**‘We’re watching mass delusion happen’: Trump’s return to White House brings cascade of lies**

* David Smith, *The Guardian*, Sun 26 Jan 2025

Donald Trump had been US president again for less than 15 minutes when he made his first factually dubious claim.

“The vicious, violent and unfair weaponisation of the justice department and our government will end,” he said [early in his inaugural address](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jan/20/president-trump-speech-inauguration). There is no evidence that former president Joe Biden ordered the justice department to prosecute Trump and no violence took place.

The return of Trump to the White House for his second presidential term is also the return of what one critic called “[America’s liar-in-chief](https://deadline.com/2025/01/the-view-inauguration-ana-navarro-trump-1236262437/)”. His first week in office brought a cascade of false and misleading claims about immigration, the economy, electric vehicles, the Panama Canal, his election defeat in 2020 and the January 6 insurrection that followed.

Some see the brazen embrace of mendacity as both habitual and strategic. “It’s a continuation of Donald Trump’s brand,” said [Tara Setmayer](https://www.tarasetmayer.com/), a former Republican communications director on Capitol Hill. “He knows that sunlight is the best disinfectant so he’s going to continue to lie to mask what he’s doing. If you can undermine institutions and credible sources of information, you can get away with lying and deceiving people. We’re watching that mass delusion happen right before our eyes in the Trump administration 2.0.*”*

During his first term as president, Trump made 30,573 false or misleading claims over four years, according to [a count by the Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/24/trumps-false-or-misleading-claims-total-30573-over-four-years/). He maintained a similar pace during last year’s presidential election campaign. On Monday, as he was sworn in for a second time at the US Capitol in Washington, he made clear it will be business as usual.

Trump said [in his inaugural address](https://apnews.com/article/trump-inauguration-fact-check-b920161868e192d0430df534a42ea5ce) the US government “fails to protect our magnificent, law-abiding American citizens but provides sanctuary and protection for dangerous criminals, many from prisons and mental institutions that have illegally entered our country from all over the world”. In truth there is no evidence other countries are sending their criminals or the mentally ill across the border.

The 47th president also promised to direct his cabinet to defeat “record inflation” and rapidly bring down costs and prices. Inflation peaked at 9.1% under Biden in June 2022 but has been much higher in other historical periods, such as a more than 14% rate in 1980.

In discussing his desire for the US to [take back the Panama Canal](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/dec/29/trump-greenland-panama-china-threats), Trump said: “American ships are being severely overcharged and not treated fairly in any way, shape or form, and that includes the United States navy. And, above all, China is operating the Panama Canal.” Officials in Panama have denied Trump’s claims that China is operating the canal and that the US is being overcharged.

Shortly after the inauguration ceremony, the onslaught against reality continued. In remarks to an overflow audience at the Capitol’s Emancipation Hall, Trump claimed: “2020, by the way, that election was totally rigged.” Authorities who reviewed the election – including Trump’s own attorney general – concluded [the election was fair](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2023/mar/09/trump-big-lie-2020-election-republican-supporters-congress).

Trump alleged that then House speaker [Nancy Pelosi](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/nancy-pelosi) “turned down the offer of 10,000 soldiers” on 6 January 2021, when a violent mob stormed the US Capitol. Yet he issued no such order or formal request for National Guard troops before or during the rioting.

The president asserted that Biden had pardoned “what is it, 33 murderers, absolute murderers, the worst murderers. You know, when you get the death sentence in the United States, you have to be bad.” Biden [announced last month](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/dec/23/joe-biden-death-row-inmate-sentences-commuted-clemency) that he was commuting the sentences of 37 of the 40 people on federal death row; a commutation is not a pardon and does not exonerate the person.

Trump continued to fire off misleading assertions, wild exaggerations and blatant lies all week in a series of freewheeling exchanges with reporters. In a Fox News interview in the Oval Office he sought to explain his blanket pardon of January 6 rioters by dismissing violent attacks on police as “[very minor incidents](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jan/23/donald-trump-sean-hannity-interview-january-6-pardons-inauguration-fox-news)”.

Trump also used the interview to repeat a false claim that California governor Gavin Newsom and other officials refused to provide water from the northern part of the state to fight fires. He falsely claimed that Newsom prioritised the preservation of endangered fish over public safety.

Even the White House website has been compromised. Among the claims on [Trump’s official biography](https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/donald-j-trump/) are that he won “a landslide victory” last year and he “defines the American success story”. But the site leaves out what might be Trump’s “big lie”that he won the 2020 presidential election, stating he “won a second time despite several assassination attempts and the unprecedented weaponization of law fare against him”.

But while fact-checkers continued to hold Trump to account, Republicans seemed less willing than ever to correct the record while rightwing influencers were eager to amplify his falsehoods in what is now a fragmented media ecosystem. The leaders of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google and X attended his inauguration; Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg recently announced that the platform will [abandon third party fact-checking](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jan/07/meta-facebook-instagram-threads-mark-zuckerberg-remove-fact-checkers-recommend-political-content).

[Kurt Bardella](https://www.newsnationnow.com/author/kurt-bardella/), a Democratic strategist and media relations consultant, said: “If there’s any lasting impact from Donald Trump’s time on the political stage it’s that we live in a world now where you can just make up your own facts and truth is however you decide to to bend it. There are content creators and content machines that exist solely for the purpose of laundering anything that Donald Trump says and making it true to a certain degree. It’s a play off the [Richard] Nixon quote: if the president does it, it is legal; well, if the president says it, it’s true. That’s the world that we live in now.”