**[White noise](https://www.dawn.com/news/1765158/white-noise)**

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SECURITY at the White House tends to take its job pretty seriously, and so when a packet containing an unknown white powder was found somewhere in the White House, it was cause for serious alarm and led to a temporary evacuation. Could this be anthrax or some other biological agent? Had Putin finally had enough of the US arming Ukraine to the teeth and decided to poison Biden? After much scrambling and testing it turned out that the said white powder was in fact cocaine.

We don’t know whose cocaine this was, as despite having round-the-clock surveillance and sweeping CCTV coverage (not the kind we have in our safe city projects) and DNA and fingerprint testing of the packet itself, Secret Service was unable to determine who had left the cocaine, which was reportedly found in a cubbyhole in the visitors’ section which is usually frequented by tour groups.

Naturally, former US president Donald Trump wasted no time in declaring that it was ‘obvious’ that the drugs belonged to Joe Biden and/or his son Hunter Biden, both of whom are the former president’s favourite targets.

Even if that were to be true it really wouldn’t be all that unbelievable; a few years back the bathrooms in the UK Houses of Parliament were swabbed for cocaine and it turned out that cocaine had been snorted off the basins and toilet tops of 11 out of 12 bathrooms tested in the parliamentary estate. These weren’t publicly accessible bathrooms, and many of these could only be accessed if you had a designated parliamentary pass. As per Britain’s Sunday Times, cocaine was also found “close to rooms used by the opposition Labour Party, as well as a sedate dining room in the House of Lords”.

Politicians and heads of state doing drugs isn’t anything new.

One bathroom that tested positive for cocaine was also rather close to then-prime minister Boris Johnson’s office, which goes a long way in explaining the former British PM’s antics, policies and hair. In any case, it does show you that lawmakers are also people, and given that in 2015 London sewers were found to contain the highest concentration of cocaine in all of Europe, the possibility of the members of the Houses of Parliament being coked out of their minds only shows how deeply in touch UK’s parliamentarians are with the people they govern.

Buckingham Palace has also seen some cocaine use, though this isn’t really linked to the royals but to legendary British actor Stephen Fry who, while admitting to a 15-year addiction, confessed to having snorted cocaine in the palace, the House of Commons, the House of Lords, Windsor Castle, Clarence House, Sandringham House, the BBC Television Centre and just about anywhere else he had been.

Politicians and heads of state doing drugs isn’t anything new, but the absolute poster child for this sort of thing is none other than Toronto’s former mayor Rob Ford. Rumours about his out-of-control drug habit had been doing the rounds for some time and some reporters were approached by an individual who offered to sell them a video of Ford smoking crack cocaine, with media outlet Gawker even setting up a fund they named ‘crackstarter’ to raise money to buy the video. While Ford, already known for his drunken antics, originally denied the claim, the video of him smoking crack while discussing politics was soon made public, along with a photo of him posing with known gang members, one of whom was later shot dead on a Toronto street. Later, it emerged that the video was recorded and put on sale by none other than his smoking buddies, which just goes to prove that you really can’t trust anyone.

When confron­ted by reporters about his lies and evasions, Ford re­­plied that he had smoked crack “probably in one of my drunken stupors”. And that he hadn’t admitted to it under questioning because reporters had not asked the “correct questions”. The usual round of apologies, promises and rehabilitation followed but Ford’s antics continued, with more and more accounts and videos of his intoxicated behaviour emerging. Ford passed away at the age of 46 in 2016.

Another politician who was partial to crack cocaine was former Washington, D.C. mayor Marion Barry. In 1990, Barry, who had been elected mayor thrice, was arrested for possession of crack after a sting operation by the FBI and local police; a video was recorded of him smoking the drug with a woman who had set him up in exchange for a reduction in her own previous drug-related sentence.

Claiming to have overcome his ‘personal adversities’ after serving six months in prison, Barry re-entered politics and was elected mayor for an unprecedented fourth time, perhaps proving that voters respond well to an honest admission of human failures and also, that people love a good redemption story.

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