

ERIK S. LESSER EPA/Shutterstock

**LT. COL.** Alexander Vindman provided firsthand testimony at the impeachment hearing about the phone call in which President Trump asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate the Bidens.

## White House aides testify that Trump call was troubling

At the hearing, one witness says he was so alarmed that he reported it 'without hesitation' to a lawyer.

By SARAH D. WIRE, MOLLY O'TOOLE AND DEL QUENTIN WILBER

WASHINGTON — White House aides who listened in on President Trump's controversial call with Ukraine's president testified publicly for the first time Tuesday, bringing the impeachment inquiry directly into the White House and providing damaging new details about Trump's efforts to press a foreign leader to investigate his political rivals while he held up crucial military aid.

The firsthand testimony countered days of complaints from Trump and his allies that previous testimony in the House Intelligence Committee was based on second- or third-hand accounts. Instead, the public heard from several officials or staffers who were on the

call, or attended White House meetings, at the root of the inquiry.

The third day of hearings in the Democratic-led inquiry dragged on for more than 11 hours as lawmakers from both sides peppered four witnesses with questions. At least some evidence bolstered the Democrats' case, and Republicans largely responded by trying to discredit the witnesses rather than dispute their testimony.

One key witness, who was summoned by Republicans, wound up shooting down conspiracy theories embraced by the president, saying pursuing them in Ukraine did not serve the "national interest." He also called it inappropriate for Trump to ask a foreign leader to investigate a U.S. political rival.

One of the first two witnesses Tuesday, Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, the top Ukraine expert on the National Security Council, said he was so alarmed by Trump's "demand" on a July 25 call for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to

[See Impeachment, A8]

## STATE HALTS NEW FRACKING

Newsom blocks approval of such projects pending scientific review

By PHIL WILSON

SACRAMENTO — In a victory for critics of California's oil drilling industry, Gov. Gavin Newsom on Tuesday stopped the approval of new hydraulic fracturing in the state until the permits for those projects can be reviewed by an independent panel of scientists.

Newsom also imposed a moratorium on new permits for steam-injected oil drilling, another extraction method opposed by environmentalists that was linked to a massive petroleum spill in Kern County over the summer.

"These are necessary steps to strengthen oversight of oil and gas extraction as we phase out our dependence on fossil fuels and



LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

### L.A. CLIMATE DEBATE

As Los Angeles prepares to shut down the coal-fired Intermountain Power Plant in Utah, climate activists Tuesday urged the city to abandon plans for a gas-powered replacement. **BUSINESS, C1**

focus on clean energy sources," Newsom said in a statement Tuesday morning. "This transition cannot happen overnight; it must advance in a deliberate way to protect people, our environment, and our economy."

Along with halting use of the oil extraction methods, the Newsom administration plans to study the possible adoption of buffer zones around oil wells in or near residential neighborhoods, schools, hospitals and other facilities that could be exposed to hazardous fumes.

The actions come just weeks after Newsom signed a bill into law revising the primary mission of a state agency that regulates the oil industry, now called the Geologic Energy Management Division, to include

[See Fracking, A14]

## A judge signals toughness to parents

Jurist handling some admissions scandal cases takes hard line.

By MATTHEW ORMSETH

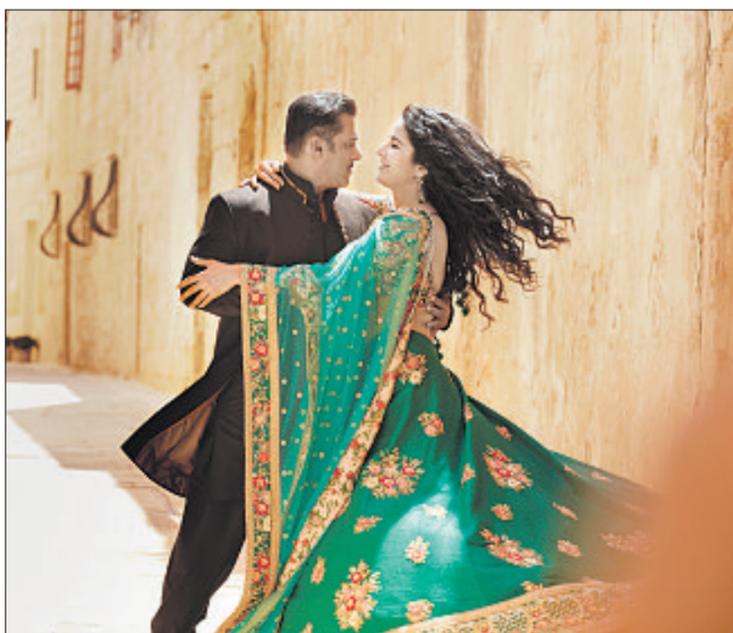
BOSTON — It was a sentencing hearing for Toby Macfarlane, a Del Mar insurance executive who will spend six months in prison for conspiring to have his children admitted to USC as bogus athletic recruits.

