

# White House Security Held 'Adequate'

By Paul W. Valentine  
Washington Post Staff Writer

4/25/73

The nation's two top Secret Service officials testified yesterday it is unlikely a mob storming the White House could reach President Nixon and that ample security defenses would make it unnecessary for him to escape through an available tunnel.

The testimony of Secret Service Director James J. Rowley and Assistant Director Thomas J. Kelley came in the second day of a U.S. District Court trial at which civil liberties lawyers are challenging the legality of an Interior Department regulation limiting the number of demonstrators in front of the White House.

"If the President was in the White House, they (violent crowd) probably couldn't get him," Kelley said. He said, preventing harm to the President would require "stringent and possibly violent actions" by police.

"I don't believe the tunnel would have to be used at all today," added Rowley, because we (have) adequate protection." Attorneys for the American Civil Liberties Union led by Joseph LaRauh, contended that

there is no history of radical demonstrators attempting to storm the White House and that even if it happened in the future, there are adequate safeguards to protect the President.

But Kelley and Rowley, under questioning by government attorney Gil Zimmerman, countered that they are responsible for protecting not only the President but all vital property within the White House compound. They said that increasing militancy of demonstrations in the late 1960s created a "potential" for physical penetration of the compound and that a limit on the size of demonstrations in the area was thus justified.

The Interior Department regulation limits the number of demonstrators to 100 on the sidewalk in front of the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue and to 500 in adjacent Lafayette Park. The regulation was suspended by an earlier court order pending outcome of the present trial before Judge George L. Hart Jr.

For years, the White House has been a symbolic target for hundreds of major and minor demonstrations, ranging from antiwar and civil

rights protests to religious gatherings and American Nazi Party rallies.

Rauh repeatedly argued yesterday that the purpose of the numerical limit, imposed in 1967, "is not to prevent harm to the President but to prevent him from being protested against." Rowley and Kelley denied this.

Pressed for his views on balancing presidential protection with the constitutional right of free speech and assembly, Rowley said:

"The First Amendment guarantees free speech but does not necessarily guarantee use of the White House as a backdrop."

He said this was the official view of the Secret Service as expressed in a May, 1970, memorandum to then Deputy Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst.

"The object of some of those demonstrators was to use the (news) media," he said, by having the White House as a backdrop to their demonstrations. "When there were no photographers around, some of the demonstrators left," he said.

"You don't think it's right to have the media cover the demonstrations?" Rauh asked. "I'm not say that," Rowley answered.