

# Secret Service Sued Over Suspension

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**JOHN L. SAMUELSON**  
... agent filed a safety complaint

ST. PAUL, Dec. 2 (AP)—Secret Service agent John L. Samuelson filed a safety complaint against his employer, thinking it would be kept confidential. But the agency identified him by lifting fingerprints from his complaint papers and suspended him, he claims in a \$500,000 lawsuit.

Samuelson said in the U.S. District Court suit that he was suspended for five days after complaining about gasoline sloshing from the tanks of presidential limousines while they were being transported in C-141 cargo planes.

As many as 25 Secret Service agents were seated in temporary seats next to the cars and, "on numerous occasions, gas spillage from the automobiles would occur which would cause a fire hazard in the aircraft," the complaint said.

Secret Service spokesman Ken Lynch said in Washington today that the agency would have no comment on the case because it involved pending litigation.

Samuelson, a 33-year-old Richfield, Minn., native, joined the Secret Service in July, 1971, at Minneapolis. He

was transferred to Washington in June, 1974.

While he was with the presidential protection division in May, 1976, Samuelson said he read a bulletin from the Labor Department's Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs inviting reports of unsafe working conditions.

He said he reported the gasoline danger and was assured his report would be kept confidential. The Labor Department said it went to some lengths to assure confidentiality after the Secret Service demanded to see documentation—such as work and attendance records—which Samuelson filed with the complaint.

"We released the documents after the Secret Service told us they were sensitive," said Alfred C. White, a Labor Department safety specialist. "We had a feeling they might try and identify him from the very beginning." So, White said, the complaint was "retyped without his [Samuelson's] name and edited."

According to the suit, the Secret Service identified Samuelson's fingerprints on the documents accompanying the complaint and suspended him five days without pay. Samuelson's complaints said his su-

periors told him he was suspended for copying and releasing private documents and for "insubordinate refusal" to return documents when asked.

Samuelson also complains in court that his promotion evaluation was downgraded and that he was forced to take a six-week medical leave as a result of the incident.

The suit, which names Secret Service Director H. Stuart Knight and other Secret Service and Labor Department officials as defendants, asks that the suspension be rescinded and that Samuelson be transferred from the Omaha station to Minneapolis.

According to the complaint, a federal grievance examiner recommended on Aug. 17 that Samuelson be reprimanded for poor judgment in using Secret Service documents, but that the suspension should be rescinded and the record of it wiped from his personnel file. On Sept. 27, however, the service notified Samuelson it would not comply with that recommendation, the complaint said.

The suit said the Secret Service violated the law that prohibits reprisals against an employee for filing an unsafe working condition report.