

# White House has a new defense for Biden's memory lapses: He has always been a gaffe machine, as it blames Republican pressure for 'gratuitous' report

By Rob Crilly, Senior U.S. Political Reporter For Dailymail.Com 17:04 EST 09 Feb 2024 , updated 22:30 EST 09 Feb 2024

The [White House](#) deployed a new defense Friday as it slammed a report into the president's mishandling of classified documents that [described his 'diminished faculties'](#): [Joe Biden](#) has always been a gaffe machine.

It came after a difficult 24 hours when the news media focused on damaging revelations about Biden's memory and inability to recall key dates, such as the year in which his beloved son Beau died.

It only worsened during a news conference called late in the day to attack the report by Special Counsel Robert Hur. As he took questions, Biden managed to muddle the names of the presidents of [Egypt](#) and [Mexico](#).

A day later, his press secretary defended the president against accusations that he was too old at the age of 81, and emphasized his record of getting things done.

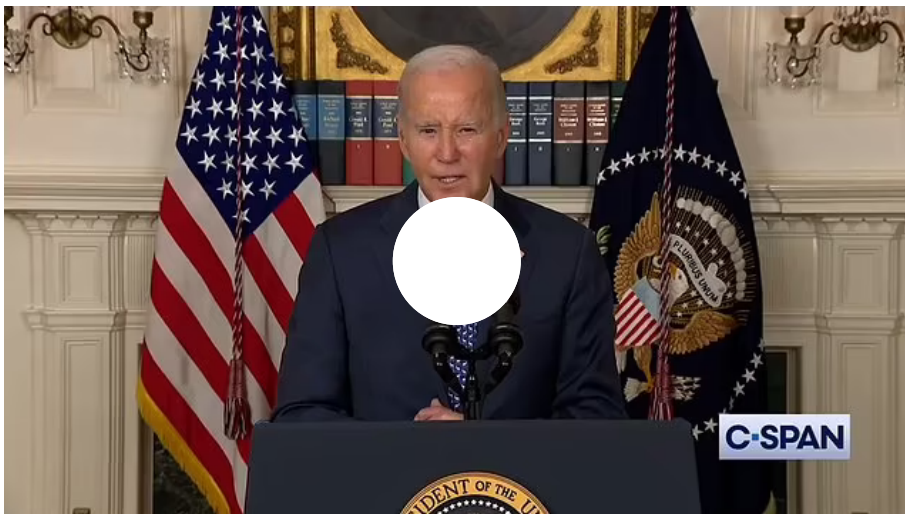
'Biden has gaffed names his entire career ... his entire career,' said [Karine Jean-Pierre](#), quoting a piece by Atlantic writer Yair Rosenberg. 'It is not uncommon that he's done that, like many of us do.'



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President Joe Biden in the Oval Office of the White House on Friday. For 24 hours he has been at the center of a storm after Special Counsel Robert Hur issued his report into Biden's mishandling of classified information. It portrays him as befuddled old man

## Biden addresses reports of mental confusion over son's death



She spoke approvingly of other assessments of Biden, including former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's verdict that he was a sharp negotiator.

It was part of a multi-pronged strategy to defend Biden and undermine the findings of Special Counsel Robert Hur.

After more than a year investigating how sensitive documents ended up at Biden's home and a former office, he concluded that no charges should be brought.

But the legal exoneration came with considerable political damage. It described a picture of a president with 'diminished faculties in advancing age.'

This week brought fresh examples for his critics to seize on. He twice muddled world leaders with predecessors who died years earlier, and in an interaction with reporters forgot the name of the terrorist group  [Hamas](#)  when asked about hostage negotiations.

He is already the oldest president in history and is running for a second term that would keep him in office until the age of 86.

The White House slammed Hur for ignoring Department of Justice regulations in adding 'gratuitous' details about Biden's demeanor, and that he had been subject to intense political pressure.

Ian Sams, spokesman for the White House legal counsel's office, even threw in a distracting headline for reporters at the daily briefing. He announced that the president would be naming a taskforce to protect classified material during transitions, when documents might inadvertently end up in the wrong place.

And he once again underlined the main finding that there were no charges to answer.



White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre quoting approvingly from an Atlantic piece that said Biden had made gaffes during his entire career



Ian Sams, spokesman for the White House legal counsel's office, blamed Republican pressure on prosecutors for 'gratuitous' and inaccurate details in the report



The box circled in the foreground contained documents about Afghanistan. The picture was taken in December 2022 in Biden's garage, with other household items



Special Counsel Robert Hur spent a year investigating files found at President Joe Biden's home and former office. He said Biden's status as president meant he could not be prosecuted

**'The special counsel's assignment when he was appointed was to determine whether any criminal conduct occurred,' said Sams. 'He found it didn't.**

**'That was the finding. The case is closed.'**

**However, coverage over the preceding 24 hours had focused on other details in the report.**

**In interviews with investigators, Biden became muddled about the dates he was vice president and could not even remember the year in which his son Beau died.**

**The report described his 'diminished faculties in advancing age.'**

And it said his cavalier attitude to classified documents, such as his habit of reading sensitive files to a ghostwriter, posed a significant national security risk.

'He did not remember when he was vice president, forgetting on the first day of the interview when his term ended ("if it was 2013 - when did I stop being Vice President?"), and forgetting on the second day of the interview when his term began ("in 2009, am I still Vice President?"),' the report said.

'He did not remember, even within several years, when his son Beau died.'

Harris defends blasts 'politically motivated' hits on Biden's memory



Vice President Kamala Harris said that as a former prosecutor, she considered Hur's comments 'gratuitous, inaccurate, and inappropriate.'

And Sams said those details never should have been part of the report. He pointed the finger at Republicans who have increased pressure on prosecutors.

'They have denigrated the rule of law for political purposes,' he said.

'That reality creates a ton of pressure, and in that pressurised political

environment, when the inevitable conclusion is that the facts and the evidence don't support any charges you're left to wonder why this report spends time making gratuitous and inappropriate criticisms of the president.'

He said Hur should have known better.

'The Justice Department has its own sort of manual of procedures,' he said. 'And ... you're not supposed to sort of criticize unindicted conduct when you're making these determinations.'