



A Secret Service officer patrols the grounds of the 2024 Republican National Convention at the Fiserv Forum on July 16 in Milwaukee. MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO/GETTY IMAGES

Management

‘Long been the case’ that we’re stretched too thin, Secret Service says

Agency says it is dealing with "long impacts" of staffing shortages as congressional leaders call for heads to roll.

ERIC KATZ | JULY 17, 2024

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The U.S. Secret Service has been struggling for a decade to maintain the staffing it needs to ensure the safety of its protectees, a top official said on Wednesday, who explained the agency is doing the best it can with the resources it has.

Agency leaders have been adamant that it met all the resource demands placed on it ahead of former President Trump’s rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday that led to an unsuccessful assassination attempt, though it conceded its workforce has and continues to be spread too thin. Matthew Noyes, the director of cyber policy and strategy in the agency’s Office of Investigations, told the Aspen Security Forum that USSS is still recovering from the impacts of the budget caps first instituted across government in 2013.

Noyes said those spending limits, which were regularly increased but remained in effect for a decade, restricted hiring at USSS for several years and the agency went multiple years without hiring at all. An agency with fewer than 8,000 employees like the Secret Service, he added, feels the pain of those restrictions for a long period.

“We do the best we can with the resources we have, but we have been constrained for well over a decade now, in terms of resourcing and hiring,” Noyes said. “That has a long impact in terms of increasing the staffing to do both of our incredibly important tasks.”

Noyes was referring to USSS’ dual mission to protect designated individuals and safeguard the nation’s financial systems. He said it has “long been the case” that the agency has been spread too thin.

Back in 2021, when Secret Service employed 7,600 personnel, it had hoped to increase its staffing regularly until seeing an overall jump of more than 25% by fiscal 2026 to nearly 10,000 employees. That surge never materialized and instead the agency still maintains fewer than 8,000 workers.

Its budget situation has improved in recent years, however. In fiscal 2024, USSS received \$3.1 billion in discretionary funds, a 9% uptick from the prior year and more than Biden had requested. Biden asked for just \$2.9 billion and essentially flat staffing levels for the agency in fiscal 2025—a proposal made before fiscal 2024 funding was finalized—and House Republicans have instead proposed boosting that figure to \$3.2 billion.

Noyes acknowledged that the agency’s funding situation has improved in more recent years and said it is “hiring as quickly as we can.” Still, he suggested the renewed caps instituted last year in the Fiscal Responsibility Act as part of a deal President Biden struck with House Republicans are bringing back the uncertainty of years’ past.

“It really constrains the room for strategic planning and thoughtful consideration of how to best allocate resources,” Noyes said.

The agency has long suffered from poor morale. In a 2023 ranking of the [best places to work in federal government](#) as measured by the Office of Personnel Management’s annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and compiled by the Partnership for Public Service, USSS came in 413 for overall engagement and satisfaction out of 459 subcomponent agencies.

It fared equally poorly in employees’ assessment of the agency’s senior leaders. Those individuals have now come under fire, in particular Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle. In an interview with *Fox News* on Wednesday, House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., called on Cheatle to resign. That followed a similar request from House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-La. Cheatle [told ABC News](#) on Monday that she would not step down from her post.

Oversight and Accountability Committee next week. Johnson said he would create a task force that would coordinate the various probes.

Cheatle said USSS has adjusted its protection for Trump to ensure his safety going forward. Noyles added the agency has enough “depth” to make changes as new scenarios arise.

“Neither manpower nor budget is as elastic as you would hope when you’re responding to events,” he said. “But that is part of the design of the Secret Service is that we have a depth so we can shift resources as needed to meet increased requirements, which is the case now.”

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Secret Service agents cover former president Donald Trump during a campaign rally on Saturday, July 13, 2024 in Butler, Pa. Members of Congress have criticized the protective agency for letting a gunman get within striking distance. THE WASHINGTON POST / GETTY IMAGES

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Scrutiny increases of Secret Service security at Trump rally where assassination attempt occurred

President Joe Biden has ordered an independent review of the shooting.

SEAN MICHAEL NEWHOUSE | JULY 16, 2024

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While the [investigation into the Saturday assassination attempt of Donald Trump](#) continues, numerous congressional and other probes are examining how the U.S. Secret Service let a gunman within striking distance of the former president and Republican presidential nominee.

