

***United States Secret Service Protective Mission Panel  
(USSSPMP)***

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***Testimony of the  
United States Secret Service  
Protective Mission Panel  
before the House Committee on  
Oversight and Government Reform***

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**2154 Rayburn House Office Building**

Good morning. First we would like to thank Chairman Chaffetz and Ranking Member Cummings, as well as other members of the Committee, for inviting us to testify on the subject of “Identifying Steps To Restore the Protective Agency.” The four of us have different backgrounds and different experiences in government service, and we served in administrations led by Presidents from different political parties. But all of us have interacted and worked with the U.S. Secret Service over the years, and all of us, like all Americans, care deeply about the U.S. Secret Service and its mission.

We have had the opportunity and responsibility of examining the Service up close, in ways that go beyond the single news stories of a fence-jumper or other incident. On December 15, 2014, we submitted to the Secretary of Homeland Security a report containing recommendations to strengthen the Secret Service and improve its ability to perform its mission. As we discuss further in our testimony, we met with dozens of agency personnel and more than a hundred experts from around the country. We would also like to thank your staffs for the insights they provided.

Our report is law enforcement sensitive, and many of our recommendations are classified. Today we are happy to discuss those findings that we can discuss in a public setting and answer any questions. A list of those recommendations that can be made public is included at the end of our testimony.

The paramount mission of the United States Secret Service—protecting the President and other high-ranking national officials—allows no tolerance for error. A single miscue, or even a split-second delay, could have disastrous consequences for the Nation and the world. The men and women of the Secret Service fulfill one of the most important obligations in this country, and they do so often with no personal recognition, no desire for fame, and modest compensation. We know special agents of the United States Secret Service as the silent figures around the President, but we tend to notice them only in the extraordinarily rare moments when they fail. Most Americans know little of the work of the Secret Service’s Uniformed Division and do not realize that it is the Uniformed Division that plays a primary role in the protection of the White House.

Throughout its work, the Protective Missions Panel (“the Panel”) developed an even greater appreciation than each of us had previously for the work of the Secret Service. From our meetings at the highest levels of the Secret Service, to meetings with line agents and officers, we saw individuals who were unwavering in their passion and dedication to duty. In discussions with others inside and outside of the U.S. government, including other law enforcement agencies and the U.S. military, there was agreement that, when it comes to providing personal protection to a chief executive and others, the Secret Service is without peer. Facing constant threats and charged with guarding the world’s most powerful and visible head of state and the most accessible executive mansion of any large nation, the Secret Service has an extraordinary track record of success. This is not to say that the Secret Service does not make mistakes. But we owe the agents, officers, and line personnel of the Secret Service a debt of gratitude.

For an organization that has a zero-failure mission, however, a commitment to constant improvement and a refusal to compromise are essential. The Secret Service must be prepared to

face every evolving threat in a rapidly changing environment and to stay constantly ahead of those who could threaten the White House, the President, and other protectees—including the First Family, the Vice-President, and foreign heads of state. That central mission requires a dynamic organization that constantly evaluates its performance and seeks to improve, with leaders able to take the agency to that higher level of performance. It requires personnel who are not only committed to the mission and of great character and ability, but who are also highly trained and innovative. And it requires deployment of the best available technology to augment the talents and training of the men and women of the Secret Service.

The Panel was established following the events of September 19, 2014, when a lone individual leapt over the White House fence, onto the North Lawn, and ultimately into the White House itself. This Panel's mandate was not to redo the report prepared by Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") Deputy Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas ("Mayorkas Report"), which makes specific findings related to the September 19, 2014 fence-jumping incident, but to accept its findings and undertake a broader review of the Secret Service's protection of the White House compound.

The Panel enjoyed full cooperation from the Secret Service, DHS, and the White House, as well as numerous other state and federal agencies and individuals who offered their time and insight into a multitude of issues. We met with approximately 50 employees of the Secret Service itself—officers and agents currently in service, junior and mid-level managers and Assistant Directors, officials from headquarters and field offices, agency leadership, and a number of the agency's past directors and other former agents. The Panel thanks Acting Director Joe Clancy for this cooperation and for all that he has already done to put the Secret Service back on the right course.

