

Biden eyes preemptive pardons as Trump plots revenge: reports

AFP – President Joe Biden is considering preemptive pardons for several prominent names facing possible retribution from the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump, US media has reported.

Among those being considered for the historic pardons are Anthony Fauci, the former White House special advisor on Covid-19, and former Republican lawmaker Liz Cheney, a fierce critic of Trump.

The president-elect has made no secret of his desire to exact vengeance against critics and those he falsely claims stole the 2020 election from him.

Biden has discussed with advisors the possibility of using his constitutional power to protectively issue preemptive pardons – even to people yet to be charged with any crime – before he leaves the White House on January 20.

The discussions were reported by Politico and later by the New York Times, CBS News and the Washington Post, all citing anonymous sources close to the talks.

On Friday, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre did not confirm the reports, but said President Biden was “reviewing other pardons and commutations.”

Biden sparked controversy on Sunday when, in a reversal, he pardoned his son Hunter, who was due to be sentenced this month in cases involving a gun purchase and tax fraud.

Democratic Representative Adam Schiff of California, who served as lead manager during the first Senate impeachment of Trump, and retired general Mark Milley might also be in line

for preemptive pardons to shield them from Trump.

Milley, who was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during Trump's first term, later told journalist Bob Woodward that Trump was "a total fascist" and "the most dangerous person to this country."

Schiff responded to the reports by saying he would be against such a move.

"I don't think the idea of a blanket pardon of some kind is a good idea, and I would recommend against it," he told US media, adding that he had communicated this position to the White House.

– Threats to prosecute –

Overseeing any such prosecutions would be the man who the president-elect has nominated to head the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Kash Patel.

Patel, who held a senior position in the Pentagon during the first Trump term, has said that as FBI chief he would "come after" those "who helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections."

"WHEN I WIN," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform in September, "those people that CHEATED will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the Law."

Presidential pardons, issued at the end of a term, have a long history in the United States.

On his last day in the White House in January 2021, Trump pardoned 74 people accused of various crimes and misdemeanors, including his former chief strategist Steve Bannon and Elliot Broidy, a former major Republican fundraiser.

And in September 1974, a month after Richard Nixon resigned as president during the Watergate scandal, his successor Gerald

Ford announced “a full, free and absolute pardon” for any crimes against the United States that Nixon might have committed while in office.

But the multiple preemptive pardons reportedly being considered by Biden – to insulate several people from future prosecutions that might not ever happen – could constitute a first.

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