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Exclusive: 'I'm here': Hunter Biden hits back at Trump taunt in exclusive ABC News interview

The son of presidential candidate Joe Biden is caught in a political firestorm.

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Hunter Biden says he never spoke to father about Ukraine business dealings: Part 1

The son of former Vice President Joe Biden says they never spoke about his role in Ukraine and discussed being on the receiving end of Trump's taunts and not attending his father's campaign events.

ABC News

As President Donald Trump continues to fill his Twitter feed and campaign speeches with [attacks on Hunter Biden](#) over his foreign business deals, the former vice president's son defended the ethical implications of his private ventures in an interview with ABC News, but conceded taking a misstep in failing to foresee the political implications on his father's career.

"In retrospect, look, I think that it was poor judgment on my part. Is that I think that it was poor judgment because I don't believe now, when I look back on it -- I know that there was -- did nothing wrong at all," Hunter Biden told ABC News in an exclusive interview. "However, was it poor judgment to be in the middle of something that is...a swamp in — in — in many ways? Yeah."

"I gave a hook to some very unethical people to act in illegal ways to try to do some harm to my father. That's where I made the mistake," said Biden. "So I take full responsibility for that. Did I do anything improper? No, not in any way. Not in any way whatsoever."

No topic was off-limits when Biden sat down with ABC News' Amy Robach over the weekend, including how the spotlight on his personal and professional life has threatened his ongoing struggle with addiction. It's his first broadcast interview since attracting the attention of Trump, who

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posed this question to his 66 million Twitter followers last week: "WHERE'S HUNTER?"



"I'm here. I'm here and I'm working and I'm living my life," Hunter Biden retorted from his Los Angeles home. "Hiding in plain sight, I guess."

"Did I make a mistake? Well, maybe in the grand scheme of things, yeah," he said, again referring to fallout from his overseas business. "But did I make a mistake based upon some ethical lapse? Absolutely not."

Biden said, "I take -- full responsibility for that. Do I -- did I do anything improper? No, and not in any way. Not in any way whatsoever. I joined a board, I served honorably. I did -- I focused on corporate governance. I didn't have any discussions with my father before or after I joined the board as it related to it, other than that brief exchange that we had."

Even so, the 49-year-old has maintained a low profile in recent months as the president and his allies have targeted Hunter Biden for his professional endeavors in Ukraine and China.

+ (MORE: Ukraine's 2014 revolution to Trump's push for a Ukrainian probe of Biden: A timeline)

Hunter Biden told ABC News he does not specifically regret those business ventures, but wishes he had anticipated future attacks from his father's political rivals. "What I regret is not taking into account that there would be a Rudy Giuliani and a president of the United States that would be listening to this -- this ridiculous conspiracy idea."

Trump's overtures to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy [in a July phone call](#) to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden has led to a burgeoning impeachment inquiry in Congress. When a transcript of the call revealed the president's repeated references to the Bidens, Hunter described his reaction as being "like every other American -- I was shocked."



ABC's Amy Robach talks with Hunter Biden during an exclusive interview.
ABC News

Soon after reading the transcript released by the White House, Hunter picked up the phone and called his father. Hunter said his father asked him about his daughter, Maisy, before getting into the big news.

"For real. And that's not a joke. I mean, and then discussion was literally like, 'Oh my gosh,'" the younger Biden told ABC News, describing their mutual surprise at the nature of the transcript. "But other than that, really, I want to make it clear, it's not like anybody has to have any discussion beyond that."

Hunter Biden reiterated that [he never discussed his foreign business dealings with his father](#), and made it clear he has no interest in becoming a political football as congressional Democrats haul witnesses in for depositions as part of their impeachment proceedings.

"I'll let Congress handle that," he said. "And I'll let you guys in the media handle that. And I'll let my dad's campaign handle that. And the only thing that I'm looking to handle is to make certain that I get up every day and do the next right thing. And that really is the way that I've been trying to live my life."

+ (MORE: [Hunter Biden tackles cocaine use, diamonds and alleged business conflicts in candid magazine interview](#))

Despite his desire to stay out of the spotlight, ethics experts told ABC News that Hunter Biden's role on the board of a Ukrainian oil and gas company called Burisma, while his father fronted U.S. foreign policy toward Kyiv, could present an ethical conundrum -- an allegation Hunter fervently disputed.

Biden spoke with conviction when asked about how much information he shared with his father and even whether he was qualified.

"[My father] read the press reports that I'd joined the board of Burisma which was a Ukrainian natural gas company. And there's been a lot of misinformation about me, not about my dad. Nobody buys Dad. But -- by this idea that I was unqualified to be on the board," said Biden.

"I was vice chairman of the board of Amtrak for five years," he continued. "I was the chairman of the board of the U.N. World Food Program. I was a lawyer for Boies Schiller Flexner, one of the most prestigious law firms in -- in the world."

"I think that I had as much knowledge as anybody else that was on the board -- if not more."