The Panel also felt it was critical to receive extensive information from experts outside the Service who were engaged in missions similar to the Service, had expertise in management of law enforcement or security agencies, or were involved in the development or deployment of protective technology. Ultimately, the Panel met with over 120 representatives and leaders from a broad array of federal agencies and research facilities, as well as with representatives of major metropolitan police and security forces. Among government agencies alone, in addition to Secret Service and White House personnel, the Panel met with representatives of the Central Intelligence Agency; the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency; the Department of Defense's Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate; the Defense Threat Reduction Agency; the Federal Bureau of Investigation Security Division and Washington Field Office; the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Cybersecurity and Communications, Federal Protective Service, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Office of the General Counsel, Office of Infrastructure Protection, Office of the Inspector General, Office of Operations, Coordination, and Planning, the Science and Technology Directorate's Homeland Security Advanced Research Projects Agency, and the Transportation Security Administration; the U.S. Marine Corps; the U.S. Marshal Service; the U.S. Navy; the U.S. Park Police; the Pentagon Force Protection Agency; Sandia National Laboratories; and the Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security. The Panel also met with, among others, local law enforcement agencies that often partner with the Secret Service.

Our review and recommendations fall within three general areas: training and personnel; perimeter security, technology, and operations; and leadership. A number of the recommendations go directly to issues highlighted by the events of September 19, 2014. Among other things, the Panel believes strongly that the fence around the White House needs to be changed as soon as possible to provide better protection. We recognize all of the competing considerations that may go into questions regarding the fence, but believe that protection of the President and the White House must be the higher priority. As the Executive Branch, Congress, and the Service itself have all recognized, the fence must be addressed immediately.

A better fence can provide time, and time is crucial to the protective mission. Every additional second of response time provided by a fence that is more difficult to climb makes a material difference in ensuring the President's safety and protecting the symbol that is the White House. Additionally, the ease with which "pranksters" and the mentally ill can climb the current fence puts Secret Service personnel in a precarious position: When someone jumps the fence, they must decide, in a split-second, whether to use lethal force on a person who may not actually pose a viable threat to the President or the White House. By deterring these lesser threats, a more effective fence can minimize the instances when such difficult decision making is required.

We decline to say precisely what the optimal new fence should look like. Importantly, designers of the new fence must balance security concerns with the long and storied tradition of the White House being the "People's House." These historical, symbolic, and aesthetic factors deserve consideration, but ultimately they should not be permitted to delay or prevent a fence that could save lives. A number of common-sense improvements should be explored. For sure, the fence must be taller; even an increase of four or five feet would be materially helpful. Horizontal bars, where climbers can easily place feet or hands, should be eliminated or placed where they provide little assistance. The top of the fence can also be manipulated in certain ways—such as including curvature outward at the top of the fence—to make scaling it much more difficult for most. Any of these adjustments, the Panel is certain, can be made without diminishing the aesthetic beauty or historic character of the White House grounds.

But the problems exposed by recent events go deeper than a new fence can fix. The Panel thus looked more broadly at the Service, recognizing that issues affecting the Service's protective operations more generally have their greatest impact on protection of the White House and President. Of the many concerns the Panel encountered, the question of leadership is, in our view, the most important. The Panel found an organization starved for leadership that rewards innovation and excellence and demands accountability. From agents to officers to supervisors, we heard a common desire: More resources would help, but what we really need is leadership.

