

## **Introduction**

Since July 13, 2024, the United States Secret Service (Secret Service) has fielded a number of questions surrounding Thomas Crooks' attempted assassination of former President of the United States/Republican Presidential Nominee (FPOTUS/RPN) Donald Trump. This includes questions regarding the agency's organizational culture, executive oversight, operational leadership, and details regarding employee actions that may have contributed to the mission failure.

The Secret Service Office of Professional Responsibility is conducting a mission assurance inquiry that will address these questions. A summary of that office's initial mission assurance report, which identifies potential causes for the July 13th mission failure, is provided below. It will be followed by a supplemental report that will provide recommendations for agency leadership.

Even before the conclusion of the mission assurance inquiry, the agency made enhancements to FPOTUS/RPN Trump's protection. It should also be noted that the Secret Service's internal recommendations are separate from those that will result from external inquiries conducted by Congress, the independent review panel convened by the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General.

This summary will primarily focus on deficiencies in the Secret Service protective advance, along with the agency's interactions with its state and local law enforcement partners, prior to the July 13th attack. The summary also addresses the agency's demanding operational tempo and how it may have contributed to mission failure.

## **Command and Control / State and Local Law Enforcement Partners**

The Secret Service is the ultimate responsible party for the security planning at our protective venues. Accordingly, ensuring that our state and local counterparts have a clear understanding of our operational requirements and function is key to mission success. Advance team personnel have an obligation to ensure that state and local support from law enforcement in all capacities meets the protective requirements and principles of Secret Service methodologies. However, interviews of Secret Service personnel and partnering agencies revealed discrepancies in the understanding and expectations of how various elements of the site security planning would be accomplished.

The Secret Service does not ask our state and local law enforcement partners to support protective operations by operating beyond the scope of their expertise. That would not be prudent and would invite unintended consequences. For example, when executing a comprehensive security plan involving state or local tactical assets, such as a sniper team, the placement of those units is sometimes made in consultation with the local tactical units and is not a unilateral decision by Secret Service personnel. Conversely, the location or placement of state or local tactical assets must not be

made without due consideration of Secret Service protective objectives or without dialogue between agency advance team personnel, field office supervisors, and protective detail supervisors.

A consistent theme gathered from state and local law enforcement personnel who helped secure the Butler rally was the presence of communications deficiencies. These deficiencies included gaps in collocation of law enforcement resources to share information, the variety of radio frequencies/channels used (again without the collocation of physical personnel to convey information), and the capability of agency personnel to clearly convey the Secret Service's protective needs. Some local police entities supporting the Butler venue had no knowledge that there were two separate communications centers on site (i.e., the Secret Service security room and the Butler County Emergency Services Mobile Command Post). As a result, those entities were operating under a misimpression that the Secret Service was directly receiving their radio transmissions.

Routinely, the Secret Service coordinates with state and local law enforcement entities in preparation for protective visits. When those local law enforcement agencies require additional assistance for the visit, they will often request mutual aid support from additional neighboring police entities to accomplish the mission. This mutual aid support may include additional officers to stand post, providing motorcade support, traffic control personnel, tactical support, or other specialized assets. The Secret Service is sometimes given advance notice of its local partners need to rely on mutual aid, but that is not always the case.

Early in the protective visit advance process, the Secret Service invites all relevant law enforcement entities to an initial police meeting. However, local jurisdictional requirements often change if the protectee's itinerary is modified. In the case of the Butler rally, several nearby local law enforcement entities were employed to provide mutual aid—a fact the Secret Service advance team was not initially made aware at the time of the police meeting. It is not a common practice for the Secret Service to invite neighboring or nearby police departments to a police meeting merely for awareness.

In connection with the Butler rally, one local police entity requested mutual aid support from another local department for tactical augmentation. Neither the Secret Service's Pittsburgh Field Office leadership nor anyone on the agency's advance team were aware of this outreach for support. This led to a situation where the local tactical team operating on the second floor of the AGR building—a team that was providing mutual aid support—had no prior contact with Secret Service personnel before the rally. Multiple law enforcement entities involved in securing the rally questioned the efficacy of that local sniper team's positioning in the AGR building, yet there was no follow-up discussion about modifying their position. There was also no discussion with Secret Service advance personnel about positioning that team atop the AGR roof. Local sniper support were apparently not opposed to that location.

## **Deference & Protectee Exposure / Operational Follow-Up**

The Secret Service works with any number of organizations to carry out its protective mission. For example, engagement with the protectee's staff is a longstanding staple of our operations. It is crucial that the agency maintain a professional rapport with the staff advance teams to obtain timely and accurate information as it relates to the protectees' schedules, public and private engagements, and other details that impact the agency's ability to provide a safe and secure environment for the protectee.