Even so, on Sunday the Biden campaign released details of a proposed government ethics plan, which included a stipulation designed to "rein in executive branch financial conflicts of interest" -- an apparent response to allegations lodged against the Biden family. And while he cited being a lawyer at a prominent firm and his record serving on several boards as qualifications for the job, in his interview with ABC News, Hunter Biden acknowledged that his last name likely played a role in his Burisma board appointment.

"If your last name wasn't Biden," Robach asked, "do you think you would've been asked to be on the board of Burisma?"

"I don't know. I don't know. Probably not, in retrospect," he said. "But that's -- you know -- I don't think that there's a lot of things that would have happened in my life if my last name wasn't Biden."

"Because my dad was vice president of the United States. There's literally nothing, as a young man or as a full grown adult that -- my father in some way hasn't had influence over. It does not serve either one of us," Biden continued.



ABC's Amy Robach talks with Hunter Biden during an exclusive interview.
ABC News

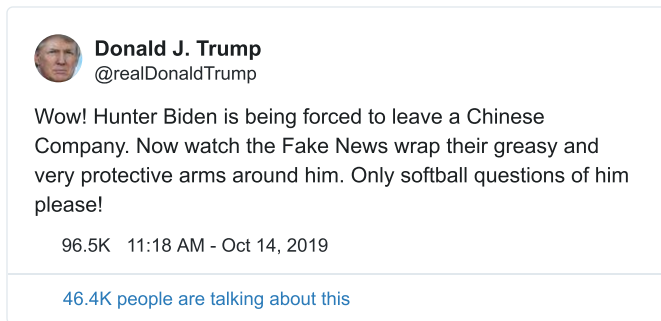
On the same day the Biden campaign rolled out their government ethics plan, a lawyer for Hunter Biden announced that his client would [step down from the board of directors](#) of a Chinese-backed private equity company by the end of this month -- and commit to halting all work with foreign entities if his father wins the White House in 2020.

"I'm taking it off the table, Amy," Hunter Biden said of his decision to step away from any foreign businesses. "I'm making that commitment. Let's see

if anybody else makes that commitment. But that's the commitment that I'm making."

"Look, I'm a private citizen," he said. "One thing that I don't have to do is sit here and open my kimono as it relates to how much money I make or make or did or didn't. But it's all been reported."

In a press conference over the weekend, Joe Biden said the decision "represents the kind of man of integrity [Hunter] is." The president took the opportunity to recast the decision as Hunter "being forced to leave a Chinese Company."



While the congressional impeachment inquiry focuses, for the time being, squarely on the president's interactions with Ukrainian officials, Trump's more recent line of attack against the Bidens has targeted Hunter's Chinese business venture. Earlier this month, Trump called on Beijing to launch an investigation into the matter.

"The Biden family was PAID OFF, pure and simple!" Trump tweeted earlier this month, [echoing an accusation raised by his personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani](#). The president and his allies have accused Hunter Biden of banking \$1.5 billion from the joint investment firm, a figure Hunter Biden called "crazy" and "has no basis in fact in any way."

Reports at the time indicated Hunter Biden's firm sought to raise \$1.5 billion for the fund -- not that either he or his firm pocketed \$1.5 billion from the deal.

"They feel like they have the license to go out and say whatever they want," Hunter Biden said. "It's insane to even -- it feels to me like living in some kind of, you know, 'Alice in Wonderland,' where you're up on the real world and then you fall down the rabbit hole, and, you know, the president's the Cheshire Cat asking you questions about crazy things that don't bear any resemblance to the reality of anything that has to do with me."

Despite Hunter Biden's dismissal of the \$1.5 billion figure attached to his investment in the firm, ethics experts have said his connection with the Chinese-based corporation again raises the potential for the appearance of a conflict of interest, particularly in light of the fact that Hunter Biden flew with his father to Beijing aboard Air Force Two in 2013 -- around the time the deal was negotiated.

+ (MORE: [The allegations about Hunter Biden's business dealings in China, explained](#))

"I've traveled everywhere with my dad," Biden said. "And I went [to China in 2013] because my daughter was on the trip too."

Hunter Biden's lawyer said he has yet to receive a financial return on investment, adding that he only became a minority stakeholder in the company in October 2017 – after Joe Biden was no longer vice president. Prior to then, he served as an unpaid director.

Again, Biden insists he never spoke of his professional dealings with his father on the 13-hour flight. And while he insists he did not engage in any business during the visit, [he told](#) The New Yorker in July that he did meet with a business partner, Jonathan Li, and even organized Li to shake hands with his father.



ABC's Amy Robach talks with Hunter Biden.
ABC News

Asked about that interaction, Hunter Biden said he could not remember it specifically, but said he "probably" introduced them, and in fact "hoped" he had – adding that he had been friends with Li for 13 years.

"Whether I'm in New York, or whether I'm in Washington, D.C., or whether I'm on the campaign trail in Nevada, or whether I am in Iowa with him -- [and] a friend and a business associate is in the hotel, and my dad's staying there -- is it inappropriate for me to have coffee with him?" Biden asked rhetorically.