Consistent with Secretary Johnson's directive, the Panel considered the qualities needed in a new director for the Service, as well as the next management team. The Panel has concluded that the Service needs strong, new leadership that can drive change within the organization. While we believe the right person could come from many different backgrounds and believe that leadership qualities are more important than any particular background, we think the right person should come from outside the Service. We know that many in the Service today would argue that its unique protective mission can only be understood and managed by someone who has served within its ranks. The Panel appreciates the virtue of experience in the Service, but we

believe that at this time in the agency's history, the need for Service experience is outweighed by what the Service needs today: dynamic leadership that can move the Service forward into a new era and drive change in the organization. The next director will have to make difficult choices, identifying clear priorities for the organization and holding management accountable for any failure to achieve those priorities. Only a director from outside the Service, removed from organizational traditions and personal relationships, will be able to do the honest top-to-bottom reassessment this will require. Finally, this will also require support from a management team that combines diverse strengths—including those in the Service as well as those from outside, those with special agent or law enforcement training, and those with other professional backgrounds.

The new leader will need to help the Secret Service learn to improve itself by listening to the outside. The Panel heard one common critique from those inside and outside the Service: The Service is too insular. The Secret Service is justifiably proud of its preeminence and its history. But the Secret Service could benefit greatly from reaching outside itself to other entities, here and abroad, that share a similar mission or have knowledge and skills that would be valuable to the Secret Service. The Panel spent significant time interviewing leaders inside and outside the federal government who are experts in technology and protection of physical locations, and the Service could benefit greatly from long-term consistent engagement with these types of complementary experts. Such engagement should include regular and hard-edged evaluations of the Service itself, as well as its methods; this kind of constant evaluation and improvement needs to become part of the Secret Service's culture.

The next director also needs to help the Secret Service be clear about its priorities, and there should be no doubt about what comes first. The agency exists to protect the President and its other very high-level protectees. Yet the Secret Service has sometimes acted in ways that send mixed signals on a number of fronts. While promoting other capacities might help bring resources into the agency, the new leadership needs to think carefully about how the agency's core priorities are implemented up and down the organization, and focus on improving them.

The new leader will also need to reform the Secret Service's administrative capabilities. If the Secret Service is to remain the best in the world and defeat its adversaries every time, it has to be the best in every facet of the game. An agency that needs the best agents and officers on the front lines needs a hiring process run by human resources experts valued for their specialized knowledge about how to recruit and retain talent, in a timely and efficient manner. An agency that needs to be three steps ahead of those who would do its protectees harm needs more of the best and most innovative scientists and engineers dreaming up ways to defeat the next threat. And an agency that needs to spend every penny wisely needs an administrative department that can demonstrate with rigorous precision why additional resources are necessary and knows how to budget for it.

Finally, the next director will need to help strengthen a culture of accountability. The organization asks its protective agents to stand in front of a bullet to protect the President. It expects its Uniform Division officers to maintain high alertness at every moment of a long shift. It requires its advance teams to scour massive new venues for the smallest weakness. The agency's zero-failure mission requires that its high standards be met. In order for the Service's

agents and officers to meet its high standards, they must see that the organization itself believes in its standards and enforces them in a consistent, evenhanded manner. In other words, agency leadership, managers, and front line supervisors must believe and show that they are accountable for their mission. These are not just morale issues, or issues of fairness or trust. Accountability creates the culture of performance that the Secret Service needs to meet its zero-failure mission.

The necessary changes will thus require strong leadership, but they will also require resources. The Secret Service is stretched to and, in many cases, beyond its limits. Perhaps the Service's greatest strength—the commitment of its personnel to sacrifice and do the job “no matter what”—has had unintended consequences. Special agents and Uniformed Division personnel protecting the White House work an unsustainable number of hours. Rather than invest in systems to manage the organization more effectively and accurately predict its needs, the Service simply adds more overtime for existing personnel. Rather than sending its agents and officers to training, it keeps them at their posts.

The Panel found that, due in large part to limitations on personnel, the Service's training regimen has diminished far below acceptable levels. The Presidential Protective Division's (“PPD”) so-called “Fourth Shift” had once ensured that for two weeks out of every eight, the President's detail was maintaining its strength, practicing, and getting better. But Secret Service reports show that in FY 2013, apart from firearms re-qualifications and basic career development technical requirements, the average special agent received only forty-two hours of training. The Uniformed Division has never trained at the level of PPD, but today training for the Uniformed Division has also fallen below acceptable levels. In FY 2013, Service data shows that the Uniformed Division *as a whole* received 576 hours of training, or about 25 minutes for each of over 1300 Uniformed Division officers. We believe that the Secret Service should be staffed at a level that enables it to provide a true Fourth Shift for training to its Presidential Protective Division and Vice-Presidential Protective Division special agents, and to ensure that Uniformed Division officers are in training for no less than 10% of their time.

