

His final appearance before the White House press corps could not even muster a full house. The door into the White House briefing room - which will be bulging next week for the first briefing under Barack Obama's administration - opened to reveal a sombre-looking president who quickly switched on a smile for the cameras.

He made a few jokes, often at his own expense, but he also revealed how much he has been hurt by the criticism that he was the worst president in recent US history. He admitted to some disappointments, but was generally unapologetic.

Most of the 48 minutes of what Bush described as the "ultimate exit interview" was spent trying to persuade his audience, both in the room and the public watching on television, that he did not deserve to be labelled the worst president in recent US history.

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