

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Presidential Protection

It would appear from your June 25^{*} editorial "The High Cost of Presidential Living" that you share with the public the famous failing of a short memory. In the public it is a simple, almost endearing failing. In a national paper, an opinion-maker, it is sheer negligence.

The past few years have seen one American President assassinated, two candidates for that office killed or crippled by assassins, and other national figures senselessly murdered. Remember? In this climate of violence the Congress called for increased security for candidates and Presidents. The public and the press demanded it. The Post cried out for it. Now, that increased security is being provided at San Clemente and Key Biscayne—and The Post decries it.

A review of the legal authority for the services which GSA has provided to Presidents has established several important points. First, the Executive Office of the President is entitled, by statute, to the services (facilities, furnishings, and so forth) which GSA provides to other executive agencies. Second, GSA is not simply cooperating with the Secret Service in protecting the President and the First Family. GSA is required by law to provide this assistance when asked. Finally, the general prohibition against making improvements on private property does not apply to work done for the protection of the President. Security work requested by the Secret Service and thus required of GSA may be provided wherever the First Family may reside—at San Clemente, at Key Biscayne, or elsewhere. The legal basis for security work at Key Biscayne and San Clemente is established as clearly as the events of recent years have established its necessity.

In spite of this authority and the access to reports and files which GSA has given to the press, some items have been erroneously reported. For example:

- The press has repeatedly reported the expense of \$2,800 for a swimming pool heater at San Clemente—GSA has no record whatsoever of having made this expenditure. In fact, a check today with the office of the building inspector of San Clemente indicated that the heater was installed, along with the pool, by the Sir Pool Company operating on a subcontract from Sturdevant Company. Funds for this work were provided by representatives of the President.

- Installation of a septic tank by GSA has also been reported. In fact, the septic tank was installed for the home of the caretaker, Jose Garcia. A

check with Nottingham Company, who installed the septic tank, confirmed the fact that it was paid for by representatives of the President.

- Many references have been made to a "beach cabana"—this is in fact a security outpost requested by the Secret Service. In a document dated September 19, 1969, signed by the Secret Service, GSA was requested to "construct three redwood and stucco gazebos around the residence and a cabana on the beach to serve as security outposts."

The public through the press should understand one more thing. The President did not request the fencing and the underground cables. He did not request, and I'm sure does not like, the locked doors, the guard stations, the bulletproof windows. The work was not done at his request. It was done on his behalf—by those charged by law with his safety, with the safety of his family, and with the safety of the national and world leaders who visit San Clemente and Key Biscayne.

If the Washington Post can determine the security requirements of our President, perhaps they should take on the job of protecting him. I, for one, don't think you should. Anyone who can ignore murder, forget assassination, is hardly qualified for the responsibility. I hope you agree. I hope you do some remembering. I hope you stop writing about "Fringe Benefits" and consider, instead, presidential safety.

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General Services Administration.
Washington.

(See editorial on opposite page.)

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