There is constant negotiation and information sharing between the Secret Service and the protectee's respective staff as it relates to nearly every aspect of a protective visit. While negotiations with staff are a given, the security of the protectee is undeniably the responsibility of the Secret Service. The staff selects the venues for the protectees to visit and the Secret Service subsequently secures those venues. One of the primary considerations for any outdoor venue is minimizing the protectee's exposure to long range threats, which usually come into play with those venues.

There was some discussion regarding site selection between FPOTUS/RPN Trump's staff and local elected representatives, however it appears the Butler Farm Show site was selected by staff because it was the better venue to accommodate the large number of desired attendees. The site was seen by the Secret Service and our local law enforcement partners as a challenge.

Advance personnel and multiple supervisors with oversight of the security plan at the Butler Farm Show venue recognized line of site concerns. However, the security measures to alleviate these concerns were not carried out on July 13, 2024 as intended. There was a lack of detailed knowledge by Secret Service personnel regarding the state or local law enforcement presence that would be present in and around the AGR complex. There was also a lack of knowledge regarding the specific footprint of resources that would buttress the secure area of the venue and separate it from the AGR complex, which was outside of the site's secure perimeter.

The construction of the protected site, along with line of site mitigation to address the vulnerabilities created by the open grounds of the AGR complex, should have been a key objectives of the site advance. The lack of due diligence in site construction was evident. Advance personnel should have reported any discrepancies or lack of clarity to detail and field office supervisors.

## **Communications Inconsistency**

The different radio frequencies used at the Butler Farm Show venue were not conducive for quickly sharing real-time information. A central tenet of law enforcement operations is effective communications. The Secret Service employs this standard application in its protective advance procedures to maximize overlap in communications and to ensure a common operating platform for all law enforcement entities supporting a protective visit. Providing overlapping or redundant

communications for a protective site is crucial. Similarly, multiple communications touchpoints maximize the likelihood of that consequential information will be shared in a timely fashion. There were multiple standard conduits of communication that were not in operation on July 13, 2024, which if present would have increased the probability of pertinent information or context being conveyed.

The failure of personnel to broadcast via radio the description of the assailant, or vital information received from local law enforcement regarding a suspicious individual on the roof of the AGR complex, to all federal personnel at the Butler site inhibited the collective awareness of all Secret Service personnel. This failure was especially acute in terms of the FPOTUS/RPN's protective detail, who were not apprised of how focused state and local law enforcement were in the minutes leading up to the attack on locating the suspicious subject. If this information was passed over Secret Service radio frequencies it would have allowed FPOTUS/RPN's protective detail to determine whether to move their protectee while the search for the suspicious suspect was in progress. Vital information was transmitted via mobile/cellular devices in staggered or fragmented fashion instead of being relayed via the Secret Service radio network.

### **Specialty Asset Impact**

There have been numerous questions regarding the approval, denial, and decision-making process for specialized assets surrounding FPOTUS/RPN Trump's visit to Butler, PA on July 13, 2024. The visit of FPOTUS/RPN Trump to Butler, PA was supported by Secret Service counter sniper and counter assault assets. These and other tactical assets are sometimes augmented by law enforcement partners. While the advance team from the local office and the protective detail were afforded sufficient notice to conduct an unabbreviated advance, the counter sniper asset arrived later during the advance week. Having all members of the advance team present to engage local law enforcement counterparts beginning with the initial formal police meeting and onwards provides more time and opportunity to begin nuanced conversations and planning.

The FPOTUS/RPN's protective detail provided a counter unmanned aerial system advance agent for the visit to Butler, PA. Due to the former president's schedule, which involves a steady cadence of outdoor events and activity, the protective detail prioritized this asset to counter drones and similar threats. There were some technical difficulties experienced by the advance personnel with that system. It is possible that if this element of the advance had functioned properly, the shooter may have been detected as he flew his drone near the Butler Farm Show venue earlier in the day.

### **Operational Tempo**

The Secret Service is a proud organization with a critical mission. While this pride resonates throughout the agency's workforce, this pride can lead to overextension in furtherance of carrying out that mission. Resources did not factor into this mission failure. Ever-increasing responsibilities place the agency in the unenviable position of

having to stretch the workforce continually to satisfy a never ending high operational tempo. The predisposition for Secret Service personnel to continually accomplish the mission despite obstacles is tangible.

This dynamic becomes more relevant during a Presidential campaign where the addition of new protectees stretch an already busy organization. Concurrently, our existing protectees are steadily increasing their travel tempo. The site in Butler was chronologically inserted between two National Special Security Events, our most staffing intensive undertakings, requiring a whole of enterprise approach to support with over a year of planning for each event.