

Panel Calls for Secret Service Overhaul After Trump Assassination Attempt

Report outlines agency failures in preventing Trump shooting in Pennsylvania

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WASHINGTON—An independent panel investigating [the July attempted assassination](#) of [Donald Trump](#) called for an overhaul of the Secret Service, saying the agency should replace its leadership with outsiders and focus more closely on its protective mission.

The report released Thursday by the Department of Homeland Security outlined [top-to-bottom failures](#) that allowed [a gunman to open fire](#) on Trump during a campaign rally in western Pennsylvania, killing a spectator and wounding two others.

The panel pointed to the Secret Service's failure to secure the rooftop from which the shooter fired eight shots and faulted the agency for poor communication during the rally.

It cited deeper problems within the Secret Service's "corrosive" culture of "doing more with less," including a failure to fully appreciate the unique challenges of protecting Trump.

"The Secret Service has become bureaucratic, complacent, and static even though risks have multiplied and technology has evolved," the panel said in the report. "It is simply unacceptable for the Service to have anything less than a paramount focus on its protective mission, particularly while that protective mission function is presently suboptimal."

The report follows other investigations into how the gunman, Thomas Matthew Crooks was able to open fire with [an AR-15 rifle](#) from the roof of a building roughly 400 feet away from where Trump spoke.

It was written by a panel of four former law-enforcement officials and builds on findings by Congress, government watchdogs and the Secret Service's own internal review.

The report linked security lapses to a “troubling lack of critical thinking” when threats of politically motivated violence are on the rise. It cited specific deficiencies with the way the Secret Service protects Trump, who faced a [second attempt on his life](#) in September when a man pointed a rifle through the fence at Trump’s golf club in Florida as he was playing on the links.

The agency failed to staff Trump’s detail in a way that “captured the unique security threats he might engender as not just a former president but a former president with significant and unique associated risk,” the report said.

The panel said it was struck particularly by senior Secret Service officials failing to “take necessary ownership” for the planning and security of the Butler, Pa., rally. In a manifestation of the absence of critical thinking, the panel said many Secret Service officials “appear to have done little in the way of self-reflection in terms of identifying areas of missteps, omissions, or opportunities for improvement.”

Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle [stepped down after the July shooting](#) and was succeeded by her deputy, Ronald Rowe, a 24-year-veteran of the agency who stepped in as the agency’s acting leader. The report said that leadership change should go much further, by replacing senior officials with outsiders from the private sector who can bring fresh perspectives and expertise to the agency that has become complacent.

In a statement, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said his department would fully consider the independent panel’s recommendations and was taking the steps necessary to advance the Secret Service’s mission.

“These actions will be responsive not only to the security failures that led to the July 13, 2024 assassination attempt but, importantly, to what the independent review panel describes as systemic and foundational issues that underlie those failures,” Mayorkas said.

The report was reminiscent of a [previous independent panel](#)’s review of the Secret Service, which followed a 2014 incident in which a man jumped the White House fence and made it inside the mansion. Saying the Secret Service was “starved for leadership,” the panel called for a new director from outside the agency.

In the decade since, the Secret Service has had five directors leading the agency in a permanent or acting capacity. Only one came from outside the agency.