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By Ellen Knickmeyer

Biden defends inaction against Saudi crown prince in killing

Байден виправдовує свою бездіяльність щодо саудівського принца за вбивство

Президент Джо Байден захистив своє рішення відмовитись від будь-якого покарання для королівського принца Саудівської Аравії за вбивством американського журналіста, стверджуючи, що дія проти саудівського короля була б дипломатично безпрецедентною для США. Д. Байден в інтерв'ю ABC News пояснив рішення адміністрації звільнити спадкового принца Мухаммеда ібн Салмана від будь-яких санкцій за вбивство саудівського журналіста Джамала Хашоггі. Американська розвідка дійшла висновку, що спадковий принц уповноважив команду саудівських службовців безпеки та розвідки, які вбили Д. Хашоггі. «Ми притягнули до відповідальності всіх людей в цій організації, - але не спадкового принца, тому що ми ніколи, коли ми маємо союз з країною, не зверталися з претензіями до виконуючого обов'язки глави держави і не карали цю особу», - сказав Д. Байден у своїх перших широких публічних коментарях до рішення своєї адміністрації.

<https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-politics-jamal-khashoggi-united-states-eada17b53d9924c5175b84990f5e0477>



In this Feb. 4, 2021, file photo, President Joe Biden speaks about foreign policy, at the State Department in Washington. As a presidential candidate, Joe Biden promised to make a pariah out of Saudi Arabia over the 2018 murder of dissident Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi. But when it came time to actually penalize Saudi Arabia's crown prince, America's strategic interests prevailed. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci, File)

President Joe Biden defended his decision to waive any punishment for [Saudi Arabia's crown prince](#) in the killing of a U.S.-based journalist, claiming that acting against the Saudi royal would have been diplomatically unprecedented for the United States.

Biden, in an ABC News interview that aired Wednesday, discussed his administration's decision to exempt Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman from any penalties for the Oct. 2, 2018, killing of [Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi](#). [U.S. intelligence](#), in a report released Feb. 26, concluded that the crown prince authorized the team of Saudi security and intelligence officials that killed Khashoggi.

“We held accountable all the people in that organization — but not the crown prince, because we have never that I’m aware of, when we have an alliance with a country, gone to the acting head of state and punished that person and ostracized him,” Biden said in his first extended public comments on his administration’s decision.

Biden was overstating the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia, however.

The United States has no treaty binding itself with Saudi Arabia, and the kingdom is not one of the Arab countries designated as a major non-NATO ally. The U.S. often refers to the kingdom as a strategic partner because of its oil production, its status as a regional counterbalance to Iran and its counterterrorism cooperation.

Biden administration’s last month released the U.S. intelligence report concluding the prince’s approval of the killing of Khashoggi, who at the time of his killing was living in the United States and writing critically for The Washington Post about the prince’s rights abuses as he consolidated power.

The U.S. has imposed visa restrictions and penalties on the Saudi agents who killed and dismembered Khashoggi inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul.

Biden’s inaction against the prince was a [turnabout from his campaign](#), when Biden spoke scathingly of the royal family and said he wanted to make Saudi Arabia a “pariah” for the killing and other abuses.

Rights groups and some journalists organizations criticized the decision not to punish the crown prince, saying it signaled impunity for the royal and other authoritarian leaders in the future.

Biden noted that he had approved releasing the intelligence report and also said he had “made it clear” to Saudi Arabia’s aging king “that things were going to change.” King Salman, who is in his mid-80s, has allowed his son broad governing authority.

Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report.