

At least six major security failures at Trump rally leave more questions for investigators

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Less than five days after the failed assassination attempt on GOP nominee and former President Donald Trump, several questions still remain about how and why the shooter – Thomas Matthew Crooks – was able to gain access to the rooftop with an unobstructed view over the rally and the crowd. Six of the biggest security failures that reportedly occurred at the event raise even more questions for investigators.

The investigation into the assassination attempt that left one attendee dead, and three injured including Trump, is being led by the FBI. However, the bureau has remained relatively quiet on its probe, publishing only one update so far on Monday, July 15.

On Wednesday, the Secret Service and the FBI briefed Congress on the investigation, though some officials called it inadequate. Congress itself has also sprung into action to get answers about the security failures. The House Oversight Committee Tuesday ordered Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle to appear for a hearing to address the incident.

This afternoon, Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., posted on X that "I just got off a briefing with the Secret Service and FBI. I am appalled to learn that the Secret Service knew about a threat prior to President Trump walking on stage."

Here are the six biggest revelations about the security failures that led to a nearly successful assassination attempt against former President Trump that will likely be a focus of any investigation:

Onlookers warned police about suspicious individual

Shortly after the attempted assassination, a video emerged from the event that appears to show that rally attendees who were watching the speech from outside the fence warned the police that there was a suspicious individual climbing on the roof of the building from where Thomas Matthew Crooks ultimately opened fire. The video shows one man shouting, "Officer! Officer!" and a woman saying, "He's on the roof!"

According to the Washington Post report, this video was recorded about a minute and a half before Crooks opened fire on the president, striking him in the ear, and killing Corey Comperatore.

This video, which was disseminated widely on social media after the assassination attempt, was one of the first pieces of evidence that showed law enforcement became aware of Crooks before he started firing on the rally. It is far from the only evidence of a massive security failure.

A local officer sees Crooks with rifle

It was later reported that not only had audience members noticed the shooter climbing on the roof just minutes before the attempted assassination, but one local police officer attempted to find him and came face-to-face with him.

USA Today reported that a local police officer was hoisted by a partner to the roof the building in a search for Crooks when the shooter turned his weapon on the officer, who dropped from the ledge to protect himself. This incident occurred shortly before Crooks opened fire on Trump and the crowd.

The Secret Service had made the decision to secure that building from the inside because of the "safety factor" of the sloped roof, Direct Cheattle said in an interview after the incident, explaining why there were no security officers stationed there to stop the shooter.

“That building in particular has a sloped roof, at its highest point,” Cheattle said in an interview with ABC’s “Good Morning America” Tuesday. “And so, there’s a safety factor that would be considered there that we wouldn’t want to put somebody up on a sloped roof. And so, the decision was made to secure the building, from inside.”

Multiple security officers spotted the suspicious individual before shooting

In the hours leading up to the assassination attempt, several security officers – whether local police or Secret Service – received reports of a suspicious individual and even took photo of Crooks.

In the lead up to the rally, several attendees reported to local police officers that Crooks was suspicious while he was pacing near the metal detectors, according to the Associated Press. Crooks reportedly attempted to bring a rangefinder commonly used by shooting enthusiasts through the metal detectors, raising the suspicion of law enforcement.

Other reports also indicate that a law enforcement officer member of a tactical sniper team took a photo of Crooks during a 5:30 PM sighting, more than 40 minutes before he fired on the former president, the Daily Mail reported. The photo taken by law enforcement has been circulated social and news media. CBS News reported that the tactical team saw Crooks at least twice looking at the building and using his rangefinder.

Congress briefed about early timeline

According to a report, the Secret Service and the FBI confirmed to Congress on Wednesday that Crooks was identified by law enforcement much earlier than originally expected.

According to PunchBowl News, the FBI told senators that the shooter was photographed as a suspicious person 62 minutes before he began firing on Trump. Additionally, Secret Service snipers spotted Crooks twenty minutes before he began his attack. PunchBowl also reported that Crooks visited the rally site days before to scope out the event.

FBI Director Christopher Wray, told senators that no foreign connections have been identified and the shooter maintained almost no social media presence. Just The News confirmed that online investigative search services have deleted any files they may have had on Crooks' social media presence.

Local police warned USSS that they didn't have enough resources

Questions still remain about how Crook was able to gain access to the building which provided him a perfect vantage point of the rally stage without interference by law enforcement. The reported warnings of local law enforcement show that security personnel knew there were not enough resources to fully cover the building.

According to the Washington Post, the local police assisting the Secret Service with security warned the agency that they did not have enough resources to station a patrol car outside the key building used in Crook's assassination attempt.

The Butler County District Attorney said the agency "was informed that the local police department did not have manpower to assist with securing that building." This account was also confirmed by an Secret Service official, according to the Post.

Donald Trump remained on stage despite threat

Ultimately one of the most startling security lapses is that the former president remained on the rally stage delivering his speech and was not evacuated by the Secret Service even though it was monitoring an active threat.

The videos of the event show no attempts by any of the officers to get Trump out of harm's way on the stage before Crooks fired on him. Even after the would-be assassin shot multiple rounds at Trump and the crowd, the Secret Service seemed confused in its response.

USSS agents could be heard asking "What are we doing?" and "Where are we going from here?" on the microphone as they attempted to evacuate Trump, according to The Hill. For his part, Trump insisted that the agents let him find his shoes, and paused briefly to raise his fist and shout "fight!" to the crowd.

Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle says she has no plans to resign, even after the revelation that the agency decided not to guard the roof from which Thomas Crooks opened fire on former President Donald Trump because it was "too slanted" and represented a safety concern, although the counter-snipers who shot Crooks were located on a much steeper incline