

Cheatle Calls the 30 Minutes Between Noticing and Neutralizing Shooter 'a Very Short Period of Time

Western Journal

July 16, 2024

C. Douglas Golden

Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle is a woman who has a lot to explain, and it turns out she's not very good at explaining it.

Cheatle, as you may have heard, was the subject of criticism in the wake of an assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, on Saturday.

The alleged gunman, who was killed by Secret Service agents after getting off over a half-dozen shots — one of which hit the former president's ear and might have hit him square in the head had he not turned before the bullet was fired — was able to get within the direct line of sight of Trump without prior intervention from federal agents.

Cheatle's record came under scrutiny almost immediately after the attack, with conservative activist Mike Cernovich noting Saturday that her profile on the government's website emphasized diversity and noted that her prior experience, before becoming the 27th director of Secret Service, was senior director of global security at PepsiCo.

"[Cheatle] is responsible for successfully executing the agency's integrated mission of protection and investigations by leading a diverse workforce composed of more than 7,800 Special Agents, Uniformed Division Officers, Technical Law Enforcement Officers, and Administrative, Professional, and Technical personnel," the profile read. (Emphasis ours.)

Diversity has not managed to save a single person under the Secret Service's protection, at least that we know about, which makes the prominence given to that word just a little bit odd. And the fact that it makes it look like Cheatle was a diversity hire isn't her only issue, although we'll get to that in a bit.

Instead, it's probably worth talking about her standards for her agents charged with protecting potential targets.

Take, for instance, the roughly 30 minutes that reportedly elapsed between the time the shooter, Thomas Crooks, was initially spotted on the roof of a building and when he was "neutralized," which is to say killed.

In an interview Monday with ABC News, Cheatle called that "a very short period of time."

Pittsburgh station WPXI-TV reported Monday that “Crooks was spotted by law enforcement on a roof nearly 30 minutes before shots were fired that injured Trump, killed a former fire chief, and injured two others in the crowd.”

“Channel 11's Nicole Ford confirmed that Beaver County's [emergency service unit] team had eight members at the rally, including snipers and spotters,” the report said.

“According to Ford's sources, one of them noticed a suspicious man on a roof near the rally at 5:45 p.m., called it in and took a picture of the person. We have learned from our sources the person in that picture is Thomas Crooks. We're told it's not clear if Crooks had a gun with him at that point,” WPXI reported.

“26 minutes after the second picture of Crooks was taken by law enforcement and the information called in, shots were fired from the roof of the American Glass Research building. Seconds later, a Secret Service sniper returned fire and killed Crooks.”

And yet Cheatle — who told ABC News the “buck stops with me” — defended this response time as not only acceptable but swift.

“I don't have all the details yet, but it was a very short period of time,” she said.

“Seeking that person out, finding them, identifying them and eventually neutralizing them took place in a very short period of time, and it makes it very difficult,” Cheatle said.

Thankfully, the Secret Service director acknowledged that this “was an event that should have never happened.”

The best that could be said for Cheatle's mea sorta culpa is that at least she didn't trot out the hoary “mistakes were made” passive-voice buck-passing.

Other than that, this is even worse than we thought, and nothing short of her resignation or explicit explanation as to why 26 minutes between a suspicious person spotting and shots being fired is “a very short period of time” will make things any better.

An episode of “Friends” doesn't even last that long — and the most high-stakes thing that can happen in said episode is that Rachel and Ross break up or get back together. In Cheatle's case, the stakes literally involved the former — and potentially future — president of the United States' life.

So, she either admitted that she and her Secret Service agents didn't know about the suspicious person — who turned out to be a shooter — or they didn't act on it quickly enough.

If there's a third alternative, America would love to hear it. If not, she should tender her resignation.

Mind you, she should have tendered her resignation well before this. Earlier this year, a petition circulated within the Secret Service community expressing concern over "diversity, equity and inclusion" initiatives within the agency after a physical altercation involving an agent at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland.

Reports indicated the agent, a woman who was supposed to be guarding Vice President Kamala Harris, had an apparent mental health breakdown from indeterminate causes. She was subsequently "removed from [her] assignment" and physically restrained, disarmed, handcuffed and taken from the facility.

The DEI issue raised its ugly head again when it came out that the woman involved had several troubling incidents in her background that would normally be disqualifying for a potential Secret Service agent, according to experts.

The existence of the petition, which specifically addressed "DEI hiring superseding training and creating security issues," according to a RealClearPolitics report, comes as the agency has maintained its target of a workforce that is 30 percent female by 2030.

Nevertheless, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas expressed full confidence in Cheatle after the assassination attempt on Trump.

"I have full confidence in the leadership of the United States Secret Service," Mayorkas told CNN. "An independent review will make factual findings and recommendations based on those findings, and I look forward to studying those findings and recommendations and acting accordingly."

Just a thought, but perhaps Mayorkas should closely study what happened during those 26 minutes between Crooks being identified as a suspicious person and the shooting before issuing that blanket statement of confidence.