Adviser John Bolton and Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, defied earlier House subpoenas to appear before impeachment investigators.

House Democrats on the investigative committees did not seem eager to try to compel them again to come before the committees, which would potentially draw out the impeachment process. Furthermore, many Democrats thought they had gained enough evidence already to proceed with the impeachment inquiry against Trump.

"Do we need to hear from him? No. Would it be desirable? Yes. But I don't think we need to hear from Bolton," Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.) told *Fortune*. "What's in front of us is profoundly damning."

Bolton was one of several officials, including Vice President Mike Pence, who Ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland said had knowledge of the Ukraine pressure campaign.

"Everyone was in the loop," said the Trump mega-donor in his opening statement. He disputed that he, Energy Secretary Rick Perry, and former Special Representative to Ukraine Kurt Volker were running a "rogue" operation. Rather, he said, multiple Trump officials knew Trump wanted to dangle a White House visit for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in exchange for him to announce investigations into the Bidens. Sondland further said that the State Department had not made available documents he said would help reconstruct his memory of the pressure campaign.

Bolton's lawyer [wrote a letter](#) to House investigators on November 8, saying that he had knowledge of "many relevant meetings and conversations" that had then not yet been discussed in the impeachment inquiry. But he has refused to appear before the inquiry until a court rules on whether he needs to testify, which could take months.

Democrats hit Bolton for signing a [\\$2 million book deal](#) and not testifying before the committees. "I thought John Bolton was more interested in his book deal than coming and telling what he knows to the American people about this impeachment inquiry," said Rep. Val Demings (D-Fla.)

Democrats, despite the new information from witnesses about other potential witnesses and documents, said they had potentially enough evidence to move forward with impeachment articles.

"There's a lot there. I was struck by the fact that there's potentially sufficient evidence to allege at least three or four different theories of what has happened from a legal standpoint," including bribery, coercion, abuse of power, solicitation of foreign influence in an election, and obstruction, Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Ill.) told reporters Thursday.

The Intelligence Committee Democrat said he did not think the inquiry should be slowed down to wait for Bolton, Mulvaney, or Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to testify, or the State Department to produce documents. "We have to stop whatever shenanigans are happening right now in the White House," he said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi echoed that she did not want to get drawn into a long court battle to compel Trump administration officials to appear.

"We're not going to wait until the courts decide," she said to reporters at her weekly briefing. "That might be information that's available to the Senate...but it's a technique. It's Obstruction of Justice. It's Obstruction of Congress."

Democrats have concluded their last scheduled public impeachment inquiry hearings before recessing for the Thanksgiving holiday until December 3. They have announced no further public hearings, but they have not ruled out additional ones. Many Democrats have seen potential impeachment articles as being voted on before the end of the year, although Pelosi has publicly refused to commit to a timeline.

In the last scheduled impeachment hearing, former National Security Council official Fiona Hill further described Bolton's role. She relayed a comment made by him, testifying that he said the president's lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, the architect of the pressure campaign, was "a hand grenade rolling around, waiting to blow up." In her opening statement Thursday, she appeared to take a thinly-veiled shot at Bolton for not testifying. "I believe that those who have information that the Congress deems relevant have a legal and moral obligation to provide it," she said.

House Democrats, though, showed no signs of pushing Bolton, other Trump officials, or the State Department to provide documents before moving on.

"If we were to wait until we completed an investigation of everything, he'd [Trump] be out of office before we were done," Rep. David Cicilline (D-R.I.) told reporters. "There has to come a point, if you're a prosecutor, we have sufficient evidence to move forward on this charge."

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