

Guarding President: Flaws Still Exist

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—As on every Presidential trip out of Washington, the men guarding President Johnson here yesterday had seemingly thought of everything.

The attention to detail was evident at the playing field of Glassboro State College even before the President's helicopter landed.

At least 50 New Jersey State Policemen were ringing the field. Some undoubtedly remembered Dallas, where the local policemen had stood on the curb and faced John F. Kennedy's motorcade instead of keeping their eyes on the crowds and on the buildings. The New Jersey troopers faced the windrow of trees and underbrush lining the field on three sides.

The troopers followed instructions and kept their backs to the playing field until the President's helicopter landed in short center field. Then, surrendering to curiosity, at least half of them twisted to get a look at the President, leaving large spots of underbrush unwatched during the vital seconds and minutes of Mr. Johnson's exposure to the open field.

Safety in Many Hands

The Secret Service, which has the primary responsibility for protecting the President, sometimes says that a President is only as safe as he wishes to be, referring to the manner and frequency of his public appearances. But a President's safety also depends on thousands of other law-enforcement people around the country.

The system of protecting the President has been improved greatly since the assassination of President Kennedy, but the gaps remain.

One difficulty in trying to perfect the system is that the Secret Service cannot do the whole job. It has to depend on many other agencies and people at all levels of government, and the others protect a President infrequently.

After studying the Kennedy assassination, the Warren Commission was emphatic in pointing out the necessity of broad thorough cooperation of many persons and agencies at all levels of government in protecting a President.

Washington Police Escort

Even when the President drives across Washington to make a speech, the Washington police are alerted. They frequently provide an escort.

One day this spring, the White House did not request an

escort for one of Mr. Johnson's short drives and the Secret Service men accompanying him had a moment of mild anxiety.

An impatient motorist, who apparently did not realize why the two unmarked cars were blocking traffic behind the big limousine, finally broke across the center line and angrily sped around the whole informal motorcade. He almost crashed into an oncoming car as he turned to glare at his "tormentors."

To be prepared for such small incidents and their potential for danger, as well as the real emergencies, Mr. Johnson has taken to buckling his seatbelt carefully each time he climbs into the back seat of the black Presidential limousine.

Although shortcomings remain, Presidential protection is clearly better than it was in 1963.

Liaison is More Effective

Liaison between the Secret Service and other agencies is more formal and effective. The service cannot make sure that every local policeman keeps his eyes straight ahead at the crucial moment, but there are other things that it has done with the cooperation of police departments, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and many other agencies.

Perhaps the most important gain since 1963 has been in preventive security.

Before the assassination, the service regularly had about 100 persons of "substantial interest" in its so-called trip file. These were persons who had threatened the President or who were known to be violently inclined in political matters or who, for various other reasons, were considered potential threats to the President's safety.

Cooperation Is Wider

AA typical entry in the trip file was a person of erratic behavior, who had just been released from a mental hospital. If the President visited that person's town, the person was watched closely.

The file now has 1,800 names. This does not mean that more people are potential threats than before, but only that the service has a better way of keeping track of such threats.

One strong recommendation of the Warren Commission was that other agencies of government should cooperate with the service in providing information on potentially hostile persons, from political defectors, like Lee Harvey Oswald, to right-wing zealots, who threaten force to gain their ends.

The service now has formal

arrangements for getting information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Department and the National Security Agency. It has informal arrangements with many others, including state and local law enforcement agencies.

The Warren Commission also recommended that the service consider using automatic data processing to make its information on potential assassins more valuable. After thorough study, the service leased and installed a computer last fall.

The computer has revolutionized the old trip file. At the press of a button, a Secret Service agent now can produce in seconds information vital to guarding the President.

Is the President going to, say, Hartford during the next 24 hours? Complete information on every known threat to the President in the Hartford area comes out of the computer. Research that would take one man 10 days is done electronically in less than four minutes.

Training Is Stronger

The training of Secret Service agents has been strengthened since 1963. An agent assigned to the Presidential detail gets five weeks of basic Treasury Department law enforcement schooling and another six weeks of special training.

Special training for agents was a sporadic, part-time duty before the assassination. Now, the teaching staff has nine full-time persons, and agents go to schools full-time during their training period.

A Secret Service spokesman recalled that, before 1963, the agents guarding the President were given periodic physical and mental tests only on an informal basis. Now records are kept on everything from the number of pushups a man can do to the swiftness of his reactions to a stimulus.

Not all of the improvements that the Secret Service planned after the assassination have been realized.

For example, it asked Congress for \$1.2-million to build a training center on a 55-acre site at Beltsville, Md. The House Appropriations Committee turned it down and suggested that the service share a training facility with the F.B.I.

The service says that is not feasible, and it is talking with other agencies about proposing a new facility that would train people for various security tasks.