

**FOUO/LES**



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**BEFORE THE  
Task Force on the Attempted Assassination  
of Donald J. Trump**

**AT A COMMITTEE HEARING ENTITLED  
“EXAMINATION OF THE SECURITY FAILURES LEADING TO  
THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON FORMER PRESIDENT  
TRUMP”**

**DECEMBER 5, 2024**

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Good morning, Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Crow, and distinguished Members of the Task Force.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the numerous changes the Secret Service has implemented since the assassination attempt on former and now President-elect Trump.

July 13<sup>th</sup> was a failure of the Secret Service to adequately secure the Butler Farm Show site and protect President elect-Trump. That abject failure underscored critical gaps in Secret Service operations, and I recognize that we did not meet the expectations the American public, Congress, and our protectees rightly have for the Secret Service.

The men and women of the Secret Service will never forget July 13, 2024. That day we nearly lost a former President, and a cowardly and despicable act killed one person and injured two others. I join you and all Americans in condemning the horrific assault on President-elect Trump, Corey Comperatore, James Copenhaver, and David Dutch. Once again, I extend my deepest sympathies to the Comperatore family.

Since becoming Acting Director, I have worked tirelessly to address what I believe are shared goals with the Task Force:

- To understand what went wrong on the day of the attempted assassination.
- To ensure accountability.
- To prevent such a failure from ever happening again.

### **Mission Assurance Inquiry**

To better understand what went wrong on the day of the attempted assassination, the Secret Service completed its Mission Assurance Inquiry, copies of which have been provided to the Task Force and the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, as directed in the Continuing Appropriations and Other Matters Act, 2025. That inquiry thoroughly investigated the specific actions and inactions that led to the assassination attempt.

The Mission Assurance Inquiry identified deficiencies in the following areas in the lead-up to and on July 13<sup>th</sup>: communications; protective advance processes, including the appropriate mitigation of line-of-sight concerns; command and control processes; and coordination with external entities.

### **Accountability**

To ensure accountability, the Mission Assurance Inquiry identified failures by multiple employees. It is essential that we recognize the gravity of our failure on July 13, 2024. I personally carry the weight of knowing that we almost lost a protectee and that our failure cost a father and husband his life. This entire incident represents the failure to meet the expectations and responsibilities of the Secret Service.

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Ultimately, the quality of the advance work in preparation for the Butler Farm Show visit absolutely did not meet the standard expected of this agency. All Secret Service employees are held to a high standard of conduct. We must perform and execute our protocols with the highest degree of competency when providing protection to those who entrust us with the safety of themselves and their families.

All disciplinary measures are imposed to promote the efficiency of the Secret Service and to encourage behaviors and principles that ensure the success of the agency's mission. Employees receiving proposals of discipline will be provided due process under agency policy as well as any applicable laws and regulations. But, let me be clear, there will be accountability, and that accountability is occurring. Consistent with applicable laws and regulations, I cannot comment further on specific disciplinary actions underway or being considered.

Additionally, I am using this incident as an opportunity to review our own policies and procedures to ensure that they are as effective and clear as possible in preventing complacency and negligence. It is my charge to make sure that reviews and recommendations, such as the Mission Assurance Inquiry and oversight efforts by Congress and other third-parties, are examined and given full consideration to bring change to the Secret Service.

I would like to express my appreciation for the recommendations provided by the Senate and the Independent Review Panel, and I await the findings from this committee. I believe that the perspectives of these oversight efforts will help us as we strengthen the Secret Service in meaningful ways. I have already started analyzing and prioritizing the various recommendations and setting firm deadlines for implementation. Some of these recommendations – especially ones related to increased training – will require the necessary resources and support to bring them to fruition.

### **Prevention**

I have reflected extensively on the agency's substandard performance during the advance for the Butler rally. I have implemented numerous systematic and strategic changes to prevent these failures from ever happening again. It has been my singular focus to bring much needed reform to the Secret Service. To be an agent of change. To challenge previous assumptions. While doing so, also ensuring that the brave men and women of the Secret Service have the resources, leadership, and assets that they need to be successful in carrying out our protective mission. As important as the recommendations of the oversight bodies are, and will be, in the aftermath of this failure, the Agency did not wait to enact necessary and immediate changes to include:

- Providing the highest levels of Secret Service protection to Vice President Harris and President-elect Trump throughout the remainder of the campaign, commensurate with the level of protection provided to the President.
- Increasing the staffing levels of Special Agents assigned to former and now President-elect Trump's protective detail.
- Expanding the use of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) for aerial observation at venues.

