

DID MITT ROMNEY MAKE CLINT EASTWOOD LIE CRY?

A number of outlets responded to Clint Eastwood's bizarre speech the other night by fact-checking the legend.

CNN:

"I haven't cried that hard since I found out that there are 23 million unemployed people in this country," Eastwood said. "This administration hasn't done enough to cure that."

But the U.S. Labor Department, which puts out the official government jobs data, counts 12.8 million people as unemployed – not 23 million.

Even if you add in unemployed people who are not counted in that total because they are not actively looking for work – a category the Labor Department terms "marginally attached" – that number rises to just over 15.3 million.

HuffPo:

Apparently Clint Eastwood is a fan of talking about things that don't really exist.

At the Republican National Convention Thursday night, the man many know as "Dirty Harry" talked to an invisible President Obama. He also invented millions of unemployed people.

During his speech, Eastwood said he was crying for the 23 million unemployed Americans. The only problem: there are actually only 12.8 million unemployed Americans as of July, according to the

Bureau of Labor Statistics, whose job it is to keep track of that sort of thing.

While both of these pieces acknowledge the Mitt campaign has said something similar...

The Romney campaign itself has used the 23 million figure, including in a four-minute campaign video entitled "A few of the 23 million."

The video doesn't explicitly say that the 23 million are unemployed. Instead, it says "millions of Americans are struggling under the Obama economy. Here are a few of their stories." While many of the people in the film are unemployed, some have part-time jobs like digging graves or helping a neighbor's moving business.

The Romney campaign defended Eastwood's speech.

"Judging an American icon like Clint Eastwood through a typical political lens doesn't work," a campaign spokeswoman said in a statement. "He rightly pointed out that 23 million Americans out of work or underemployed is a national disgrace and it's time for a change."

... The articles themselves blame Clint for the inflated number. "Eastwood inflated unemployment count." "Clint Eastwood Invents Millions of Unemployed People While Talking to an Empty Chair."

But the NYT makes clear that the unemployment line is one of the few talking points, given by the campaign, that Clint used.

Another adviser said that several top aides had reviewed the talking points given to Mr. Eastwood just a few hours before his appearance. They included a request to mention the millions of

people who remain unemployed – something Mr. Eastwood did, though he misstated the number.

Now, it's unclear we'll ever know what the talking point Mitt's campaign gave Clint was. Mitt's advisors are cowardly denying all responsibility. And Clint has refused all media requests. So it may be Clint simplified the claim, or it could be Mitt did.

But check out how the Mitt campaign simplified this latest incarnation of the claim in Mitt's stump speech...

One of the promises he made was he was going to create more jobs, and today, 23 million people are out of work or stopped looking for work or underemployed. Let me tell you, if you have a coach that's 0-23 million, you say it's time to get a new coach.

Into a tweet:

When it comes to job creation, @BarackObama is 0-23 million. If your coach has that kind of record, you get a new coach

Let me be clear: The number is unforgivable in any case.

But for Mitt, of all people, to conflate the number of people unemployed with underemployed—on the same night his campaign boasted of creating tens of thousands of \$9 an hour jobs which, Mitt himself admitted, require working two jobs to pay the bills.

Then again, like so many jobs, it appears he outsourced the difficult work. To a Hollywood legend.