

Trump Security Scandal Follows Yearslong String Of Secret Service Failures

The Federalist

7/17/24

The director of the Secret Service is refusing to step down after one of the worst agency failures since President Ronald Reagan was shot in 1981. On Saturday, former President Donald Trump had part of his ear blown off as a result of federal officials' refusal to secure the rooftop of a building just 450 feet from a Pennsylvania rally platform.

"I do plan to stay on," Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle told ABC News on Monday.

The agency chief went on to blame local law enforcement in Pennsylvania for the cascade of security lapses that ultimately culminated in the Republican presidential nominee taking a gunshot to the ear and only surviving by a miracle. Two rallygoers were injured in the assassination attempt and a third was killed.

During her interview with ABC News, the Secret Service chief emphasized security of the building from where a gunman shot Trump was the responsibility of local police.

"In this particular instance, we did share support for that particular site and that the Secret Service was responsible for the inner perimeter," she said. "And then we sought assistance from our local counterparts for the outer perimeter. There was local police in that building — there was local police in the area that were responsible for the outer perimeter of the building."

The Secret Service, however, is ultimately in charge of the overall security plan, and according to The Washington Post, "also has primary responsibility for addressing the risk of a long-range shooter and blocking lines of sight, including by instructing local police to secure or stand guard at buildings that could provide an opportunity for an attacker."

Three counter-snipers were positioned in the building underneath the roof from which Saturday's gunman fired multiple shots. According to Channel 11 News, a local Pennsylvania outlet, law enforcement had spotted the shooter nearly a half hour before Trump was hit. NBC News reported the Secret Service was even made aware of the unique threat presented by the building at the rally "days" before the event, and yet the Secret Service chief said the reason law enforcement did not secure the rooftop was because it was "sloped."

A source also told The Federalist that Trump's team had repeatedly pled with the Secret Service and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to beef up security for months but were rebuffed "time and again." Former Secret Service agent Dan Bongino said Tuesday an

“unimpeachable source” told him a security guard was supposed to be on the roof left open but “didn’t show up.”

“They’re now making up excuses saying the pitch of the roof. My source says to me that no one knows why the post didn’t show up,” Bongino said.

Obama’s Secret Service Chief Resigned for Less

In 2014, then-President Barack Obama’s Secret Service director, Julia Pierson, stepped down after “an armed man managed to jump the White House fence and enter the Executive Mansion.” The episode followed reports of an armed security guard who rode an elevator with the president but was not properly vetted by the agency.

So many Secret Service scandals have popped up in recent years that in 2015, The Atlantic published a timeline of agency mishaps. In 2011, gunshots, which the Secret Service mistook for gang-related crossfire, hit the White House; but agents didn’t notice until “four days later.” In 2012, nearly a dozen agents were sent home from a trip to Colombia for hiring as many as 20 prostitutes. In 2013, a supervisor on an elite team was caught trying to reenter a woman’s hotel room because he left a bullet there. An investigation found the supervisor and another male officer sent “inappropriate messages to a female subordinate.” In 2014, three agents were sent home during a presidential trip to the Netherlands “after being found passed out drunk in a hotel hallway in Amsterdam.”

In 2015, four assistant directors for the Secret Service were fired. A fifth had already retired. This was all before Donald Trump was even elected president.

Agent Prefers ‘Jail Over a Bullet’ for Trump

In 2017, one top agent wrote in a Facebook post that she “would take jail time over a bullet” for President Trump, or in her words, “what I believe to be disaster to this country and the strong and amazing women and minorities who reside here.”

“Hatch Act be damned,” wrote Kerry O’Grady. “I am with Her.”

O’Grady was eventually removed from her role as Special Agent in Charge of the agency’s Denver operations.

Purge of J6 Text Messages

When the since-disbanded House Select Committee on Jan. 6 requested text messages from the Secret Service between Jan. 5, 2021, and Jan. 6, 2021, lawmakers were shocked to receive just one conversation. The agency apparently erased the agency’s texts on cell phones just eleven days after the Capitol riot.

On Monday, journalist Julie Kelly republished a 2022 article on the saga of the missing text messages on X, explaining, “the purge did not happen while Trump or his Homeland Security chief were in charge.”

