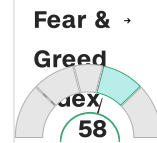


[Markets →](#)
 40,484.93 ▲ 0.17%
 5,579.66 ▲ 0.27%
 AQ18,097.84 ▲ 0.50%

[Hot Stocks →](#)



[Latest News →](#)
 Wall Street
 cybersec
 Startup
 ends talk
 with Goo
 on \$23 b
 deal

The glob
tech out:
showed
we're jus
one mist
away fro
chaos

Delta is e
melting
down. It
could las
week

Business / Media

Right-wing media figures blame women in Secret Service and 'DEI' for security failure in Trump shooting

By Hodan Gold, CNN



WatchListenLive TV





Donald Trump is surrounded by secret service agents as he is taken off the stage at a campaign event at Butler Farm Show Inc. in Butler, Pennsylvania, July 13, 2024. Rebecca Droke/AFP via Getty Images

New York (CNN) — In the days following the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump, the Secret Service, charged with securing the Pennsylvania event, has faced scrutiny for the extraordinary breach that led to the agency’s worst failure in decades.

But one narrative has quickly taken hold in parts of the right-wing media ecosystem: The security failure was the result of workforce diversity initiatives and women working as Secret Service agents.

While the security lapse happened outside of the event’s hard perimeter at a poorly secured building roughly 120 to 150 meters away from the stage, prominent right-wing figures have launched misogynistic attacks, blaming the female agents positioned near Trump as well as Secret Service director Kimberly Cheatle, the second woman to hold the top job and an advocate for women to join the force.



RELATED ARTICLE

Secret Service ‘solely responsible’ for implementation and execution of security at the Trump rally site, director tells CNN

In the seconds after shots rang out Saturday, male and female agents positioned on stage with Trump sprang into action to protect the former president with their own bodies. But in a series of social media posts and television appearances, right-wing media pundits have targeted the female agents’ response, claiming they lacked the experience, size, and capability to handle the situation. Edited videos that garnered millions of views on social media as supposed evidence of female incompetence, showed a female Secret Service agent seemingly struggling to holster her gun amid the chaotic scene as a group of agents escorted Trump to his motorcade.

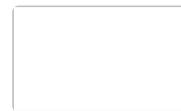
Groups that represent women in law enforcement are also raising the alarm, saying such attacks are dangerous and disingenuous.

Matt Walsh, a far-right media personality, wrote a series of posts on the social media platform X assailing the notion of women working as Secret Service agents.

“There should not be any women in the Secret Service. These are supposed to be the very best, and none of the very best at this job are women,” he wrote.

Walsh, who has advocated for traditional gender roles, claimed without evidence that if any woman is hired in the Secret Service, “it 100 percent means that a more qualified male was passed over.”

RELATED



But those experienced in federal law enforcement note that the female agents on Trump’s detail acted swiftly along with their male counterparts.

“One female agent joined the phalanx in shielding Trump from any possible additional incoming rounds, while another female agent with her gun drawn provided rear security,” said Josh Campbell, former FBI supervisory special agent and CNN security correspondent.

“Female agents were also among those guarding Trump’s armored SUV as it prepared to depart the scene,” said Campbell.

Video Ad Feedback

Conspiracy theories spread after Trump attack

03:30 - Source: [CNN](#)

Law enforcement experts say there is usually no hurry to holster a weapon, as doing so inherently means a firearm is not required to address a potential threat. The holstering process is also a moment where plainclothes agents in particular must take care to ensure their trigger does not snag on a piece of loose clothing.

Barbara Riggs, former deputy director of the Secret Service, called the criticism directed at female agents “preposterous, “crazy,” and “just outrageous.” **RELATED** 

The agents on stage acted according to their training, Riggs told CNN, communicating with each other about where they were escorting Trump despite a chaotic scene.

They “should be commended, not vilified,” she said.

Right-wing media figures have bashed diversity initiatives for years, making “DEI” or “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” a slur in the right-wing media ecosystem, falsely claiming that standards have been lowered to accommodate diverse hiring practices. Everything from the Baltimore bridge collapse to safety issues in airliners has been placed at the feet of increasing diversity among the workforce.

Women have been part of the Secret Service since 1971. All agents, male or female, must meet the same standards to join the force, although women candidates have different physical fitness requirements.

