

Hunter Biden plea deal blocked by federal judge as Republicans threaten impeachment probe

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26 July 2023

On Wednesday, a federal judge in Delaware unexpectedly blocked a plea deal for Hunter Biden, son of President Joe Biden, on tax and gun charges, setting the stage for an escalation of the crisis wracking the US political system.

The judge's intervention gives tacit encouragement to the Republican Party's ongoing campaign to destabilize the Biden administration, which now includes open threats to launch an impeachment inquiry based on unsupported claims that the president shared in the profits from his son's shady business dealings in Ukraine and China.

Judge Maryellen Noreika questioned lawyers for Hunter Biden and representatives of the US Attorney for Delaware, David Weiss, about the terms of the plea deal. Noreika focused on the disparity between the claims of Biden's lawyers that the plea deal ended all possibility of further prosecution and the US Attorney's office's position that its investigation into Hunter Biden, in progress for five years, was continuing.

Asked directly whether he would plead guilty to two misdemeanor tax charges, as provided in the plea deal, if there was no assurance against further prosecution, Hunter Biden said he would not do so. This set off a contentious discussion between the judge and the lawyers for both sides, in the course of which Biden's lead attorney, Christopher Clark, threatened to "rip up" the plea deal.

Judge Noreika also expressed concern about how the gun charge would be resolved. Biden is charged with illegal possession of a firearm by a convicted felon (he had pled guilty to drug charges and has repeatedly admitted his addiction) because he bought a pistol in

2018. Under the plea deal, if Biden remained drug-free for two years, the gun charge would be waived.

Technically, the gun charge is the most serious of those against Biden, even though he only held the weapon for 11 days before disposing of it, since it is a felony with a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison—an indication of the savagery of the US judicial system.

The judge objected to the inclusion of a provision related to the tax charges in the part of the agreement relating to the gun charge. She also objected to a provision giving her a role in approving the finding that Biden had been drug-free for two years, when she had no part in drafting or approving the gun charge agreement. She suggested that this violated the constitutional separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive branch.

While these legal points may have some validity, it is considered unusual for a federal judge to reject a plea deal negotiated between prosecution and defense, particularly concerning charges of essentially a minor character.

The hearing ended after three hours of wrangling, with the judge giving the prosecution and defense 30 days to work out a plea deal more satisfactory to her. Hunter Biden was then booked and finger-printed on the tax charges, to which he pleaded not guilty.

The temporary rebuff to the plea deal helps fuel the anti-Biden campaign by Republicans in the House of Representatives who have opened up a series of investigations into Hunter Biden's business dealings, claiming that President Biden is implicated in the shady operations of his son in Ukraine and China.

In Ukraine, Hunter Biden occupied a well-paid

position on the board of directors of Burisma, a large energy company, although he had no expertise in the business at all. The appointment was an obvious effort by the oligarch owner of the company to curry favor with Joe Biden, then vice president in the Obama administration. Vice President Biden was named by Obama to head US efforts in Ukraine after the Maidan coup, in which fascist groups drove out the pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich, and replaced him with a pro-NATO puppet.

In China, Hunter Biden had a deal with a company that was of disputed profitability. Biden says he made little money, while Republicans claim he netted millions and shared the loot with his father. There has been no actual evidence to back up these charges, which have rocketed around the ultra-right media for years.

House Republicans have repeatedly cited Hunter Biden's business dealings as the basis for an impeachment drive against President Biden, based on the claim that he participated in and profited from his son's activities in Ukraine and China. It was then-president Trump's effort to blackmail Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky into digging into the Burisma deal that led to Trump's first impeachment in 2019.

Until this week, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy resisted appeals from the right wing of the House Republican caucus, particularly the fascistic Freedom Caucus, to back an effort to impeach Joe Biden. But in media appearances on Monday and Tuesday, and then in remarks to the House Republicans on Wednesday, McCarthy modified his stance, suggesting that an impeachment inquiry might be in order.

He presented this not as a decision to vote on impeachment—which would likely fail in the House, where the Republicans could suffer enough defections to defeat it—but to begin an investigation into the Bidens with greater powers to gather evidence and compel testimony than a routine committee investigation.

Given the likelihood that Trump will be indicted shortly for his role in leading and instigating the attack on Congress on January 6, 2021, McCarthy's statements amount to a threat that if the Justice Department goes ahead with the prosecution of Trump, the House will go ahead with the impeachment of

Biden in a tit-for-tat at the highest levels of the American state.

This prospect underscores the acuteness of the political crisis, in which each party treats the other's top leader not as an opponent, but as a criminal who should be jailed.

There is, of course, a significant difference in the two cases. Trump faces indictment for an actual crime, the attempt to overthrow the US government and establish a presidential dictatorship. Biden would be impeached for a wholly manufactured crime for which there is no evidence.

President Biden is guilty of many other crimes, those common to all recent American presidents, including mass murder against the population of countries targeted by the US military-intelligence apparatus, particularly in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, and now in Ukraine in the proxy war against Russia.

He is also responsible for vicious attacks on the American working class, as in the passage of legislation banning a strike by railroad workers and imposing a contract settlement they had already rejected.

And Biden, like Trump, is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans in the Covid pandemic, in which the federal government abandoned efforts to use lockdowns and public health measures to actually fight the pandemic, substituting ineffective mitigation efforts that have now been abandoned in favor of happy talk about the end of the pandemic.

The Republicans do not propose to impeach Biden for any of these actual crimes, however, because they agree with all of them, only berating the current president because he does not go far enough in attacking the working class and promoting the profit interests of corporate America.



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