Providing more time for training requires increased staffing, but the Secret Service needs more agents and officers even beyond the levels required to allow for in-service training. The President and other protectees cannot receive the best possible protection when agents and officers are deployed for longer and longer hours with fewer and fewer days off. For years, the Service has taken on additional missions—in both its protective and investigative roles—but has not matched its request for additional resources to those expanded missions. The Service has to increase the number of agents and, to an even greater extent, increase the size of the Uniformed Division to ensure protection of the White House. We think that a new director should give serious consideration to whether there are collateral or non-essential missions that can be shed, though we believe the Service's investigative mission provides benefits to its protective mission. We also recognize that the new director must carefully manage the Service's other missions to ensure adequate resources are available to protection. But under any scenario, the Service has to increase significantly in size.

This Report attempts to quantify the additional personnel needed, but the Panel has been hamstrung to some extent by the lack of complete data. Put simply, the Service does not have systems in place to make the most prudent budgeting choices. Like so many agencies, the

Service has, for years, looked at its base budget and tried to ballpark how much more it might be able to get through the OMB and congressional processes. The result, however, is that no one has really looked at how much the mission, done right, actually costs. That is why one of our most important recommendations is that a new director start with a zero-based budget. Forget about what the Service has asked for in the past: Define the mission, and make the argument to policy makers in the Executive Branch and Congress that this sum—which we believe to be more than current appropriations—is needed. As an interim step, the Panel recommends that Congress and the Executive Branch work together to ensure appropriations sufficient for an additional 85 special agents and 200 Uniformed Division officers; the Panel believes this is a first step, but likely not the last step, to ensure adequate training and personnel for the White House.

The Panel also reviewed a variety of physical security and operational issues at the White House, and makes a number of recommendations about the ongoing security of the compound. Aspects of this discussion are classified, and the Panel believes strongly that operational issues related to the protection of the White House should not be the subject of detailed public debate in this Report or any other fora. The events of September 19, 2014 highlighted a number of potential vulnerabilities that need to be addressed quickly. Fortunately, those events have served as a call to action for the Service.

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Many of the recommendations set forth in our Report are not new. Indeed, some of them precisely echo recommendations that the White House Security Review made in 1995 (“1995 Security Review”) but that remain concerns today. Others even harken back to recommendations made in the Warren Commission Report following the assassination of President Kennedy. And still others track internal recommendations made by the Service. As the Secret Service itself has recognized, the Service has often made recommendations and proposed solutions as it identified problems, but has frequently failed to implement its own recommendations.

Some of the changes address isolated problems, with well-defined options to solve them, while others will require far more study by, we hope, a dynamic, new management team that will lead the Service into the future. Following September 19, 2014, the Service began implementing a number of reforms, and those efforts have continued alongside the Panel’s work.

Finally, the Panel recognizes that many of these recommendations will be difficult. Many will cost money, which is always a challenge in Washington D.C. We are mindful of the current budget climate and the value of taxpayer dollars, and we would not recommend spending a penny unwisely.

Many others will require strong leadership and a will to change, which can be difficult for an organization with such a storied history. Some in the Secret Service will resist and may need to move on. But the Secret Service cannot lose focus on its core and essential mission: the protection of the current, past, and future Presidents of the United States. As a nation, we should

not fail to make prudent investments in personnel, technology, and leadership when the stakes are so high.

