

Secret Service Insists That Security at White House

By RICHARD L. MADDEN
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 25—The man who crashed his car through a wrought-iron gate in front of the White House this morning was the second intruder this year into that enclave, but Secret Service officials maintained today that security was adequate.

"In effect, we are protecting an empty house, and we have a different policy when the President is gone," George Cospser, a Secret Service spokesman, told reporters in front of the White House.

"Had the President or any of his family been here, we would have taken more authoritative action," he said. But since President Ford and his family were vacationing in Vail, Colo., and it was Christmas morning, he added, "We wanted to be as compassionate as we could be."

Another Secret Service official noted that in today's incident and in the one last Feb. 17, when a soldier landed a stolen Army helicopter in a hail of buckshot on the South Lawn of the White House at 2 o'clock on a Sunday morning, neither intruder penetrated the White House itself.

No Warning, Apparently

At the time of the February incident, Richard M. Nixon, who was the President, and his family were in Florida. The soldier flew the helicopter near the White House grounds before he landed and thus alerted the Secret Service and the Executive Protective Service, who guard the White House.

Today's incident apparently happened without warning. The automobile, a black Chevrolet sedan, burst through the gate on Pennsylvania Avenue next to a White House guardhouse, proceeded up the curving driveway and stopped near the North Portico.

The right half of the gate was torn off by the automobile, and the battered left half swung loosely on its hinges. The sidewalk in front of the White House was roped off to keep pedestrians from getting too near, and a sawhorse barrier carrying the word "closed" was placed across the breached gate.

One Secret Service official said that when intruders, such as these two, entered the White House grounds, "total security is not breached."

The officials declined to give details, such as the number of guards on duty when the incident happened, but he said that there were "sophisticated communications and alert systems," and what he called "secondary perimeters of security" within the White House grounds.

Guards Stand on Roof

Shortly after the automobile had broken through the gate this morning, Secret Service agents and uniformed Executive Protective Service personnel could be seen, armed with what appeared to be automatic weapons, standing on the roof of the West Wing of the White House, where the Presidential and staff offices are housed.

Asked if new security measures would be adopted because of the incident today, the Secret Service official replied,

"Obviously, we review every incident to evaluate our performance."

After the helicopter incident in February, the Secret Service reportedly installed an anti-aircraft protective system at the White House.

The soldier, Pvt. Robert K. Preston, 20 years old, of Panama City, Fla., who had washed out of Army flight training school, pleaded guilty at an Army courts-martial to charges of wrongful appropriation and breach of the peace. He was fined \$2,400, served two months of a one-year sentence at Fort Riley, Kan., and received a general discharge last October.

Another man, Doyle Allen Hicks, a plumber from Waynesville, N.C., rammed his way through a White House gate on Sept. 27, 1963, when John F. Kennedy was President. Shouting, "I just have to see President Kennedy," he was halted 25 feet from the White House door. Mr. Kennedy was not there, but Mrs. Kennedy was.

An Attack in 1950

A more violent attempt against the President's home was made in 1950 when Puerto Rican nationalists tried to break into Blair House, across the street from the White House, where President Truman and

and his family were living while the White House was being renovated.

One of the attackers and a White House guard were killed, and one guard was wounded. President Truman was unhurt.

After today's incident, President Ford was asked in Vail whether he thought White House security should be strengthened. He said, "I cannot give a judgment on that until I get more details about it."

In recent years, especially because of the assassination of President Kennedy and demonstrations against the Vietnam war, security at the White

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Is Adequate

House has been conspicuously strengthened.

The wrought-iron fence along the Pennsylvania Avenue side of the White House, which is popularly regarded as the front of the building, was improved during the Johnson Administration. It became much more difficult for visitors without White House credentials to get into the grounds. Packages are screened by detection devices like those at airports before they are carried inside.

Whether further security measures are required is one of the subjects of the investigation undertaken today after the latest invasion of the White House grounds.