

Secret Service Gears

Secret Service agents will be assigned within the next few weeks to the multi-million-dollar chore of protecting 1972's large crop of presidential candidates.

Under a system started in June, 1968, after the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, all major candidates for their party's presidential nomination are entitled to Secret Service protection.

The cost this year is expected to be much higher because of the large number of aspirants and the fact that the security details will begin their work within a few weeks, perhaps before the end of the month.

The Treasury Department reported after the 1968 campaign that the assignments cost \$5.45 million.

By some accounts, the expense in 1972 could be 10 times that figure. As many as 30 agents may be assigned to each candidate to provide 'round-the-clock protection.

More than half a dozen Democratic candidates, two Republicans, in addition to President Nixon, and Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace are likely to be offered the Secret Service detachments. None is required to accept the protection, but there have been no turndowns yet. An official involved in the security planning said: "It must be a status symbol. Some of these guys have been screaming for the protection already."

Guidelines to determine

when a candidate qualifies for a Secret Service detail are being formulated by a five-member Candidate Selection Committee headed by House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.).

The rules are not likely to be too restrictive. In 1968, even perennial GOP candidate Harold Stassen and Georgia Gov. Lester Maddox, the star of a short-lived Democratic boomlet, found agents at their

sides for a few flattering moments.

One question facing the committee is whether to provide protection for Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), who consistently rates high in public opinion polls and who just as consistently says he is not a candidate.

"He wouldn't accept protection if that implied he was a candidate," Richard C.

Up to Protect Major Candidates

Drayne, Kennedy's press secretary, told Andrew J. Glass of the National Journal.

But Drayne added that Secret Service protection would be a "nice resource to have," given Kennedy's intention to maintain an active political role and his family's concern for his safety.

Since 1968, the Secret Service has hired 526 new agents for the specific purpose of

candidate protection, and the National Journal's Glass reported that a budget analysis shows that about 85 agents would be assigned to each presidential candidate and his immediate family during the convention period.

To provide the coverage, the Secret Service will almost certainly be forced, as it was in 1968, to borrow officers from other federal agencies.

The Candidate Selection Committee, which has met twice, is expected to hold its final meeting within the next week and submit its recommendations to Treasury Secretary John Connally.

Besides Albert, committee members include House Republican Leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana, Senate

Republican Leader Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania and former Sen. Thomas H. Kuchel, who was chosen as the public member.

The Secret Service has already secured a congressional appropriation for the projected expenses involved, but the agency has declined to disclose the figure.