

Secret Service 'Intuition' Kept Ford Out of Crowd

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White House Says Guards Cautioned the President on Coast Group—Nessen Asserts Trips Will Continue

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 24—The White House said today that the Secret Service, acting on "intuition," had cautioned President Ford against mingling with the particular crowd from which a woman fired a revolver at him Monday in San Francisco.

Ron Nessen, the White House press secretary, reaffirmed the President's determination to continue his extensive cross-country travels, but broadly hinted that Mr. Ford had already begun to reduce his close contacts with large crowds.

Nessen Explanation

At a news briefing, Mr. Nessen noted that the President had not mingled with crowds of presumed well-wishers during his three-day stay in California last weekend.

The disclosure appeared to be part of a continuing White House effort to defend both the Secret Service and the President's penchant for frequent trips outside the capital.

Meanwhile, sources familiar with the activities of the woman accused of firing at Mr.

Ford said that she was a long-time Government informer who continued in that role in the days before the shot was fired. [Page 29.]

Mr. Nessen said that "occasionally the Secret Service will suggest that it might be just as well to pass up 'this or that crowd' and that, in such circumstances, Mr. Ford always accepted the judgment of his security detail.

Asked if the Secret Service had suggested on Monday that Mr. Ford pass up the chance to plunge into the crowd of 3,000 outside the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, Mr. Nessen at first said that that would be a "fair" deduction and then flatly affirmed it.

Decision to Move

A well-placed White House official said later that the Secret Service recommendation had not been based on any awareness that the crowd at the hotel included Sara Jane Moore, the 45-year-old woman accused of firing a .38-caliber

Continued on Page 30, Column 4

Secret Service 'Intuition' Kept Ford From Mingling With the Crowd

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

revolver at the President. The official said the judgment had been based on "a kind of intuition or instinct" that the crowd was not entirely friendly.

Before Mr. Ford arrived at the hotel, a group of demonstrators paraded outside with signs advocating a variety of radical and left-wing causes. One placard said, "Release Pat-ly Hearst, Arrest Gerald Ford."

One official said today that the Secret Service had obtained "some intelligence" information that the demonstrators had left their placards in nearby Union Square and had dispersed into the crowd.

Moreover, a cameraman for a local television station was said to have told Presidential aides that there were "bad" individuals in the crowd and "you ought to get [Mr. Ford] out of town as fast as you can."

Acting on the information, Secret Service agents were said to have persuaded Mr. Ford as he left the hotel to pause only long enough to wave to the crowd some 40 feet away and then enter his limousine.

It was while he walked to the vehicle that the shot was fired, struck the pavement and ricocheted and injured slightly a cab driver among the by-standers.

Mr. Nessen said later that there had been "no change in prospective travel plans" despite the two alleged attempts on Mr. Ford's life 17 days apart in California.

The first instance occurred Sept. 5 in Sacramento when Lynette Alice Fromme, a follower of Charles M. Manson, the convicted mass slayer, allegedly pointed a loaded pistol at Mr. Ford outside the State Capitol.



The New York Times/Teresa Zahara
President Ford meeting at the White House with John J. Rhodes of Arizona and other Republican Congressmen. At center is Representative Elford A. Cederberg of Michigan.

also said today that, while Mr. Ford was "certainly not going to try to block" a proposed Congressional inquiry into Secret Service protective methods, the President was "more than satisfied with the protection he gets from the Secret Service."

Mr. Nessen said in reply to questions that the Secret Service was constantly seeking ways to improve its protective function. He suggested that modifications of procedure could be put into effect on future trips by Mr. Ford.

The President "is fully aware of the dangers involved" in his journeys, Mr. Nessen said. "I think anyone who suggests the President is insensitive to the dangers is wrong."

At one point during the briefing, Mr. Nessen said Mr. Ford had recalled that the door of his limousine was not open

when he emerged from the St. Francis Hotel.

"If it had been open, he would have gotten right in," Mr. Nessen said.

Later, however, Mr. Nessen told reporters that Mr. Ford had not meant to be critical of the Secret Service in commenting on the door but had merely been "literal" in recalling details in conversation with aides.

Yesterday Mr. Ford viewed videotape copies of the television news film of the shooting incident. Mr. Nessen said that the Army Signal Corps prepares a 30-minute film of "highlights" of evening television news programs, which Mr. Ford views routinely as he eats lunch the following day.

By informing audiences around the country of the reasons for White House policies, Mr. Ford is trying to prod the public to "transmit their concerns to members of Congress," Mr. Nessen said.

The spokesman also contended that Mr. Ford considered it important to submit to questioning by community leaders at White House regional conferences in various cities and at other public forums. It was "valuable," for instance, for Mr. Ford to visit the law school at Stanford University last Sunday, he said, to "hear what 25 law students think he's doing wrong."

Despite the evident tenseness with which the White House has faced criticism of Mr. Ford's heavy travels, Mr. Nessen managed to quip when asked about the risks involved if the President goes, as planned, to the Oct. 11 football game between his alma mater, the University of Michigan, and its arch rival, Michigan State University.

"Well," Mr. Nessen remarked, "he's not playing in the game."

McCarthy Seeks Protection

WASHINGTON, Sept. 24 (UPI) — Eugene J. McCarthy's campaign chairman formally requested Secret Service protection today for the former Democratic Senator, Minnesota, who is an announced independent candidate for President.

In a letter to Senator Mike Mansfield, Democrat of Montana, Ronald Coocome said Mr. McCarthy has been campaigning actively and "we believe that Secret Service protection is essential to the personal safety of our candidate and to the safeguarding of his right to free speech."