

Chairman Mike Kelly
Opening Statement

Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump
“The Ongoing Investigation of the Butler, Pennsylvania Security Failure: The Secret Service’s Reliance on State and Local Law Enforcement”

Thursday, September 26 at 9:30 a.m. in 1100 Longworth HOB

- On July 13 in Butler, Pennsylvania, 20-year-old gunman Thomas Crooks came within inches of assassinating former President and current Republican Presidential nominee Donald Trump.
- He murdered Corey Comperatore: a volunteer firefighter, loving husband, and father of two daughters.
- Crooks also seriously injured two other rally attendees: David Dutch and James Copenhaver.
- I, along with several members of my family, were present at the rally in Butler when this shooting occurred. Butler, Pennsylvania is my hometown. I have lived in this community for over 60 years. I grew up going to the Butler Farm Show and I played American Legion baseball at the fields besides the Farm Show. This tragedy remains incredibly personal to me and to our entire community.
- This tragedy – and the very real threat to democracy our nation escaped that day – was ENTIRELY preventable.
- But because of failures by the Secret Service, the shooting was not prevented. Just last week, Acting Director Rowe said his own agency showed “complacency”.
- The day of the assassination attempt, Crooks scouted and identified weaknesses in the Secret Service’s security plan using both a drone and range finder.
- Had security vulnerabilities not existed, it is entirely plausible he might not have even attempted the shooting and returned home.
- Unfortunately, we will never know for sure.

- What we do know is that documents and testimony point to several fundamental failures on July 13 and the day leading up to the rally.
- It was not one single mistake that allowed Crooks to outmaneuver one of our country's most elite group of security professionals. United States' preeminent security entity. There were security failures on multiple fronts.
- To date, our investigation has identified three key failures:
 - First, Secret Service planning -- or perhaps more accurately, their failure to adequately plan -- d confusion among the agency's law enforcement partners.
 - The Secret Service was not assertive on key decisions, like the placement of some units and delegating responsibilities.
 - Second, the Secret Service did not close down public access or manage access to grounds next to the rally site that were less than 150 yards from the stage where former President Trump spoke.
 - Third, the security communications and command structure were not cohesive, and did not allow for rapid decision making. Information in a moment of crisis went through radio communications channels, text messages, and phone calls too slowly.
 - Second-hand reports were passed in a manner resembling the old children's game "Telephone."
- Altogether, these and other failures led to a dysfunctional security situation that took the life of Mr. Comperatore, injured two, and nearly claimed former President Trump's life.
 - In the hours leading up to the assassination attempt, Crooks had prolonged and unimpeded ability to scout the target and identify the most advantageous shooting positions.
 - Even as Crooks was flagged multiple times for suspicious behavior, confusion surrounded law enforcement's responsibility to find and question him. Crooks operated in an unsecure area as situational information about him was both delayed and limited.
 - Former President Trump took stage even as local law enforcement were escalating efforts to find a suspicious person

- Evidence shows that in the crucial moments after local police reported over radio that Crooks had a long gun on the roof – a period of less than 30 seconds before shots were fired – the Secret Service could not process the information fast enough to pull the former President from the stage.
- Thankfully, former President Trump survived this near-death experience.
- But Mr. Comperatore – exercising his patriotic right to participate in our democracy – did not.

[PAUSE]

- Today’s hearing brings forward three witnesses who were at the rally aiding the Secret Service-led effort on July 13.
- These men are the first individuals who helped provide security at the July 13 rally to testify before Congress.
- They are here to give their accounts of what they saw and experienced both at the rally and in the planning process leading up to it.
- I expect they will share enlightening information about mistakes and regrets but also about heroic, and selfless actions taken by local law enforcement that day.
- It’s important to remember that these men and their units were not in charge of July 13 nor did they have a hand in designing the Secret Service security plan.
- Those responsibilities belonged to the Secret Service.
- These men answered a call to play a role protecting the public and our political process even though providing security at political rallies is not their usual line of work.
- Our country already knows what happened at 6:11 p.m. on Sunday, July 13 in Butler.
- The law enforcement professionals with us today are here to tell us about specific actions and events that led to this outcome.
- Testifying today, we also have the Medical Examiner who performed the autopsy on Thomas Crooks.

- He is testifying to answer questions about how Crooks died and to hopefully put to rest some theories and doubts that often seem to follow high-profile violent events.
- Finally, our panel includes a distinguished retired Secret Service agent who played no role in the events of July 13 and is on this panel to provide insights into Secret Service protocols and practices.
- After this hearing, the Task Force will use what we have learned from today's testimonies, additional documents and local law enforcement resources in the next phase of our investigation.
- In this next phase we will be seeking answers about the Secret Service's questionable decisions regarding about planning, resources and the apparent lack of leadership that led to complacency and vulnerability on July 13.
- Since the Task Force added its first staff in August, following the unanimous 416-0 vote by the House of Representatives to establish this panel, we have led a thorough, fact-based, and bipartisan investigation.
- Our duty, as expressed in the resolution establishing the Task Force, is to investigate and present a report making recommendations by December 13 that address the Secret Service's security failures.
- This Task Force is fully on track to fulfill our duty.
- This hearing is not our last word or conclusion. It is a window for the public to see our important ongoing work.
- Finally, I want to take a moment to address former President Trump who, after September 15, has now endured two assassination attempts.
- No elected official, or any American, should be expected to endure the attacks this man and his family have faced as result of his public service and continued commitment to serve.
- I personally want to commend the former President and his family for the incredible strength they have show since July 13.
- He is owed better. And we have now all been warned about the clear threats to his safety – twice now.

- It is the obligation of this Congress, this Administration, and public servants at all levels of government to stand against those who would use violence to interfere in our elections.
- Every American should be outraged – regardless of who they intend to support – by these attempts to nullify their votes through violence.
- Today’s hearing is the Task Force’s latest step to seek accountability and answers on what happened in Butler and to restore the faith, trust, and confidence the American people deserve.
- I now yield to Ranking Member for his opening statement.