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Tower Ticker



What purports to be the real story behind the mysterious demise of veteran Secret Service Agent Robert Taylor as chief of President Nixon's personal security detail finally has surfaced along the banks of the Potomac.

According to informed Washington sources, Taylor was dumped on orders of H. R. Haldeman, White House civilian chief of staff, because of a disagreement with Haldeman over how much protection President and Mrs. Nixon would need during the Jan. 20 inauguration.

Taylor reportedly wanted the traditional flying phalanx of Secret Service cars guarding the Presidential party during the long haul down Pennsylvania Avenue, mainly because of plans for large antiwar demonstrations.

Haldeman, however, is said to have pronounced Taylor guilty of overkill, declaring too many guards would detract from the image of a confident President entering his second term on the crest of an historic landslide vote.

Naturally, as the second most powerful man at the White House, Haldeman won the dispute. On inauguration day, only one Secret Service followup car trailed each of the limousines bearing President Nixon and Vice President Agnew.

Missing was the usual diamond configuration of autos formed by the Presidential limousine at the point and two Secret Service cars flanking the rear to either side.

If Haldeman had any misgivings as Nixon passed 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in a hail of oranges hurled by demonstrators, he didn't show it, even as the outnumbered agents fended off the bitter fruit like goalies at a hockey game.

The oranges could have been rocks—or something even more deadly.

In any event, a week ago Agent Taylor reportedly paid the price of tangling with the Prussian-like Haldeman, whose Teutonic blood lines rarely tolerate questioning of his decisions.

After nearly 23 years of service, six of them as White House detail chief, Taylor was transferred to what amounts to a desk job at Secret Service headquarters as boss of security for visiting foreign dignitaries.

Presidential Press Secretary Ron Ziegler said the move could be viewed as a promotion.

But to a man accustomed to guarding a globe-girdling President of the United States, keeping an eye on itinerant Arab sheiks passing the Israeli embassy could prove a drag.

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I do not agree with a word that you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.

—Voltaire

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