By nature, security details are privy to the most personal and intimate details of a protectee’s life – including any women being guarded – and the presence of women on Secret Service details has been a staple for decades.

In the immediate moments following the shooting, audio captured by Trump’s microphone showed agents taking cover with Trump behind a lectern remained in place at the scene until it was clear the shooter was down. But some on the right criticized the female agents as physically incapable of covering Trump’s body as he reached in the air to pump his fist in a sign of defiance to his supporters.

“Having a small person as body cover for a large man is like an undersized Speedo at the beach – doesn’t cover the subject,” X owner Elon Musk, who later endorsed Trump and dedicated millions to his reelection effort, wrote on the platform. “Could be a man or a woman, to be clear, just needs to be large enough to do the job.”

But even Musk, who travels with personal security, has often been spotted with male guards noticeably shorter than him.

On Fox News, host Laura Ingraham said that while she supports women, “when it comes to shielding the body of someone who is six-foot-three ... you can’t do it if you’re five-foot-five. You can’t do it.”

Riggs, who retired from the Secret Service in 2006, said the idea agents need to be bigger than the protectee is “absurd,” noting that throughout the Secret Service’s history there have been male agents of varying heights, which was never an issue.

But the security failures at Trump’s rally stem from a building outside of the perimeter that was being secured by local law enforcement, where the shooter managed to reach the roof and have a clear line of sight to Trump. The threat to Trump was not feet in front of him, where the female agents who were most scrutinized were located. And most of the agents with Trump that day were men.

One notable voice on the right defended the female agents who protected Trump at the rally.

Eric Trump, the former president’s son, told CNN’s Jake Tapper on Tuesday that “The people on that stage

love him. They would take a bullet for him.” **RELATED** 

“One of the females on the stage, she was with me for three years. I know everything about her. She would take a bullet for me. She would take a bullet for him. As courageous as they come,” he added. “The same as everybody else that was around him, the head of his detail was on that stage. Believe me, the last thing they wanted was that to happen and they did all the right things.”

Video Ad Feedback

Reporter asks Secret Service director if Trump rally perimeter was too small. Hear her response

02:49 - Source: [CNN](#)

Still, other right-wing figures blamed DEI initiatives for incompetence at the federal agency led by Cheatle, only the second woman to head the Secret Service. Cheatle, who has served in the Secret Service for more than 25 years and was part of then-Vice President Joe Biden’s security detail, previously led global security for PepsiCo. In a [CBS News interview](#) last year, she said that the agency had sought to boost the number of women in the force.

“I’m very conscious as I sit in this chair now, of making sure that we need to attract diverse candidates and ensure that we are developing and giving opportunities to everybody in our workforce, and particularly women,” Cheatle said.

Right wing figures also attacked Cheatle’s previous work as head of security at PepsiCo, one of the largest food and beverage companies in the world.

Tennessee Republican Rep. Tim Burchett, who has attacked Vice President Kamala Harris as a “DEI” hire in a “box checking White House,” wrote on X, “I can’t imagine that a DEI hire from @pepsi would be a bad

choice as the head of the Secret Service. #sarcasm.”

RELATED



On the far-right cable channel One America News, host Dan Ball claimed Cheatle “has been too worried about making sure all of the agents use the proper pronouns” over ensuring the safety of the former president.

Republican Sen. Ron Johnson, who sits on the Senate Homeland Security Committee, told the Washington Post on Wednesday that he believes Cheatle “was far more concerned about DEI than protecting, for example, President Trump.”

Riggs said Cheatle did “not get that job as a token. It’s because they bring the experience, and they’ve been successful.” She also defended recruitment efforts, noting that more diversity brings “different perspectives to the table and different experiences” that can help view a situation in a different way, with unique skills, knowledge and abilities.

In an interview with CNN’s Whitney Wild on Tuesday, Cheatle said, “What happened is a terrible incident and should never happen.”

“And we are obviously going to make sure moving forward we take whatever any lessons that come out of this and adjust accordingly,” she added.

Associations that represent women in law enforcement reacted to the unfounded attacks on female agents with disappointment and alarm.

“Statements blaming this shooting on efforts to promote gender equity are disingenuous at best and deeply dangerous at worst,” a group of associations, including Women in Federal Law Enforcement, International Association of Women Police, and National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives, said in a statement.