“Why the subterfuge? Would the texts finally explain why Kamala Harris, under Secret Service protection at the time, went to the Democratic National Committee headquarters the morning of January 6, the same place where a pipe bomb allegedly was found that afternoon?” Kelly asked. “How did agents miss the explosive during a security sweep of the premises before she arrived? How did agents not locate the device for more than an hour while Harris remained in the building until law enforcement allegedly found it?”

The Cocaine Mystery That Is Not a Mystery

Last summer, a small bag of cocaine found inside the White House triggered an immediate evacuation while President Joe Biden and his family were at Camp David in Maryland. The discovery also set off a search for the bag’s owner. But the investigation into how the illicit substance ended up in what is supposed to be one of the most secure buildings in the world concluded in less than two weeks without ever identifying an official suspect.

“Without physical evidence, the investigation will not be able to single out a person of interest from the hundreds of individuals who passed through the vestibule where the cocaine was discovered,” the Secret Service said at the time.

The most obvious culprit also had a plea deal on the line and a father in the Oval Office.

Just weeks before the cocaine surfaced, President Biden’s son Hunter had landed a plea deal with federal prosecutors in Delaware that included amnesty for a federal gun charge pursuant to 24 consecutive months of sobriety. The plea deal was ultimately scrapped later in the summer, and Hunter Biden was convicted on three federal firearm charges because he purchased a gun as a drug addict.

If the Secret Service had presented evidence that the mysterious cocaine found at the White House belonged to Hunter Biden, who has written extensively about his struggles with drug addiction, the agency might have derailed Hunter Biden’s plea deal before a federal judge did in late July.

The president’s security detail had already been accused of trying to cover for Hunter Biden’s gun crimes three years ago when Politico reported agents visited the gun store from which a

firearm that was subsequently discarded was purchased. The agents allegedly “asked to take the paperwork involving the sale.” But the shopkeeper held onto Hunter Biden’s Firearms Transaction Record because he was suspicious that “Secret Service officers

wanted to hide Hunter's ownership of the missing gun in case it were to be involved in a crime." Senate Republicans launched an inquiry into the agency's conduct shortly following the 2021 report in Politico.

House Republicans Investigate What They Were Already Investigating

Since Saturday, congressional Republicans have announced a cascade of new investigations into the Secret Service failures that jeopardized national stability months before the fall election.

On Monday, the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, led by Chairman James Comer of Kentucky, demanded documents from the Secret Service to be delivered to congressional investigators by Thursday. The House Judiciary Committee, led by Chairman Jim Jordan of Ohio, also announced Wednesday that lawmakers would be holding a hearing with the FBI director next week.

House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Mark Green, R-Tenn., similarly invited FBI Director Christopher Wray, in addition to the Secret Service director and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, to testify before his own panel.

While Cheatle accepted the House Oversight Committee's request to appear before lawmakers next week, on Thursday Green told *The Federalist* she has not yet accepted the invitation from the Homeland Security Committee, but he plans to subpoena her if she refuses. Green said he wants to know why there was a delay in her agency's response to the security threat Saturday, why Trump's team was denied additional resources to protect the former president, and why the Secret Service failed to secure the building from which the gunman fired several shots.

"The list [of questions] is very long," Green said, adding Cheatle should resign. "I think she's shown herself to be beyond her capabilities in this particular role."

On Wednesday, Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, a senior member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, also announced another investigation into the Secret Service.

"The USSS must provide a complete and thorough accounting to the American people to assure them that the Secret Service is correcting its past problems and is fully and effectively carrying out its core mission: protection," Grassley wrote to the agency.

Other lawmakers, including Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., and Jim Banks, R-Ind., have called on their colleagues to open up a Select Committee to investigate the failed assassination attempt. RealClearPolitics Reporter Susan Crabtree reported Tuesday however, that even before the slate of new congressional probes opened in the aftermath of Trump's near-fatal

shooting, the House Oversight Committee had already been investigating the Secret Service “for several months” over yet another breach of security.

“In late May, as RealClearPolitics first reported, Comer’s committee had launched an investigation into a previous incident that took place in April involving a female Secret Service agent, tasked with protecting Vice President Kamala Harris, who was removed from her duties after suffering an apparent mental breakdown and attacking superior agents,” Crabtree wrote. “The incident took place just before Harris was set to depart Joint Base Andrews, the home base for Air Force One and Air Force Two, the call signs of the Boeing aircraft used by the president and vice president.”