

NBC's *Today*

07/28/26

7:12:58 a.m.

2 minutes and 42 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: DOJ Releases Biden Audio Files]

SHEINELLE JONES: Meantime, former President Joe Biden is back in the spotlight with recordings that he fought to keep secret now made public. NBC's Kelly O'Donnell joins us with more on that. Good morning to you, Kelly.

KELLY O'DONNELL: Good morning, Sheinelle. Words Joe Biden recorded years ago, expecting them to be private and to remain private are exposed. Portions of conversations with a writer for a book about his son Beau's death and his time as vice president are released by the Department of Justice after a legal fight. This morning, the Joe Biden tapes revealed.

JOE BIDEN [on 02/16/17]: I just found all the classified stuff downstairs.

O'DONNELL: The decade-old tapes capture Mr. Biden's candid conversations with a ghostwriter for a book. He's heard warning the author that material from his files might be top secret.

BIDEN [on 04/24/17]: Some of this may be classified, so be careful.

MARK ZWONITZER [on 04/24/17]: Okay.

BIDEN [on 04/24/17]: I'm not sure. It is not marked classified, but —

O'DONNELL: But the recordings were made in 2016 and 2017 after he left office as Vice President —

BIDEN [on 10/20/16]: This is my — they didn't even know I had this.

O'DONNELL: — and years later became part of a classified documents investigation. In 2024, Special Prosecutor Robert Hur declined to file charges, writing at the time that Biden was “a sympathetic elderly man with a poor memory.” Now, two and a half hours of recordings that he had reviewed are public. The DOJ releasing the material with redactions after the conservative group — the Heritage Foundation — sued and won. The former President had fought to keep them sealed, but withdrew his appeal last week. Biden's office saying, “making them public is just the latest example of this administration weaponizing the DOJ for political retribution.” The recordings also shed light on private comments Biden made about his onetime boss, former President Barack Obama, and their occasional tensions.

BIDEN [on 04/24/17]: I mean, he used to get really pissed at me. And I try — I stopped —

ZWONIZER [on 04/24/17]: He, Barack used to get pissed at you?

BIDEN [on 04/24/17]: — oh yeah. Really.

O'DONNELL: In another clip, Biden criticized Obama's decision-making process.

BIDEN [on 04/24/17]: Barack was always got to the right spot. But a day late and a dollar short.

O'DONELL: Overall, there were about 70 hours of these tapes, just two and a half hours of public. DOJ released just the portion that had been part of that special counsel investigation related to classified documents. Biden's office said he had provided that audio to the special counsel on the condition they remain private, but the legal challenges resulted in this disclosure, Sheinelle.

JONES: All right, Kelly, thank you.