

Trump Orders Investigation Into Biden Aides' Use of Autopen, Coverup of Presidential Decline

President Donald Trump called late Wednesday for an investigation into former President Joe Biden's cognitive decline, including into executive orders and other actions signed via autopen during his presidency.

The move, The Washington Post noted, is "an unprecedented request that in theory could undermine thousands of Biden's executive actions and pardons."

However, it comes amid an unprecedented number of pardons and commutations late in Biden's term – including the pardon of his son, Hunter, itself an unprecedented move for a U.S. president to make – and lingering questions over just how much mental competency Biden had at the time these decisions were "signed" by him.

"The President of the United States, as the unitary head of the executive branch, holds tremendous power and responsibility through his signature: words on paper can become the law of the land, individuals are appointed to some of the highest offices in Government, national policies can be created or eliminated, and prisoners can go free," a presidential memorandum released late Wednesday read.

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"In sum, the Nation is governed through Presidential signatures," the document added.

"In recent months, it has become increasingly apparent that former President Biden's aides abused the power of Presidential signatures through the use of an autopen to conceal Biden's cognitive decline and assert Article II authority," it continued.

"This conspiracy marks one of the most dangerous and concerning scandals in American history. The American public was purposefully shielded from discovering who wielded the executive power, all while Biden's signature was deployed across thousands of documents to effect radical policy shifts."

The order went on to note that recent exposés of Biden's state in his late presidency evinced "serious cognitive decline."

The Department of Justice refused to charge Biden for retention of classified material based on his apparent inability to remember even basic details of the timeline of events regarding the deployment and death of his late son, the 2016 election, and his departure from the vice presidency in 2017.

The order also seemed to nod toward a recent book by Jake Tapper and Alex Thompson, *Original Sin*, which alleged that a "politburo" of close aides shielded the then-president from facing situations where his decline would be apparent.

"Biden's advisors during his years in office severely restricted his news conferences and media appearances, and they scripted his conversations with lawmakers, government officials, and donors, all to cover up his inability to discharge his duties," the order read.

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"Notwithstanding these well-documented issues, the White House issued over 1,200 Presidential documents, appointed 235 judges to the Federal bench, and issued more pardons and commutations

than any administration in United States history," it noted. "For instance, just two days before Christmas in 2024, the White House announced that Biden commuted the sentences of 37 of the 40 most vile and monstrous criminals on Federal death row, including several child killers and mass murderers."

Thus, both the U.S. attorney general and presidential counsel "shall investigate, to the extent permitted by law, whether certain individuals conspired to deceive the public about Biden's mental state and unconstitutionally exercise the authorities and responsibilities of the President."

This includes "Biden's supposed execution of numerous executive actions during his final years in office ... the policy documents for which the autopen was used, including clemency grants, Executive Orders, Presidential memoranda, or other Presidential policy decisions; and who directed that the President's signature be affixed."

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The "autopen" is the name for a device that has been used, in various guises, in the White House since Harry Truman's administration, the Smithsonian Magazine noted, although its existence wasn't acknowledged until Gerald Ford's presidency and it wasn't used to sign legislation until Barack Obama did that in 2011.

Broadly speaking, it uses mechanical means to affix the president's signature in real ink using a duplicate file. By the time of Obama's administration, the device had been upgraded to digital form and could "store multiple signature files digitally on a SD card, meaning that a single device can reproduce everything from John Hancock's John Hancock to Barack Obama's."

In 2005, the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel

issued an opinion that autopen signatures on executive actions and legislation would be acceptable inasmuch as the president does not need to personally sign every document himself for it to be legally valid. However, that opinion did not address whether or not the president was incapacitated.

The investigation comes on the heels of a particularly bad month for the former president and those around him in terms of news related to his mental and physical faculties while in office.

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Shortly before Tapper and Thompson's book revealed the full extent of the alleged cover-up into Biden's cognitive decline, there was the president's announcement of a metastatic form of a slow-growing, easily detectable cancer in its late stages.

This was quickly followed by allegations of a previously unknown Secret Service whistleblower, who reportedly told Missouri Republican Sen. Josh Hawley that "Biden used to get lost in his closet in the mornings at the White House" – not metaphorically, but "literally stumbling around in the White House residence couldn't find his way out of his own closet," another wrinkle that called into question whether Biden was capable of carrying out his Article II executive duties.

For his part, Biden defended his state of mind when he used the autopen in a statement late Wednesday.

"Let me be clear: I made the decisions during my presidency," Biden said. "I made the decisions about the pardons, executive orders, legislation, and proclamations. Any suggestion that I didn't is ridiculous and false."

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