But last week, all eyes were on U.S. District Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton, who is also overseeing the cases of 15 other parents who've maintained their innocence in an investigation of fraud, graft and deceit in the college admissions process.

Actress Lori Loughlin's legal fate will be decided in Gorton's courtroom. So, too, will those of many other high-profile names embroiled in the scandal, among them Loughlin's husband, fashion designer J. Mossimo Giannulli, and Bill McGlashan, a San Francisco Bay Area financier.

Six attorneys for other parents charged in the scandal filled a bench in Gorton's third-floor courtroom, taking notes and trying to gain insight into how the 81-year-old jurist views the allegations of fraud and bribery the government has brought against clients of William "Rick" Singer, the Newport Beach consultant who oversaw a scheme to defraud some of the country's most elite universities with rigged

[See Judge, A14]



T-Series

**T-SERIES**, a music label, has become not only India's biggest film studio, producing such movies as "Bharat," above, but also YouTube's No. 1 channel.

### COLUMN ONE

## A Bollywood upstart's rise to king of YouTube

By SHASHANK BENGALI REPORTING FROM MUMBAI, INDIA

PewDiePie was in trouble. The snarky Swedish internet sensation, whose real name is Felix Kjellberg, had long held the distinction of having the most subscribers on YouTube. Now he was about to be dethroned.

He complained to his "9-Year-Old Army" — the youthful audience that devours clips of him playing video games and cracking off-color jokes — that a new contender was piling up subscribers at an unprecedented rate.

The threat was an Indian production company called T-Series, whose 29 YouTube channels feature thousands of

slickly produced Hindi music videos replete with thumping bass and bare skin.

The two operations traded the lead for weeks. On March 31, trailing by about 100,000 subscribers, Kjellberg posted a diss track called "Congratulations" — a four-minute rap video that included a line about Indians having "poo-poo in their brains."

T-Series persuaded a court to block the video in India on the grounds that it was racist, and a few weeks later surged into a commanding lead. It now boasts 118 million subscribers, 16 million more than Kjellberg.

"It was a childish war, but it helped us," said Neeraj Kalyan, the company's president. "Now people all over the world

[See India, A4]

## A 'star witness' faces questions about credibility

By JENNIFER HABERKORN

WASHINGTON — When Gordon Sondland enters the ornate House hearing room for televised testimony on Wednesday morning, he'll be something of a jump ball in the contest between Republicans and Democrats to control narratives of the Ukraine case — a witness who could provide crucial testimony for either side, but whom both regard with suspicion.

A former big-dollar donor to Republicans rewarded with a plum ambassadorship, Sondland says he told the Ukrainians that U.S. foreign aid and a White House meeting with the president were contingent on conducting investigations into the Biden family.

And unlike other witnesses in the impeachment case, Sondland had direct conversations with President Trump about relations with Ukraine, making him a key witness.

But Sondland, the ambassador to the European Union, has already had to change the story he presented to impeachment investigators — the result of reading other witnesses' opening statements, which he said had "refreshed [his] recollection."



OLIVIER DOULIERY Getty Images

**GORDON SONDLAND** had direct talks with President Trump about relations with Ukraine.

That has made Sondland potentially not only one of the most important witnesses, but also one of the least credible — a perilous combination. His testimony could bolster the Democratic case or give Republicans an opening to undercut it.

"This impeachment inquiry will come down to [Wednesday], regardless of [See Sondland, A9]

### Aid to Ukraine still being held up

Lawmakers want to know why Kyiv has yet to receive about \$35 million in U.S. defense funding. **NATION, A8**



GABRIELLA ANGOTTI-JONES Los Angeles Times

### Mariachi tradition continues

Trumpeters march in Boyle Heights for the annual celebration of Santa Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians. This year's event also marked Mariachi Plaza's 30th anniversary. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

**Weather**  
Showers possible.  
L.A. Basin: 63/53. **B6**

