



# SPECIAL COUNSEL ALLEGED BIDEN COULDN'T RECALL PERSONAL MILESTONES. HIS RESPONSE: 'MY MEMORY IS FINE' - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The longstanding concerns about President Joe Biden's age and memory intensified on Thursday after the release of a special counsel's report investigating his possession of classified documents.

The report described the 81-year-old Democrat's memory as "hazy," "fuzzy," "faulty," "poor" and having "significant limitations." It noted that Biden could not recall defining milestones in his own life such as when his son Beau died or when he served as vice president.

"My memory is fine," Biden responded Thursday night from the White House, where he grew visibly angry as he denied forgetting when his son died. Beau Biden died of brain cancer in 2015 at the age of 46.

While Biden will not face charges for mishandling classified documents, the report's assertions about his memory could undermine Biden's message to voters that he can manage the government and safeguard the country. Voters are already going into this year's election with severe misgivings about Biden's age, having scrutinized his gaffes, his coughing, his slow walking and even a tumble off his bicycle.

Yet even as Biden defended himself, he committed another gaffe while discussing the Israel-Hamas War and mistakenly referred to Egypt's leader Abdel Fattah El-Sissi as "the president of Mexico."

In ruling out prosecution of Biden over his retention of highly classified materials as a private citizen, the report from special counsel Robert Hur suggested he would seem too feeble to prosecute: "It would be difficult to convince a jury that they should convict him — by then a former president well into his eighties — of a serious felony that requires a mental state of willfulness."

Biden said the report's descriptions of his memory and his son's death were "extraneous commentary" that "had no place in this report." About his son's death, Biden said, "How in the hell dare he raise that?"

"Frankly, when I was asked the question, I thought to myself, it wasn't any of their damn business," he said. "Every Memorial Day we hold

a service remembering him, attended by friends and family and the people who loved him. I don't need anyone, I don't need anyone to remind me when he passed away."



In response to reporters' questions about his memory, Biden disputed the report's statements and said he's "the most qualified person in this country to be president."

The White House also pushed back on the characterizations of Biden's memory in a Feb. 5 letter from the president's lawyers that was published in Hur's report. The letter argues that Biden's "inability to recall dates or details of events that happened years ago is neither surprising nor unusual," particularly about when certain documents were packed or moved.

"We do not believe that the report's treatment of President Biden's memory is accurate or appropriate," the letter said. "The report uses highly prejudicial language to describe a commonplace occurrence among witnesses: a lack of recall of years-old events. Such comments have no place in a Department of Justice report."

It is not unusual for the subjects of government investigations to say they don't recall an event or a conversation in order to avoid issues such as perjury. The special counsel did not release the transcript of the interviews with Biden, so some context is unclear. Former President Donald Trump, the current Republican front-runner, has boasted of his own vast memory but has also at times said in legal proceedings that he does not recall certain events.

Biden noted in a statement issued Thursday that he had sat for five hours of interviews with Hur's team over two days on Oct. 8 and 9, "even though Israel had just been attacked on October 7th and I was in the middle of handling an international crisis."

In an August poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs, 77% of U.S. adults said Biden is too old to be effective for four more years. It was one of the rare sources of bipartisan agreement during a politically polarized era, with 89% of Republicans and 69% of Democrats saying Biden's age is a problem.

The release of the report overlapped with recent Biden speeches in which he mistakenly claimed to talk with European leaders — France's Francois Mitterrand and Germany's Helmut Kohl — who had, in fact, not held office since the 1990s and had died several years ago.

The 77-year-old Trump also faces questions about recent memory lapses. In a January speech, Trump mistakenly and repeatedly confused former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, his major opponent for the GOP nomination, with Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

Pelosi was the House speaker during the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection by Trump's supporters who were seeking to stop the certification of the 2020 election results. Trump said it was Haley who led the House and alleged she should have done more to secure it.

But Republican critics were quick to pile on Thursday as the special counsel's report became public.

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn., said on X, formerly Twitter, that the report was "alarming" and it's clear that Biden "does not have the cognitive ability to be President."

"If you're too senile to stand trial, then you're too senile to be president. Joe Biden is unfit to lead this nation," said Alex Pfeiffer, a spokesman for Make America Great Again Inc., the main super PAC backing Trump's candidacy.

Shortly before the special counsel's report was publicly released, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre was playing down Biden's gaffes at the daily news briefing. Jean-Pierre said the slip-ups are "common" for most public figures, including those younger than Biden.

"It happens to all of us," said Jean-Pierre, who noted she herself has misspoken, as has House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La.

Jean-Pierre tried to say that the public's attention should be focused more on the substance of what Biden was saying about how world leaders are worried about Trump's possible return to the White House.

And Congressional Black Caucus Chairman Steven Horsford, D-Nev., on Thursday dismissed concerns about Biden's mental acuity after the president's mix-ups earlier this week.

"I was with the president on Sunday," Horsford said, referring to Biden's Nevada visit. "The president is very well suited to be our commander-in-chief and we're going to continue to focus on the issues that the American people are focused on."