Research, they said, has shown that efforts to expand the pool of qualified applicants for law enforcement positions “makes us all safer and say they do not advocate for hiring solely based on gender or lowering standards in any way.”

“We must reject all bad-faith efforts to seek to score political points at the expense of our safety. This is the most recent effort to sow division and blame by attacking diversity initiatives for everything from airline safety catastrophes to bridge collapse to bank failures,” the groups said.

Subscribe to CNN's Reliable Sources

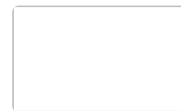
Uncompromising news and analysis at the intersection of media, technology and entertainment.

By entering your email address, you agree to our [Terms of Use](#) and acknowledge the [Privacy Policy](#). CNN and its affiliates may use your email

acknowledge the [Privacy Policy](#). CNN and its affiliates may use your email

address to provide updates, ads, and offers.

RELATED



Sign Up

Opt out via the [Privacy Policy](#).

MORE FROM CNN



Takeaways from the House hearing with Secret Service Director Cheatle on the Trump ...



Secret Service director to testify agency 'failed' during Trump shooting



Johnson and Jeffries officially announce bipartisan task force on Trump ...

CNN BUSINESS VIDEOS



▶ Louis Vuitton CEO bets on Roger, Rafa and the Olympics



▶ Behind the scenes at Paris 2024's Eiffel Tower Stadium



▶ Stranded passengers on being stuck in Atlanta: 'We're all just stuck in limbo'



▶ Friday's global computer meltdown



RELATED



CONTENT BY FINANCEBUZZ

Is a Recession Coming? 5 Things To Do ASAP

5 Things To Do To Prepare For The Recession

“I’m Worried About What’s Next”: What to do in a Recession

All Americans Should Make These Money Moves Before 2023

Copy the Strategies Used by the 1% to Become Financially Secure

CONTENT BY FINANCEBUZZ

Is a Recession Coming? 5 Things To Do ASAP

5 Things To Do To Prepare For The Recession

“I’m Worried About What’s Next”: What to do in a Recession

All Americans Should Make These Money Moves Before 2023

Copy the Strategies Used by the 1% to Become Financially Secure

CONTENT BY FINANCEBUZZ

Is a Recession Coming? 5 Things To Do ASAP

5 Things To Do To Prepare For The Recession

“I’m Worried About What’s Next”: What to do in a Recession

All Americans Should Make These

All Americans should make these

Money Moves Before 2023

RELATED



Copy the Strategies Used by the 1%
to Become Financially Secure



TU



- No fees or minimums
- Earn Interest
- Open in about 5 min



Secure up to \$400 with your first new Citizens Checking accounts¹.



Expert-built stock and bond portfolios to help you build we



4.25% APY ⓘ

As of 04/11/2024 | Member FDIC

Sponsors of GO BankingRates

Find more




RELATED
Sign in



Live TV

Listen

Watch

US

World

Politics

Business

Markets

Opinion

Health

Entertainment

Tech

Style

Travel

Sports

Watch

Listen

CNN Underscored

Science

Climate

Weather

Ukraine-Russia War

Israel-Hamas War

Paris Olympics

About CNN



FOLLOW CNN BUSINESS

RELATED



Most stock quote data provided by BATS. US market indices are shown in real time, except for the S&P 500 which is refreshed every two minutes. All times are ET. Factset: FactSet Research Systems Inc. All rights reserved. Chicago Mercantile: Certain market data is the property of Chicago Mercantile Exchange Inc. and its licensors. All rights reserved. Dow Jones: The Dow Jones branded indices are proprietary to and are calculated, distributed and marketed by DJI Opco, a subsidiary of S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC and have been licensed for use to S&P Opco, LLC and CNN. Standard & Poor's and S&P are registered trademarks of Standard & Poor's Financial Services LLC and Dow Jones is a registered trademark of Dow Jones Trademark Holdings LLC. All content of the Dow Jones branded indices Copyright S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC and/or its affiliates. Fair value provided by IndexArb.com. Market holidays and trading hours provided by Copp Clark Limited.

[Terms of Use](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Cookie Settings](#) [Ad Choices](#) [Accessibility & CC](#) [About](#) [Newsletters](#) [Transcripts](#)

© 2024 Cable News Network. A Warner Bros. Discovery Company. All Rights Reserved.

CNN Sans™ & © 2016 Cable News Network.

