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*New York Times  
(Sunday Magazine)*

OCTOBER 27, 1996

**Covering the Arc**

Each agent at a fixed post at this gathering in Hartford zeroed in on part of the 180-degree arc around Dole, being wary of possible diversions. In Virginia, agents had focused on a woman, later found to be just seeking an autograph, who was inching toward the candidate, when a man in the back leaped up with an anti-Dole poster and started shouting. "You had to give her your attention," says Chip Smith, deputy special agent in charge of the New York field office. "But you couldn't allow yourself not to be prepared for something else."



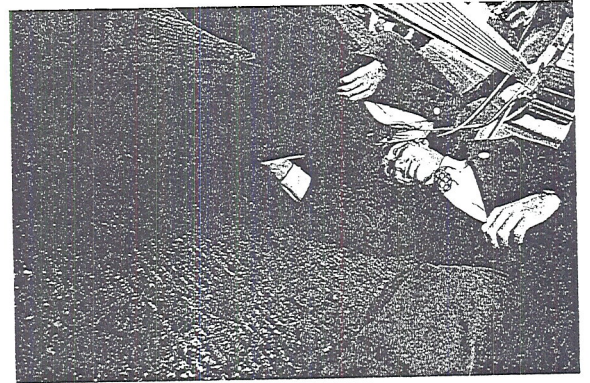


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# High Season For the Secret Service

Another Presidential campaign.  
More working that rope, leapfrogging  
that limo, covering that arc.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY EUGENE RICHARDS  
TEXT BY BRUCE PORTER



## After the Dogs

An hour before Clinton's helicopter landed on an East River pier for his United Nations visit, all cars in the motorcade, in this case the President's armor-plated limousine, were sniffed over for explosives by Air Force German shepherds; the service's own canine corps of Belgian Malinois had been deployed elsewhere. After the dogs' inspection, members of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team from the Air Force — you can tell them by their large round pins — inspected the car themselves.

THE MONTHS LEADING UP TO A Presidential election are high season for the United States Secret Service, a time when its 2,060 agents are most taxed, keeping their eyes peeled for trouble so that the candidates can brave the American public and, they hope, emerge unscathed. Signed into life by Abraham Lincoln on the very day he was shot, the Secret Service stuck to tracking counterfeiters until William McKinley was assassinated in 1901, when it took to guarding Presidents. Candidates were added to their duties the day after Robert F. Kennedy was gunned down on June 5, 1968.

As famous images reveal, "an attack can happen in milliseconds," says Larry McCallum, a special

*Bruce Porter wrote and Eugene Richards photographed the pictures for "Terror on an Eight-Hour Shift" for the Magazine in November.*



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agent in the New York field office: George Wallace crumpling in Laurel, Md., in 1972 as Arthur Bremer reached over somebody's shoulder to fire at him. Agents slamming President Ford to the sidewalk in San Francisco in 1975 after he was shot at by Sara Jane Moore from across the street. And, of course, a bewildered Ronald Reagan in 1981 after John W. Hinckley Jr. emerged from a group of journalists and photographers to shoot the President, his press secretary, James Brady, an agent and a police officer.

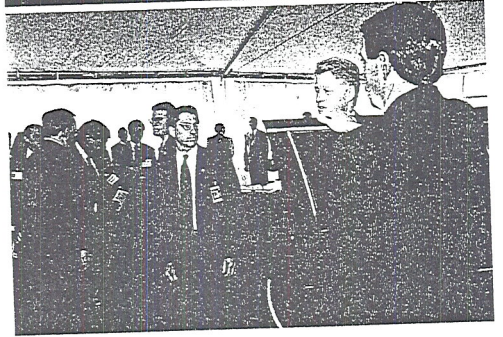
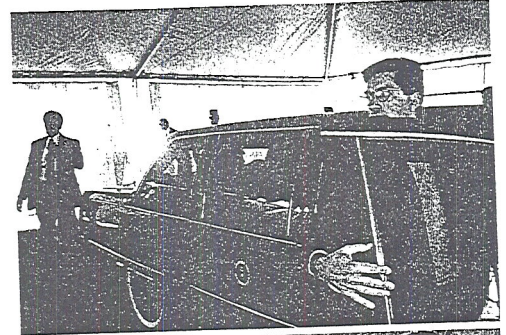
When the public sees agents — 90 percent of whom are male; average age, 36 — they're usually loping alongside slowly moving limos or "standing post" at events. The photographs on these pages were taken in September when President Bill Clinton and Bob Dole were making appearances in the Northeast.

The Secret Service's protection is intricately choreographed. Watching for snipers, agents in the motorcade — no more open convertibles since John F. Kennedy's assassination — fasten their eyes on overpasses, sometimes leapfrogging the "spare" limo into the lead position inside a tunnel. Before a speech, the candidate is escorted into a "holding room," so that his entrance can be tightly controlled. Leaving the area, agents often enclose him in a four-man diamond-shaped pattern while a fifth, the detail leader, hangs just inches from the candidate's shoulder, ready to shove him to the floor or drag him from the scene. Agents are wary of the disabled right arm of Dole (code name, "Patriot"), and would prefer that Clinton ("Eagle") didn't plunge so readily into crowds. Jacket buttons are always undone so that agents can, when necessary, "access their equipment"; i.e., pull out their 9-millimeter Sig Sauers.

Agents tend to be their own most severe critics, and they hate mistakes, even if there are no serious consequences. In early October, as Dole walked 60 feet from the New York Sheraton to the Equitable Building, he was unexpectedly swarmed by casual passers-by because someone had forgotten to block the cross street. Only after the agents got him into the Equitable's elevator did they have a "choke point," when they could sift out whoever didn't belong. "Like an ugly win in a football game," one agent says, "we won, yes, but we like it a lot better when it's nice and clean." ■

### The Critical Pause

Since Reagan was shot, the Secret Service has required Presidents to make "covered" arrivals and departures — perhaps making use of an underground parking garage. At the United Nations, the President's limo and the "spare" were driven into a special tent leading to the main entrance. To make sure nothing untoward was happening, there was a "critical pause" of 30 seconds from when Lewis Merletti, the head of the President's traveling detail, got out of the limo, top right, backed up to open Clinton's door and backed up again while another agent secured the door, bottom right.



### Working the Rope

Agents tense up when the candidate works the rope line (out of sight to Dole's right). "When people get that close, you can't see the hands of the ones in the back," says Smith (standing behind Dole at the far left), who does for Dole what Merletti does for Clinton. "People are grabbing at the candidate, close enough for anything — a knife, handgun, throwing something." Any quick movement draws their eyes: the agent to Dole's left was focused not happily on the suddenly raised camera at the right.