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- Expanding the use of counter unmanned aerial systems technologies to mitigate the use of a UAS as a kinetic attack vector.
- Addressing radio interoperability by requiring, and ensuring through appropriate supervision, the co-location of Secret Service personnel with state and local public safety counterparts at unified command posts.
- Deploying Secret Service and Department of Defense personnel to assist in the development of radio communications networks, with redundancies, at Secret Service-protected campaign sites.
- Implementing agreements with federal partners to support Secret Service protective operations when the agency's personnel and assets are temporarily committed to other protective visits.
- Expanding Secret Service tactical coverage, augmented by other federal tactical units, to support protective operations for the Vice President, former and now President-elect Trump, and others.
- Expanding use of ballistic countermeasures at Secret Service-protected campaign sites.
- Expanding use of technical countermeasures and technologies to enhance the security of former and now President-elect Trump and his residence.
- Realigning agency technology programs with the appropriate operational entities across Secret Service, with the goal of effectively leveraging internal research and the development of emerging technologies.

My goal is to improve our mission effectiveness and rebuild public trust. One of the key systemic changes was the directive to mandate a unified command in a singular location for all protective sites, something that was not done on July 13<sup>th</sup> in Butler. This co-location enhances our communications and intelligence-sharing mechanisms with state, local and federal partners to better anticipate threats and respond to them more swiftly.

Moving forward, I have directed the Office of Protective Operations to develop a continuous evaluation and audit capability to conduct regular assessments of our advance procedures and protocols and identify areas of weakness. This capability will serve to ensure the Secret Service has an evaluative framework for after-action reviews, quality control, and accountability for protective operations.

I have also prioritized mental health and wellness programs for our personnel, understanding that the stress and pressures of the job can impact decision-making and overall performance. This

week we onboarded a Chief Wellness Officer as part of what will be a long-term commitment to improving the Secret Service.

While I cannot undo the harm that has been done, I am committed to doing everything in my power to ensure that the Secret Service never has a failure like this again.

### **Paradigm Shift**

Following the assassination attempt on former and now President-elect Trump, the Secret Service recognized the need for a new protective model. The heightened threat environment and expanding protection requirements require a paradigm shift in the Secret Service's levels of protection, readiness, and sustainability. The dynamic threat environment demands that the Secret Service protective model be elevated to provide comprehensive and advanced protection capabilities to proactively confront and defeat all threats and all hazards. This approach must be threat-based and extend to other Secret Service protectees in addition to the President of the United States. The paradigm shift will also enable robust internal sustainability and the ability to dynamically escalate and de-escalate protective operations relative to the threat environment for numerous protectees simultaneously.

As I have previously stated, the Secret Service historically has had to manage its operations by "doing more with less." That is not consistent with achieving a no-fail mission. Since becoming Acting Director, I have made it my priority to eliminate the "do more with less" mindset, which had long-term degrading effects on our workforce and our protective operations. The key elements of the paradigm shift include addressing how the current Secret Service budget is allocated, managing the day-to-day demands of protection, and developing and maintaining a workforce that is in a state of readiness to mitigate all hazards and all threats.

The heightened threat environment, coupled with emerging and evolving threats, has resulted in new and significant protective requirements for the Secret Service. As a result, the agency must make additional modifications to provide elevated protection capabilities based on threat levels determined from intelligence collection and analysis.

During protective operations, the Secret Service must have domain awareness superiority over its sites. We will achieve this by adhering to our principles of layered rings of security. In addition, we will augment our efforts by expanding our use of common operating picture platforms, sensors, and alarms; leveraging communications networks through interoperability with partner agencies; and utilizing technology to drive decision-making and to counter threats. We have already begun implementing these approaches since July 13<sup>th</sup> and are updating our doctrine, policies, and procedures.

