

Assassination of President J.F. Kennedy

# Shocked Secret Service Putting Itself Through an Agonizing Self-Appraisal

By MIRIAM OTTENBERG  
Star Staff Writer

The Secret Service has turned its investigative talents on itself—to find out every move made by every agent before the assassination of President Kennedy Friday.

The broad investigation now engaging every high-ranking Secret Service official has a twofold purpose.

The Secret Service wants to know first what combination of circumstances occurred to frustrate the elaborate precautions always taken to guard the President. This phase of the investigation looks to the future, to what additional precautions must now be taken whenever the President leaves the White House.

The second purpose of the investigation is designed to provide the answers to the questions expected from Congress and the people.

## Agonizing Self-Appraisal

Until the investigation is completed, Secret Service spokesmen are answering no questions. They want to know the entire picture before they start providing pieces of it.

"We've just started piecing it together," a spokesman said. "We're taking it from the ground up. We intend to talk to every person who had anything to do with the Dallas trip.

"We've got to see the entire picture. We've got to know what the planning was, what the problems were, what was done and exactly what happened."

The agonizing self-appraisal comes at a time when the Secret Service is working around the clock to devise security precautions for President Johnson. Some of the agents' work in the tragic cavalcade

at Dallas flew back to go on immediate duty at the new President's home.

## Faces Reflect Sorrow

Their grim faces mirrored the extent of their personal sorrow. Each of them had pledged himself to sacrifice his own life if necessary to protect the White House family.

Secret Service Chief James Rowley was particularly hard hit. Before he became chief in September, 1961, he had had direct charge of protecting the President since 1946 and had served on the White House detail for 22 years. President Kennedy chose him to become chief of the Secret Service.

Chief Rowley was more acutely aware probably than any other man of the dangers accepted so casually by the American chief of state.

"The biggest threat to a President's life," he once remarked, "is from the self-deluded who become the dupes of terroristic or subversive organizations."

He has been continually concerned about snipers firing from a distance. When President Eisenhower golfed at Burning Tree County club, for instance, some of the golfers nearby carried high-powered rifles instead of clubs in their golf bags. Chief Rowley feared that snipers might lurk on the wooded golf course.

## Buildings Are Checked

Checking the buildings along the route the President will travel is a customary precautionary in the advance planning for the President's out-of-town trips. Although the Secret Service is declining comment, it was pointed out by White House sources that the building

from which the shots were fired was an isolated one in an area where no large crowds had been expected.

Lee Harvey Oswald was employed in that building, but Dallas police did not give his name to the Secret Service in the agents' routine check of possible crackpots. Oswald, now charged with the murder of Mr. Kennedy, had not brushed with the Dallas police.

He had been arrested in New Orleans in August and FBI agents had questioned him then, but he was not kept under surveillance and an FBI spokesman said it was not known that he had settled in Dallas two months ago.

A White House spokesman said no special precautions were taken for the Dallas visit beyond the customary security arrangements whenever the President travels. This source said no information in the nature of a warning reached Washington that would have prompted a doubling of the guardians of the President or other additional precautions.

## Preventive Protection

Customarily, the Secret Service has stressed preventive protection. This has included both tracking down anonymous threats and exploring every possibility of danger, from the food the President eats to his methods of travel.

The car in which President Kennedy was riding was built in 1961 to rigid Secret Service specifications. The car was designed by Ford Motor Co. technicians and built by Hess & Eisenhart Manufacturing Co., a custom automobile firm.

Hess & Eisenhart officials told the Associated Press yesterday that the "Presidential Continental" had a protective

bubble-top but declined to say whether this was bullet-proof. The top was not on the car as the President's motorcade drove through Dallas. It is designed mainly as a protection against inclement weather.

## Route Always Checked

When the President rides in a motorcade, Secret Service agents have always gone over the route in advance, assessing every source of danger. Local police always play a large part in manning this phase of the operation, providing the motorcycle escorts and handling crowd-controlling details.

That is a responsibility Washington police always live with. It is a new responsibility for the police wherever the President goes, but usually the Secret Service advance agents have worked out the details to the point where the local forces can give the maximum protection.

The Secret Service agents themselves form the President's personal bodyguard, keeping their eyes fixed on the crowds, ready to shield the President's body with their own.

Any one of them would have done that Friday, but when the shot was fired from above none of them had a chance.

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