

# Doltish Ways: Biden's Documents Problem

By [Dr. Binoy Kampmark](#)

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*Through the course of his political life, the current US president has often been injudicious. He has stumbled, bungled and miscalculated. His electoral victory was fortuitous, aided by a number of factors, not least the conduct of his opponent and the murderous gift of a global pandemic. Along with his fellow Democrats, he has made the issue of Donald Trump a matter of pathology rather than politics.*

It is precisely that pathological approach that has come back to haunt his administration. While Trump continues to be characterised as the proto-authoritarian in waiting, squirreling off classified documents that should have been deposited in the national archives, Biden claimed to be above such behaviour.

His own Attorney General, Merrick Garland, has [now appointed](#) two prosecutors as special counsels responsible for investigating how Biden and Trump handled classified documents, with the latter also facing an investigation on his role in the January 6 storming of the Capitol. Former federal prosecutor in Maryland Robert K. Hur has been tasked with dealing with Biden and any relevant staff in their alleged mishandling of classified material. Veteran Department of Justice investigator Jack Smith is conducting two criminal investigations into the conduct of Trump.

Biden's imbroglio centres on what happened to official documents after the conclusion of his Vice-Presidency during the Obama administration, though the problem is promising to be wider than that. The circumstance of their uncovering is significant and bruising for a president extolling the merits of transparency.

Last November, one of Biden's personal attorneys, Pat Moore, uncovered relevant documents in the private office and home of Biden. These were then turned over to the National Archives. The timing was relevant: the discovery took place less than a week before the midterm elections. The following month, another tranche of classified documents were found in Biden's garage in his Wilmington home. In January, a third set of documents were found at the Delaware home.

On January 20, the Justice Department made what it claimed to be thorough combing of the president's Wilmington home. The search revealed a number of additional classified documents, some dating from Biden's time as Senator, and more during his vice-presidential tenure. According to Bob Bauer, the president's personal attorney, the [seizure of six items](#) involved "documents with classification markings and surrounding materials." Handwritten notes from the vice-presidential period were also taken.

Such revelations have thrown the administration off its stroke. For one thing, the White House initially made no mention of the garage discovery. A few days later, the tune was tinkered and adjusted. There was little mention about what additional things would come out this month.

Neil Eggleston, White House counsel in the final two and half years of Obama's presidency, is keen to diminish the significance of such discoveries. Speaking to the *New Yorker*, he [claimed](#) there was no reason to think that a crime had been committed. "It appears that, as the Vice-President's office was being dismantled [at the end of the Obama presidency], some classified information got commingled with other material, and as soon as it was located it was turned over to the National Archives."

Eggleston does, at the very least, admit that the White House could have handled matters "differently" and not just assume that the National Archives had the responsibility to alert the Justice Department. But he does much to leave room open for the fool's defence, which is hardly admirable for the US Commander-in-chief.

Biden's spin doctors are breaking into a sweat in pushing the already devastated and withered line that the president is not only cooperative, but transparent. That this whole search took place with his permission showed eagerness and willingness to resolve the matter, unlike the recalcitrant Trump, who made the FBI seek a court-approved search of Mar-a-Lago. "In the interest of moving the process forward as expeditiously as possible, we offered to provide prompt access to his home," explained Baur.

Biden, for his part, is trying to play the role of receptive statesman, keen to follow advice and good counsel, thereby showing how one leads less from the front than from the cushioned middle. "I have no regrets in following what the lawyers have told me what they want me to do - it's exactly what we're doing." With such un-presidential words, he was also confident that there was "nothing there" in terms of what documents had been found.

Only the most fervent of Trump supporters would claim that the doddering Biden would have actively sought to funnel and conceal classified documents, though the question will never go away. But from the throne of judgment, the current president has shown himself to be fallible and prone to habitual error.

As a result, the opposing Republican Party, which has been publicly cannibalising itself over such matters as the election of the House speaker, is receiving drip-feed sustenance. For one, they can argue that the Democrats can hardly make the purer-than-pure case about their own executive handling of classified documents. "It makes Biden look like a giant hypocrite," [opines](#) Republican strategist and former spokesman for President George W. Bush, Alex Conant. "Clearly Trump's handling of classified materials was a lingering problem that Republicans had not had a good answer for until this week."

With each new discovery and unveiling, President Biden is also being shown to be a

monumental, unreliable dolt. His commitment to, [in the words](#) of his special counsel Richard Sauber, “handling this responsibly because he takes this seriously” is proving increasingly risible.

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*Dr. Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He currently lectures at RMIT University. He is a regular contributor to Global Research and Asia-Pacific Research. Email: [bkampmark@gmail.com](mailto:bkampmark@gmail.com)*

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