

# [***FACT CHECK: Fact Checking Psaki's Claim About Biden, 2021 Transfer Ceremony Honoring Fallen Soldiers; In her new book, 'Say More,' Psaki claimed Biden did not check his watch during an August 2021 transfer ceremony honoring 13 fallen U.S. soldiers***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C21-22D1-JBFB-H00J-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Christine Sellers, Fact Check Reporter, [*christine@checkyourfact.com*](mailto:christine@checkyourfact.com)

**Body**

[*Link to Image*](https://cdn01.dailycaller.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2022-05-10T192953Z_1001306372_RC2F4U9NJELH_RTRMADP_3_USA-BIDEN-scaled-e1715708905583.jpg)

In her new book, “Say More,” MSNBC host and former White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki [*claimed*](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Say_More/5z7cEAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=watch) President Joe Biden did not look at his watch during a ceremony transferring the remains of 13 U.S. service members killed in Afghanistan in 2021.

Jen Psaki claims in her new book that Biden never looked at his watch during the ceremony for soldiers killed during the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 - contradicting news photos and firsthand accounts of Gold Star families. [*https://t.co/RpbkUuUPrt*](https://t.co/RpbkUuUPrt)

- Axios (@axios) [*May 13, 2024*](https://twitter.com/axios/status/1789982087849619914?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

**Verdict: False**

The claim is false. Multiple sources, including USA Today and Axios, reported Biden checked his watch during the August 2021 transfer ceremony honoring the fallen soldiers. Psaki later retracted her claim.

**Fact Check:**

Biden is trailing 2024 presumptive Republican nominee and former President Donald Trump in five out of six battleground states, according to [*The Hill*](https://thehill.com/elections/4659953-donald-trump-joe-biden-battleground-states-polling/).

In her new book, Psaki claimed Biden did not look at his watch during the August 2021 transfer ceremony honoring the fallen soldiers.

“[He didn't check his] watch during the ceremony. People who are quick to criticize the president seized on this image. They splashed it all over social media, making him appear insensitive, concerned about only how much time had passed,” Psaki said, according to an excerpt from her book.

“In other words, the president only looked at his watch after the ceremony had ended,” another excerpt of the same book reads.

The claim is false. Multiple credible news reports have indicated that Biden looked down at his watch several times during the ceremony.

In September 2021, [*USA Today*](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2021/09/01/fact-check-biden-checked-watch-after-ceremony-dover-air-force-base/5663427001/) reported that C-SPAN footage of the dignified transfer showed Biden checking his watch towards the end of the ceremony.

According to the outlet, the footage showed “Biden with his hand over his heart for about 30 seconds as [the] vans carry  the service members' remains off the tarmac. After the vans left, Biden closed his eyes briefly before dropping his arms and glancing down at his watch.”

“At that point, everyone else in the video also stands at ease, indicating that the ceremony was over,” the outlet added.

In addition, family members of the fallen soldiers expressed their disappointment with Biden's behavior during the ceremony, according to a [*New York Post article*](https://nypost.com/2021/08/31/biden-blasted-by-gold-star-dads-darin-hoover-mark-schmitz-for-checking-watch-during-ceremony/) published on Aug. 31, 2021. The outlet referenced an appearance Darin Hoover, the father of Marine Staff Sgt. Darin “Taylor” Hoover, made on Fox News at the time. Hoover told network host Sean Hannity, “They would release the salute and he looked down at his watch on every last one. All 13, he looked down at his watch.”

The outlet also referenced comments Mark Schmitz, the father of Marine Lance Cpl. Jared Schmitz, made about Biden, saying, “'I actually leaned into my son's mother's ear and I said, 'I swear to God, if he checks his watch one more time. And that was only probably four times in. I couldn't look at him anymore after that, just considering, especially, the time and why we were there. I found it to be the most disrespectful thing I've ever seen.'”

Likewise, in September 2023, ABC News host Martha Raddatz [*interviewed*](https://abcnews.go.com/International/gold-star-mother-bidens-conduct-dignified-transfer-ceremony/story?id=102885936) Kelly Barnett, Christy Shamblin, and Coral Briseno, three relatives of the service members killed in the attack in Kabul. They discussed Biden's conduct with Raddatz, saying that he was disrespectful and had checked his watch several times during the dignified transfer.

“It was just total disrespect,” Barnett, Hoover's mother, said. “It's beyond disgusting.”

Additionally, Shana Chappell, mother of Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Kareem M. Nikoui called out Biden for checking his watch during the ceremony via a [*post*](https://www.facebook.com/socal.angel.3/posts/3040817939483743) shared to her personal Facebook account.

“By the way, as my son and the rest of our fallen heroes were being taken off the plane yesterday, I watched you disrespect us all five different times by checking your watch!!! What the f-k was so important that you had to keep looking at your watch????,” Chappell wrote on Aug. 30, 2021.

Two images show Biden checking his watch during the ceremony. The first image's caption [*indicates*](https://newsroom.ap.org/editorial-photos-videos/detail?itemid=1d657c899cfd4130ba31f323bc0e704a&mediatype=photo) Biden checked his watch while the remains of Marine Corps Cpl. Daegan W. Page were transferred. Likewise, the second image's caption [*indicates*](https://newsroom.ap.org/editorial-photos-videos/detail?itemid=269a7a4966f3446db1d1f9c8570d9a52&mediatype=photo) Biden checked his watch while the remains of Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Jared M. Schmitz were transferred as well.

The two instances where Biden checked his watch occurred 10 minutes apart, according to [*Axios*](https://www.axios.com/2024/05/13/psaki-book-biden-watch-check-afghanistan).

Alex Thompson, Axios' National Political Correspondent, shared a [*statement*](https://twitter.com/AlexThomp/status/1790011657424376253) Psaki gave the outlet after they reported her claim as false.

“The story on Afghanistan is really about the importance of delivering feedback even when it is difficult told through my own experience of telling President Biden that his own story of loss was not well received by the families who were grieving their sons and daughters and the detail in a few lines of the book about the exact number of times he looked at his watch will be removed in future reprints and the ebook,” Psaki's statement, which Thompson shared via his verified X account, reads.

Following Axios' article and Psaki's statement, multiple major media outlets, including [*Fox News*](https://www.foxnews.com/media/jen-psaki-forced-edit-book-after-making-misleading-claim-about-biden-not-checking-watch-ceremony), [*the New York Post*](https://nypost.com/2024/05/13/us-news/jen-psaki-forced-to-retract-false-book-claim-that-biden-did-not-check-his-watch-during-ceremony-for-us-troops-slain-in-afghanistan/), [*The Hill*](https://thehill.com/homenews/media/4660492-psaki-biden-afghan-ceremony-fallen-soldiers-say-more-book/), and [*the Daily Beast*](https://www.thedailybeast.com/jen-psaki-to-remove-false-account-of-biden-watch-check-from-her-new-book) all reported that she was forced to retract the false claim made in her book.

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

Joseph Casieri contributed to this report.

**Graphic**

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki holds a press briefing at the White House in Washington, U.S., May 10, 2022. REUTERS/Leah Millis

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