To facilitate the paradigm shift, the Secret Service must have a workforce posture that is in a "warm" state of readiness. This will allow the agency to respond to a heightened threat environment without significantly depending on external support from other government agencies or the availability of personnel and assets outside of the Secret Service. In doing so, the Secret Service will have the dynamic ability to quickly adjust protective assets and personnel based on intelligence or credible threats.

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Approximately 60 percent of the Secret Service's law enforcement personnel have less than 10 years of experience with the agency, with approximately 30 percent having less than five years of experience. The Secret Service must have adequate training facilities and resources for personnel to develop and strengthen basic and advanced skills to meet current and future protective requirements. The Secret Service's training for recruits and in-service personnel includes scenario-based training. However, these scenarios need to be conducted in realistic training environments that simulate the environments that we operate in – such as the White House. Training must occur in regular intervals, especially for personnel assigned to major protective details, and former presidential details.

It is my intention to reconstitute the Secret Service's culture such that training is routine and expected. That was how it was when I worked in the Presidential Protective Division. Somehow, along the way, we became disproportionately operational in comparison to time allocated for training. Restoring a productive balance between training and operations will involve investing in the Secret Service's Rowley Training Center to address longstanding challenges with training infrastructure.

### **Prioritization of Protective Operations**

The purpose of the Office of Investigations is often misunderstood outside the Secret Service; specifically, how the work performed relates to our protective mission. Our domestic and international field offices comprise almost the entirety of the Office of Investigations. The field offices serve a critical role in everything we do operationally to include protection, protective intelligence investigations, and enforcement operations; recruitment, hiring, and onboarding; workforce development; and community outreach and partner engagement. Most importantly, the field offices, which house the greatest population of our Special Agents, serve as the primary force provider for protective operations. Special Agents assigned to our field offices serve as shift agents on temporary protective details during presidential campaigns and National Special Security Events (NSSEs); advance agents for all protective operations including serving as local counterparts for Presidential and Vice-Presidential visits; and post standers for all protective operations specifically in support of Presidential and Vice-Presidential visits worldwide.

Recognizing how operationally integrated the field offices are, a more appropriate name for the Office of Investigations is the Office of Field Operations. I will be directing this organizational change to shift the Office of Investigations to the Office of Field Operations. This is not simply a semantic change. Establishing the Office of Field Operations is an opportunity to:

- 1) Reset our thinking and perspective about the role field offices play in protection; and
- 2) Enhance our operational effectiveness by better leveraging field offices to support, enable, and inform protection and protective activities. As such, we plan to recalibrate enforcement operations (i.e., investigations, digital forensics, and incident response) to improve our understanding of the threat environment, including human, cyber, and technological threats, and enhance our capabilities to mitigate risks to physical security and cybersecurity during protective operations.

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The influence of geopolitics on cyber warfare has become increasingly pronounced with profound implications for our protective mission. Enhancing cybersecurity in protective operations is one area where we can directly apply knowledge and technical capabilities gained from investigating cybersecurity threats to the financial services sector. Emphasizing investigations into disruptive cyber technologies will improve our ability to analyze malicious cyber activities, which will better inform critical systems protection, generate intelligence about cyber vulnerabilities and exploits, and provide visibility into nation-state malign actions. This fusion of existing investigative and protective intelligence capabilities will strengthen our ability to prevent and mitigate both physical and cyber security threats during steady-state protective operations and special events.

### **Human Resources Initiatives**

Since July 13<sup>th</sup>, the Secret Service has made several changes to strengthen our readiness posture. These include efforts to strengthen our most significant investment – our workforce. Measures include new retention and recruitment initiatives, incentivizing top talent, and partnering with other organizations – including the Army – to bring experienced and skilled personnel to our workforce. We have also obtained direct hiring authorities to build our workforce in an expedited manner to match the needs of our operational tempo. Additionally, targeted job opportunity announcements focus on soliciting applicants with key law enforcement and military expertise directly into our Special Operations teams. These initiatives address critical workforce and staffing challenges that have historically posed a risk to operational success. At the same time, we are responding to Congressional requests for technical drafting assistance on legislative proposals for other workforce-related issues.

