

Richard Nixon's Jittery Bodyguards

How the Secret Service Protects The President From Assassins

The world's most jittery bodyguards are the Secret Service men who have sworn to use themselves as human shields, if necessary, to make sure that Richard M. Nixon won't become the nation's fifth assassinated President.

They take extreme precautions. For as James J. Rowley, Secret Service director, has said:

"There is a mass of evidence that violence and assassination are an accepted part of the thinking of certain individuals and groups today."

Rowley need only look back less than eight years — to Nov. 22, 1963 — when assassin bullets cut down President John F. Kennedy, making him the fourth U.S. chief executive to be slain. The others were Abraham Lincoln (1865), James A. Garfield (1881) and William McKinley (1901).

Because history does repeat itself, Secret Service men are taught that "the life of the President of the United States is in very real and constant danger."

And so they take no chances, as The ENQUIRER learned during a probe into some of their more unusual safeguards.

- All packages coming into the White House are X-rayed.

- The 132-room executive mansion is also frequently checked with Geiger counters for radioactive atomic dust that might be brought in, undetected, to slowly kill the President with radiation. A backup alarm system is set to go off should anybody get into the White House with any type of radioactive material on him.

- Gifts of food to the President are nearly always destroyed because it would be too big a job to analyze the contents of each one for poison.

- When President Nixon plays golf, agents with Tommy guns hidden in golf bags are always posted on the course. (When President Eisenhower used to tee off, agents carried high-powered



SECRET SERVICE CHIEF
James J. Rowley

ing places and crank individuals who might become assassins.

- Whenever the President is at a banquet or similar function, the hundreds of guests have to be screened. And if the dinner is at a hotel, waiters, cooks and other employees who can't be given a fast security clearance are relieved



OUT IN THE OPEN: Nixon is easy target as he greets Belgian crowd.

rifles in the presidential golf bags, along with clubs.)

- When the President travels in a motorcade over a previously announced route (as was the case when President Kennedy was murdered), every man-

hole along the route is sealed in advance against planted bombs that could be triggered by remote control.

- Every building along the motorcade route, and all the workers in them, are quietly checked out for marksman hid-



SOLID PROTECTION: Secret Service men surround President Nixon's car as it passes shouting group of antiwar protesters in Washington, D.C.

of their jobs for the night.

- In addition, Secret Service agents are unobtrusively planted at as many tables as possible during such dinner affairs, and they are trained to smile and chitchat just as though they were genuine guests. But all the while they are keeping watch for any suspicious moves by their table companions. They also carry small mug shots of potential troublemakers or have memorized their faces.

- A check is made of all elevator cables to see that no would-be assassin has tampered with them; chandeliers are examined to see that no one has cut partway through the wires, and bomb searches are made quietly in all parts of the hotel throughout the day before the President arrives and are continued until he has left.

- Samples of all food to be eaten by the President at a banquet are sent to a laboratory for analysis the day before — and the food is then kept under guard until it is served.

- Some agents wear devices that look like hearing aids. These can pick up radio frequencies that might be used to communicate with a would-be assas-

sin and inform him of the President's movements.

- Even the White House special police force comes under scrutiny. Every cop is given special tests designed to catch anyone who might be unbalanced.

The Secret Service agents assigned

to guard President Nixon around the clock are all expert marksmen with every kind of firearm. Young and college educated, they are also experts in judo, boxing, wrestling, swimming, horseback riding and other activities.

Specially trained for more than a year, they can even land a helicopter should that emergency ever develop.

"Our agents are trained as both protectors and investigators," Director Rowley told *The ENQUIRER*.

In addition to the 36 agents on duty at the White House, others are assigned to the President's Key Biscayne, Fla., residence and still others to the West Coast "White House" in San Clemente, Calif., Rowley said.

Because of all the precautions taken, guarding the President is a nerve-wracking task.

"Every President has had dangerous habits," said one agent. "President Truman took long walks every morning on the streets of Washington."

Two Puerto Rican fanatics attempted to kill Truman on Nov. 1, 1950, by trying to shoot their way into Blair House, his temporary Washington residence. One fanatic was wounded and the other slain, along with an Armed Forces guard.

President Nixon, who frequently makes surprise appearances before groups of people, can be an especially hard man to protect. As one agent put it, "He has no fear for his own personal safety."

Other agents, who for security reasons cannot be quoted by name, called Nixon "an assassin's dreamboat" who is "too brave for his own good."

— PETER THOMPSON