Robach pressed the matter, though, asking Hunter what he would say to those "who believe this is exactly why people hate Washington."

"I don't know what to tell you. I made a mistake in retrospect as it related to creating any perception that that was wrong," Hunter Biden said. "My dad has never made a decision about anything, I'm absolutely certain, taking into account anything other than what is best for the American people and what the people that elected him to do. I am 100% certain of that."

+ (MORE: [Hunter Biden to step down from Chinese company board amid 'false attacks' by President Trump: Lawyer](#))

Despite the controversy, Biden maintains that the attention on his foreign business deals won't harm his father's campaign in the long run.

"I think that they know who my dad is, and I think that they know that my dad is not Donald Trump," he said. "I certainly hope that there is no negative political ramifications of this. I think that the truth always wins."

Still, Biden says, the toll of being in the president's line of fire has placed a strain on his personal life -- even though he insists his relationship with his father is as strong as ever.

"My dad doesn't have to defend me. My dad only has to love me. And my dad loves me unequivocally," he said. "And so [that is] one thing that he doesn't have to get involved in because he knows that I am my own man and that I'm strong enough."

In fact, he used the president's attacks to draw a contrast between his father and Trump.

"As it relates to whether he can take on Donald Trump, absolutely," he said. "But my dad doesn't go after other people's kids. He just doesn't. Never has."



ABC's Amy Robach talks with Hunter Biden.
ABC News

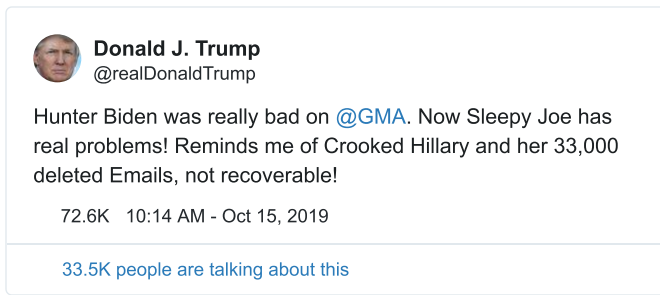
But as far as being a target for President Trump, Biden insists he doesn't care.

"Being the subject of Donald Trump's ire is a feather in my cap. It's not something that I go to bed nervous about at night at all. The reason I'm able to do that is because I am absolutely enveloped in love of my family," said Biden.

Trump continued to target the younger Biden after this interview aired.

"Hunter Biden was really bad on @GMA," [the president tweeted](#) on Tuesday. "Now Sleepy Joe has real problems! Reminds me of Crooked Hillary and her 33,000 deleted Emails, not recoverable!"

The president is not the only Trump family member to target the Bidens. At a campaign rally, Eric Trump, the president's son, led a chant of "lock him up," referring to Hunter Biden. In response, Hunter called the Trumps "irrelevant," adding that he does not spend time thinking about them.



"Unlike them, I don't spend a lot of time thinking about them. I really don't. It's all noise. And what they do is they create just an enormous amount of noise. I have to then answer questions -- about accusations made by probably the most unethical group of people that we've ever seen in this republic," Biden said.

"They'll never understand the level for how much I love my dad and how much he loves me," he said, adding later, "They're out of a B movie. I mean, they really are."

"I've been through some sh-- stuff in my life. I've been through some real, real stuff. This isn't real stuff. It isn't. It truly isn't. That part of it, that Barnum and Bailey -- you know, say anything, do anything you want, you know, I mean, like, you know, Donald Prince Humperdinck-- Trump Jr. is not somebody that I really care about," said Biden.

Hunter Biden likened the president to a bully, and said, "I don't feed bullies." In another jab at Trump, Hunter Biden told Robach he takes "no pleasure in this as watching this death spiral of this administration -- this president and the people that surround him."

"It's really hard for me to say anything -- snarky right now or combative because I was raised to respect that office. it's making me emotional. I don't -- I don't know. I hope that -- that the history isn't fully written yet. I hope that-- that a lot of people that -- that have a chance at redemption here stand up for what is right," Biden continued.


And even as he tries to remain positive, Hunter Biden worries that the undue attention on his personal life could [undermine his sobriety](#) -- an issue he has long struggled with. He was discharged from the Navy Reserve in February 2014 after a positive test for cocaine.

"Like every single person that I've ever known, I have fallen and I've gotten up. I've done esteemable things and things that are -- have been in my life that I -- that -- that I regret. every single one of those things has brought me exactly to where I am right now, which is probably the best place I've ever been in my life. I've gone through my own struggles, said Biden.

"You've got to live in the connections that you have to healthy things. And I have so many of them," he said. "And I've got to live there instead of living I fear, like, 'Oh my God, the stress is going to make me drink, or the stress is going to make me use.'"

Still, as the son of the former vice president, he recognizes the reality of his position – and that if his father succeeds in winning the White House, there will be much more of the criticism.

"It comes with the territory," he said.

 Comments (1639)