Our efforts over the past several years to strengthen staffing, along with the additional enhancements since July 13<sup>th</sup>, have already shown success. In FY 2024, we had the highest number of Special Agent hires in Secret Service history – with September alone seeing a 150 percent increase in applications year over year. At the end of November 2024, there were over 1,900 Special Agents and over 850 Uniformed Division Officers in the pipeline. We expect to onboard 370 Special Agents and 163 Uniformed Division officers by the end of June 2025.

The rigorous application and pre-employment process still results in a 2 percent acceptance rate, which means that 98 out of 100 people that apply to be a Special Agent or a Uniformed Division Officer will not make it through our selection process. Others who will attempt to complete training will be dismissed for not meeting standards at the James J. Rowley Training Center. Our focus on developing a strong workforce mandates our continued and concerted efforts to recruit the most talented pool of candidates that are capable of successfully completing our stringent requirements.

### **Budget / \$231 Million Supplemental Funding**

The strategy for the paradigm shift focuses on elevating protection, prioritizing training, strengthening our workforce, and increasing accountability. There are numerous tools and resources that are necessary to fulfill the required operational readiness outlined in this strategy. In September, the Continuing Resolution appropriated additional funding to the Secret Service in

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FY 2025 to support immediate requirements associated with protective operations for the presidential campaign, including, in part, military and other partner agency support, election night security assets, additional special operations and tactical radio system equipment, ballistic glass, enhanced counter-UAS and enabling-UAS capabilities, retention incentives for the agency's front line personnel, and funding for security operations for two National Special Security Events in January 2025.

We are nearing the end of an accountable process of procurement and execution for the \$231 million that we received as supplemental funding. This has been obligated to realize additional technical protective equipment, Special Operations capabilities, and perimeter security assets for high-risk events, development of protective intelligence capabilities, increase tactical communications capabilities, and fund reimbursable support agreements with our Federal partners.

In addition, enactment of the Enhanced Presidential Security Act of 2024, which passed the House and Senate with overwhelming support, will fundamentally reform the way the Secret Service protects major Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates in the future.

### **Protective Operations Tempo**

Since July 13<sup>th</sup>, we have completed approximately 3,945 protective visits (3,886 domestic and 59 foreign). Separately, our Uniformed Division has screened over two million people. Every available asset, unit, and resource was utilized to meet this mission tempo. In this new normal, the Secret Service seeks to grow in all areas of organizational health. Sustaining an enhanced protective posture requires continued robust resourcing and internal and external accountability. I am confident that the steps we have taken, coupled with the new strides that will be possible with a renewed understanding of how we resource and effectuate our mission, will continue to position us as a stronger Secret Service. A Secret Service with a well-equipped protective force.

### **Conclusion**

The Secret Service's 2024 Presidential Campaign will likely be remembered in history for two assassination attempts on now President-elect Trump. Two separate incidents and two very different outcomes. As an organization and as a leader, I am committed to taking the lessons learned from July 13 and September 15 to heart. We have already refined our processes, strengthened our collaboration, and ensured that we will not allow complacency to taint the important work that every member of this agency performs.

The world is a dangerous place. The responsibilities of the Secret Service are critical to the national security of the United States. It is important that decision-makers fully recognize and appreciate the vital role and significance of the Secret Service in our nation's security. The terrorist, the nation-state actor, the sniper, the lone wolf gunman, they must be lucky once. The men and women of the Secret Service must be perfect every time. That may not be fair, but that is the world in which we operate.

Thankfully, Congress has responded to the immediate challenges facing the Secret Service, and for that we are grateful. Our agency is not defined by one failure, but by our ability to learn from



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mistakes. To hold ourselves accountable. Then learn, evolve, and continue striving for excellence.

After the failure of July 13, the dedicated men and women of the Secret Service rose to the occasion. In the face of immense pressure and adversity, they answered a call to duty with unwavering resolve. I want to express my gratitude for the extraordinary dedication and hard work of our Special Agents, Uniformed Division Officers, and Mission Support personnel. They all persevered when the demands of the mission surpassed anything they or their families have ever been asked to take on. Their commitment to the mission, even under such challenging circumstances, is nothing short of inspiring. I am truly honored to serve alongside such a remarkable group of individuals.

Mr. Chairman I look forward to answering the questions of this Committee.

Thank you.