House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Mark E. Green, R-Tenn., [on Tuesday invited](#) Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, FBI Director Christopher Wray and USSS Director Kimberly Cheatle to testify at a hearing on July 23 regarding security for the Pennsylvania campaign rally where a shooter killed one attendee, injured two others and grazed Trump's ear. The suspected shooter was killed by USSS agents shortly after opening fire from a nearby rooftop.

“Secretary Mayorkas and Director Cheatle are responsible for the department and the agency charged with securing our homeland and protecting our nation’s chief executives and candidates, while Director Wray leads the agency with the vital responsibility of investigating this attempted assassination. It is imperative that we partner to understand what went wrong, and how Congress can work with the departments and agencies to ensure this never happens again,” Green said in a statement.

On Sunday, [Green sent Mayorkas a letter](#) requesting that the department by Friday provide the rally’s security plans and any documents and communications on potential increases to Trump’s security detail, among other information.

Similarly, House Oversight and Accountability Committee Chairman James Comer, R-Ky., on Monday sent Cheatle [a letter requesting information](#) as part of his panel’s investigation into the protective agency’s handling of the rally.

Panel Republicans requested that the agency provide the following by Thursday:

- A list of law enforcement personnel with assignments to protect the former president at the rally.

- All audio and video recordings in USSS possession relating to the event.
- Any memorandum or notice issued by the director to agency personnel regarding the assassination attempt.

They also requested that USSS provide additional information, including all documents and communications concerning agency protection for Trump at the rally, by July 29 and that personnel preserve all information regarding the rally.

Cheatle is scheduled to appear before the House Oversight Committee on July 22 for a hearing on the assassination attempt.

Sens. Gary Peters, D-Mich., and Rand Paul, R-Ky., chairman and ranking member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, announced on Monday that [they were launching an investigation](#) into security failures related to the assassination attempt.

And President Joe Biden has ordered an independent investigation of the assassination attempt.

Cheatle has pledged to cooperate with the independent review as well as any congressional probes.

Mayorkas told *CNN* on Monday that the assassination attempt against Trump amounted to a “failure” by USSS.

The House Oversight Committee was already [investigating the USSS following an April incident](#) when an agent assigned to protect Vice President Kamala Harris reportedly fought with other agents. Harris was not present. [c](#)

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Gathering core efficiencies: The case for leveraging identity automation in government services

Unlocking identity automation

Unlocking identity automation in government services is a complex task that requires a multi-faceted approach. It involves addressing a range of challenges, from data security and privacy concerns to user adoption and interoperability. The following sections explore the key components and strategies for successful implementation.

Key Challenges:

- Data Security and Privacy:** Government services handle sensitive information, making data security and privacy paramount. Implementing robust security measures and ensuring compliance with regulations is essential.
- User Adoption:** Encouraging citizens to use digital services is a significant challenge. This requires user-friendly interfaces, clear communication, and addressing concerns about digital literacy.
- Interoperability:** Integrating legacy systems with modern digital services is a complex task. Establishing standards and protocols for data exchange is crucial.
- Trust:** Building trust in digital services is essential for widespread adoption. This involves transparent communication and demonstrating the benefits of digital services.

Key Strategies:

- Develop a Clear Vision and Strategy:** Define the goals and objectives of the identity automation initiative. This should include identifying the services to be automated and the expected benefits.
- Engage Stakeholders:** Involve citizens, government agencies, and service providers in the planning and implementation process. This ensures that the solution meets the needs of all parties involved.
- Invest in Infrastructure and Security:** Ensure that the underlying infrastructure is robust and secure. This includes investing in secure data storage, network security, and disaster recovery plans.
- Implement a Phased Approach:** Start with pilot programs to test the solution and gather feedback. This allows for iterative improvements and reduces the risk of a large-scale failure.
- Provide Training and Support:** Offer training and support to citizens and government staff to ensure they are comfortable using the new digital services.

Conclusion:

Unlocking identity automation in government services is a complex but achievable goal. By addressing the key challenges and implementing the right strategies, governments can improve service efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance the user experience for citizens.

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