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TASK FORCE ON THE
ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION
OF
DONALD J. TRUMP

4440 O'NEILL HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

HEARING MEMORANDUM

TO: Members on the Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump

FROM: Staff on the Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump

DATE: December 3, 2024

RE: Hearing entitled “Secret Service Security Failures and the Attempts to Assassinate President-Elect Donald J. Trump”

On **Thursday, December 5, 2024, at 9:30 AM ET**, the Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump (Task Force) will hold a hearing entitled “**Secret Service Security Failures and the Attempts to Assassinate President-Elect Donald J. Trump.**” The meeting will convene in room **2141 of the Rayburn House Office Building**. The purpose of this hearing is to highlight findings from the Task Force’s nearly five-month investigation into the attempted assassinations of President-elect Trump and examine ways for USSS to improve their agency to move them closer to their zero-fail mission.

I. Witness

- **Ronald L. Rowe, Jr.**
Acting Director
U.S. Secret Service

II. Background

On July 13, 2024, former President Donald J. Trump survived an assassination attempt at a rally at the Butler Farm Show in Butler, Pennsylvania. Shortly after former President Trump took the stage, Thomas Crooks fired eight rounds from his perch on the roof of a building in the nearby American Glass Research (AGR) complex, striking the former President on the ear, taking the life of Corey Comperatore, and seriously wounding two others, David Dutch, and James Copenhaver.

The Task Force, created through unanimous passage of House Resolution 1367 on July 24, 2024, has neared completion on its three key goals: (1) to understand what went wrong on the day of the attempted assassination; (2) to ensure accountability; and (3) to prevent such a failure from ever happening again.

Approximately two months later, there was a second attempt to assassinate the former President in West Palm Beach, Florida. On September 15, 2024, a USSS Special Agent scouting the area ahead of former President Trump at Trump International Golf Club discovered another would-be assassin lying in wait just outside of the fence line at the perimeter of the property. The perpetrator was arrested after fleeing the scene when the Special Agent engaged with gunfire. No one was harmed. This incident was added to the Task Force's jurisdiction under House Resolution 1470, directing the Task Force to investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding the second assassination attempt in Florida.

The U.S. Secret Service (USSS) has a dual mission: (1) protection and investigations to ensure the safety and security of protectees, key locations, and events of national significance, and (2) protecting the integrity of U.S. currency, and for the investigation of crimes against the U.S. financial system committed by criminals around the world and in cyberspace. Although the USSS operates under a zero-fail mission mentality in guarding protectees, it has experienced a number of failures over the years, including the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the shooting of President Ronald Reagan, and multiple other near misses.

Over the course of less than five months, the Task Force interviewed 46 witnesses, obtained and analyzed more than 20,000 pages of evidence. The evidence clearly shows failures in advance planning by the Secret Service and its law enforcement partners in the days before the July 13 campaign event in Butler, Pennsylvania, and failures in execution on the day of the event itself. The Task Force's investigation also identified preexisting conditions and leadership failures that set the stage for the entirely preventable tragedy.

There was not a singular moment or decision that allowed Thomas Matthew Crooks to nearly assassinate the former President. The various failures in planning, execution, and leadership on and before July 13, 2024, and the preexisting conditions that undermined the effectiveness of the human and material assets deployed that day coalesced to create an environment in which the former President—and everyone at the campaign event—were exposed to grave danger. Conversely, the events that transpired on September 15, 2024, in West Palm Beach, Florida, demonstrated how properly executed protective measures can foil an attempted assassination.

The Task Force identified several decision points that, if handled differently, could have prevented Crooks from firing eight shots at the Butler rally stage. Foremost, the failure to secure a recognized high-risk area immediately adjacent to the venue—specifically the AGR grounds and building complex—gave rise to several issues that eventually allowed Crooks to evade law enforcement, climb on and traverse the roof of the AGR complex, and open fire. Despite its proximity to a main road, clear sight lines to the stage, and elevated position, the Secret Service allowed a crowd that was not screened by USSS or other law enforcement to gather at the fence line separating the secured area and the AGR complex. The presence of the crowd outside the secured area made Crooks more difficult to interdict as his behavior became increasingly suspicious.

The consequences of failing to secure the AGR property in the first place were compounded by the fact that the area was not sufficiently monitored or patrolled to deter threats. The Secret Service did not provide clear guidance to its state and local partners about which entity was

responsible for the area. An expressed lack of manpower and assets was not sufficiently addressed, resulting in coverage gaps on the ground. Further, local snipers on the property understood their responsibility to be overwatch of the crowd and venue, not the area outside the secure perimeter where Crooks loitered and prepared, believing that area to have been secured by Secret Service counter-snipers and patrol units. The result of that misunderstanding was that the local sniper team posted in the windows of one of the AGR buildings was not positioned to monitor the area directly underneath the windows or the roof. While another local sniper team stationed on the opposite side of the venue did have line of sight to the AGR property, they similarly did not believe they were responsible for monitoring the area and did not do so.

These issues were compounded by failures that arose on the day of the event. Technology meant to supplement venue security was out of commission for hours. A fragmented communication structure and poor decision-making prevented vital information from reaching pertinent law enforcement personnel. These technology and communication breakdowns hindered law enforcement's pursuit of Crooks and caused missed opportunities to intervene. The breakdowns also interrupted the flow of information that should have been passed to Secret Service personnel with the ability to remove the former President from the stage. Moreover, relevant threat information known by intelligence personnel was not escalated to key personnel working the rally.

The failures that led to the tragic events of July 13 were not entirely isolated to the event itself, or the days preceding it. Preexisting issues in leadership and training created an environment in which the specific failures identified above could occur. Secret Service personnel with little to no experience in advance planning roles were given significant responsibility, despite the July 13 event being held at a higher-risk outdoor venue with many line of sight issues, in addition to specific intelligence about a long-range threat. Further, some of the Secret Service agents in significant advance planning roles did not clearly understand the delineation of their responsibilities.

The Task Force identified specific recommendations related to issues that directly led to the security failures in Butler on July 13, and general recommendations related to leadership, training, and agency resources to enhance the Secret Service's capacity to fulfill its zero fail protective mission. This hearing will provide the chance for USSS to update the Task Force on improvements made since July 13 as well as their plan for a more secure future.