

# [***FACT CHECK: Fact Checking Biden's Claim About His Uncle's Death; Biden recently implied his uncle, Ambrose Finnegan 'got shot down in New Guinea' during World War II and was eaten by cannibals***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BV7-TWV1-DXXD-7003-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

[*Link to Image*](https://cdn01.dailycaller.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/GettyImages-2147885775-scaled-e1713462123455.jpg)

During an April 17 campaign speech in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, President Joe Biden [*said*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWCm7-y4jPc) his uncle, Ambrose Finnegan, “got shot down in New Guinea” during World War II and implied that Finnegan was eaten by cannibals.

**Verdict: False**

Sources indicate Finnegan died in a May 1944 crash in the Pacific theater. There is no mention of cannibalism playing a role in his death. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean Pierre later clarified Biden's remarks about his uncle's death aboard Air Force One.

**Fact Check:**

Biden will visit Tampa, Florida on April 23, [*ABC Action News Tampa Bay*](https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/region-hillsborough/president-joe-biden-visiting-tampa-on-tuesday) reported. The visit follows recent stops Biden has made in Pittsburgh, Scranton, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, according to [*CBS News Philadelphia*](https://www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/news/president-joe-biden-philadelphia-pennsylvania-thursday/).

During his April 17 campaign speech in Pittsburgh, Biden implied his uncle, Ambrose Finnegan, “got shot down in New Guinea” during World War II and was eaten by cannibals.

Recounting a previous visit he made to a World War II memorial in Scranton where his uncle's name is etched, Biden said his uncle “became a [member of the] Army Air Corps before the Air Force came along. He flew those single-engine planes as reconnaissance over war zones. He got shot down in New Guinea, and uh, they never found the body because there used to be a lot of cannibals for real in that part of New Guinea,” Biden said.

The remarks Biden made in Scranton, which feature the claim about his uncle, can also be found on the [*White House's website*](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2024/04/17/remarks-by-president-biden-before-air-force-one-departure-avoca-pa/).

The claim is false. The [*Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency*](https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaProfile?id=a0Jt000001nzWi4EAE) lists 2nd Lt. Ambrose J. Finnegan's status as “unaccounted for” via its website. According to the same website, Finnegan served in World War II in the U.S. Army Air Forces. In addition, the website details how Finnegan went missing.

Specifically, the website states:

“On May 14, 1944, an A-20 havoc (serial number 42-86768), with a crew of three and one passenger, departed Momote Airfield, Los Negros Island, for a courier flight to Nadzab Airfield, New Guinea. For unknown reasons, this plane was forced to ditch in the ocean off the north coast of New Guinea. Both engines failed at low altitude, and the aircraft's nose hit the water hard. Three men failed to emerge from the sinking wreck and were lost in the crash. One crew member survived and was rescued by a passing barge. An aerial search the next day found no trace of the missing aircraft or the lost crew members.

Second Lieutenant Ambrose J. Finnegan entered the U.S. Army Air Forces from Pennsylvania and served in Headquarters, Fifth Air Force. He was the passenger on this Havoc when it was lost. He has not been associated with any remains recovered from the area after the war and is still unaccounted-for. Today, Second Lieutenant Finnegan is memorialized on the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines.”

The records from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency make no mention of cannibalism or Finnegan's plane purportedly being “shot down.” The records were also cited in an [*April 17 NBC News*](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2024-election/biden-mischaracterizes-uncles-disappearance-world-war-ii-rcna148318) article who reported Biden had “mischaracterized the circumstances of his uncle's death.”

[*The Associated Press*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-uncle-world-war-ii-cannibals-trump-4f3b7d1c988e041fbc07f60f952ca95f) also indicated Biden had “misstated key details about his uncle's death,” citing the same records. In addition, the outlet obtained a statement from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, which reiterated that Finnegan remains “unaccounted for” but neither links his death to his plane being “shot down” nor cannibalism.

“He has not been associated with any remains recovered from the area after the war and is still unaccounted-for,” the agency said, according to the outlet.

Furthermore, both [*CNN*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/17/politics/biden-uncle-cannibals-new-guinea/index.html) and [*The Daily Beast*](https://archive.ph/0uXaw) reported on Biden's claim, indicating it was inaccurate. [***(RELATED: Was Joe Biden The First Person In His Family To Attend College?)***](https://checkyourfact.com/2024/04/10/fact-check-joe-biden-first-family-attend-college/)

Following Biden's claim and multiple news outlets labeling it as false, Jean-Pierre clarified his remarks.

“You saw the president, he was incredibly proud of his uncle's service in uniform. You saw him at the War Memorial. It was incredibly emotional and important to him,” Jean-Pierre said aboard Air Force One, according to the [*New York Post*](https://nypost.com/2024/04/18/us-news/white-house-admits-biden-uncle-wasnt-eaten-by-cannibals-died-in-pacific-ocean-crash/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=nypost).

“You saw him respond to all of you when asked about the moment yesterday and his uncle who lost his life when the military aircraft he was on crashed in the Pacific after taking off near New Guinea,” she added, the outlet reported.

Check Your Fact has also contacted the White House for comment and will update this piece accordingly if one is received.

**Graphic**

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA - APRIL 17: President Joe Biden speaks to members of the United Steel Workers Union at the United Steel Workers Headquarters on April 17, 2024 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Biden announced new actions to protect American steel and shipbuilding industries including hiking tariffs on Chinese steel. (Photo by Jeff Swensen/Getty Images)

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