

Chairman Mike Kelly
Opening Statement

Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump

**“SECRET SERVICE SECURITY FAILURES AND THE ATTEMPTS TO
ASSASSINATE PRESIDENT-ELECT DONALD J. TRUMP”**

Thursday, December 5 at 9:30 a.m. in 2141 Rayburn HOB

- Good morning, and thank you for joining us.
- The Task Force has convened today to present the American people with the facts: what went wrong, what the Secret Service is doing to address it, and – most importantly– what other changes may be necessary.
- On July 13 in Butler, Pennsylvania and then again on September 15 in West Palm Beach, Florida, President-elect Trump was the subject of two separate assassination attempts.
- Butler, Pennsylvania, is not only within the District I represent, but it’s also my hometown and where I grew up.

- I attended the July 13 rally with my family. The attempted assassination of the President-elect that day has left its mark on our community.
- We lost Corey Comperatore, a volunteer firefighter who is dearly missed by many. Two other Pennsylvanians were injured by the gunfire, injuries that have altered their lives to this day.
- Our local law enforcement agencies were wrongly smeared in the media for helping with rally security.
- The Secret Service's Zero Fail Mission failed on July 13.
- And more trust in our federal agencies was lost.
- But the news is not all bad.
- After the departure of the Secret Service's former Director Kimberly Cheatle, new

leadership has taken responsibility for failures and called out complacency in the agency.

- Choosing a path of cooperation in pursuit of truth, the Secret Service made every single employee this Task Force requested available for interview.
- The Secret Service's own Mission Accountability Review is a credible self-critique and substantially consistent with the findings of this Task Force.
- When tested again with a second assassination attempt in West Palm Beach on September 15 the Secret Service's security redundancies – while not flawless – got the job done and kept President-elect Trump a safe distance from harm.
- On October 5, President-elect Trump returned to the stage in Butler with members of his own family. The differences between the planning,

coordination, and execution of this event compared to July 13 were like day and night.

- The Task Force's upcoming report includes a few dozen recommendations for Secret Service and its parent agency, the Department of Homeland Security, as well as Congress.

- In less than five months, the Task Force
 - Conducted 46 transcribed interviews with local, state, and federal officials.

 - Participated in over a dozen briefings with relevant agencies.

 - Reviewed approximately 20,000 pages of documents.

 - Visited the site of the July 13th assassination attempt in my hometown of in Butler, Pennsylvania; and the site of the September

15 assassination attempt in West Palm Beach, Florida.

- It also went to the FBI laboratories in Quantico, Virginia to examine the physical evidence from the July 13 attempt.
- This work has positioned the Task Force to make bipartisan determinations about exactly how the failures occurred and where the responsibility falls.
- At the Task Force's hearing in September, I noted three key areas of failure by Secret Service that occurred on July 13. This included:
 - Planning errors that led to confusion among local law enforcement partners.
 - An inexplicable failure to close public access to the site where shooter Thomas

Crooks chose to position himself.

- And third, a communications and command structure that did not facilitate rapid communication.
- Further investigation has revealed new information shedding light on each of these failures.
- First, planning errors by Secret Service not only created confusion among local law enforcement partners, but also among the Secret Service agents working at the rally.
- In interviews with the Task Force, multiple agents offered uncertain and at times conflicting takes on the duties of Secret Service personnel working in key roles for planning and executing the rally that day.
- Second, our investigation found that the AGR Complex – the grounds and buildings adjacent

to the rally site where would-be assassin Thomas Crooks fired from – were not secured due to the Secret Service’s failure to understand and confirm key information.

- Interviews with Secret Service agents revealed the area was never secured because agents mistakenly believed state and local officials planned to secure it. Secret Service never verified this coverage before or during the rally.
- Third, communications and intelligence failures occurred in numerous ways ranging from a flawed setup, agents failing to speak up about problems they observed, training issues, inadequate resources, and not communicating with one another in a moment of crisis.
- After much investigation, we found no evidence or testimony suggesting that any Secret Service agent in proximity to President-elect Trump at the rally – who might have

been in position to get him off the stage – knew that there was a suspicious or armed person on a rooftop until after shots were fired.

- In the course of our investigation, some interviews with Secret Service personnel included expressions of regret while others took defiant stances blaming colleagues for failures.
- Several Secret Service agents interviewed by the Task Force have either already left the agency or have been placed on a status called “situational telework,” where they are not allowed to contribute to the core duty of protection.
- Those agents have been left in flux, waiting to see if these fundamental leadership failures will ultimately lead to the end of their careers.

- It is not in our nation's or anyone's interest, for the Secret Service to delay accountability decisions any longer.
- I strongly encourage Director Rowe to review the Task Force's final report and act to hold those individuals responsible for the failure accountable in a way that enables the Secret Service to move forward.
- We are under no illusion: there is still work to do in fixing problems within the Secret Service.
- Every four years, those campaigning for our nation's highest office reach out across America to connect with the public and ask for their support.
- This is a fundamental principle of our democracy.

- On top of being responsible for protecting our nation's highest-ranking officials, their families, and foreign dignitaries, during campaign season, the Secret Service must protect the candidates running for office.
- This greatly increases their operational tempo and pushes their resources to the limit.
- Today, we will discuss the lessons learned from this past campaign cycle and underscore what needs to happen moving forward.
- I want to thank the Acting Director for being here today and I yield to the Ranking Member for his opening statement.