# *Summary of Recommendations*

## *Training and Personnel*

- **Provide a true “Fourth Shift” for training the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Protective Divisions, so that they spend two weeks out of every eight in training, and ensure that Uniformed Division (“UD”) officers are in training for no less than 10% of their time:** Only with constant training can all of the teams at the White House perform the coordinated actions needed to effectively respond.
- **Implement integrated training focused on ensuring that all teams at the White House know their roles in responding to specific threats:** Teams need to train with the full complement of forces with which they will operate in real life, and the training needs to be provided force-wide, not just to those on duty on the day that training is scheduled.
- **Train in conditions that replicate the physical environment in which they will operate:** A security team should also be trained so that it is intimately familiar with the space in which it is operating.
- **Increase the Uniformed Division, as quickly as can be appropriately managed, by an initial 200 positions, and the Presidential Protective Division (“PPD”) by 85 positions. Perform additional analyses and, likely, further increases as necessary:** Both UD and PPD are currently stretched beyond their limits.
- **Reform and professionalize recruiting, hiring, promotion and rotation process that puts the most talented, capable individuals in place as efficiently as possible:** The Service must continue efforts to develop a professionalized recruiting and hiring process that finds talented individuals, evaluates candidates rigorously for the PPD, and hires them quickly.

## *Technology, Perimeter Security, and Operations<sup>1</sup>*

- **Ensure that the Office of Technical Development and Mission Support proactively reviews and refreshes the Service’s technological footprint. The Service should receive dedicated funds for technology, both within its own budget and within DHS Science & Technology’s budget, to accomplish these tasks:** Technology systems used on the complex must always remain on the cutting edge, and the Service must invest in technology, including becoming a driver of research and development that may assist in its mission.
- **Replace the outer fence that surrounds the 18 Acres to give Secret Service personnel more time to react to intrusions:** The current seven-and-a-half-foot fence, not just along Pennsylvania Avenue but around the compound’s entire perimeter, must be replaced as quickly as possible.

## *Leadership*

- **Clearly communicate agency priorities, give effect to those priorities through its actions, and align its operations with its priorities:** The Panel believes the Secret Service’s leadership must make those choices in a manner to ensure that its core protective mission remains first priority.
- **Promote specialized expertise in its budget, workforce, and technology functions.** Filling important administrative functions with agents rather than professional administrators may not be optimal.

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<sup>1</sup> A number of our recommendations pertaining to technology, perimeter security, and operations contained classified material and are thus not reproduced here.

- **Present a zero-based or mission-based budget that will provide sufficient resources to accomplish its mission, beginning immediately by working within DHS to adopt a workforce staffing model:** The Service must build a new budget from the ground up by defining its mission, determining what it will take to achieve it, and asking for that. The mission is important enough to justify that approach.
- **Create more opportunities for officers and agents to provide input on their mission and train its mid- and lower-level managers to encourage, value and respond to such feedback:** Leadership and, even more critically, mid- and lower-level managers, need to make clear that their mission requires that they get things right—and thus that the agency values information out of sync with the status quo or the leadership’s views.
- **Lead the federal protective force community:** Collaboration with protective forces like the Federal Protective Service, the Pentagon Force Protection Agency, the FBI Police, and the State Department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security and other agencies, especially on technology, could significantly increase opportunities for innovation.
- **Receive periodic, outside assessments of the threats to and strategies for protecting the White House compound:** The Secret Service should engage other federal agencies to evaluate the threats that the agency faces and its ways of doing business.
- **Resume participation in international fora with comparable protective services of friendly nations:** While most national protective forces do not compare to the Secret Service, those of certain nations are much more similar than they are different.
- **Give leadership’s priorities and reforms the organization’s sustained attention and hold the agency accountable through to their completion:** Following through on reforms and recommendations has been an issue for the Service in the past.
- **Implement a disciplinary system in a consistent manner that demonstrates zero tolerance for failures that are incompatible with its zero-failure mission:** It is clear that the rank-and-file—and even very senior current and former members of the Secret Service—do not have confidence that discipline is imposed in a fair and consistent manner.
- **Hold forces accountable for performance by using front-line supervisors to constantly test readiness:** To be ready for a job where quick reactions and reflexes are critical, supervisors need to drive home to their officers and agents that the front line is constantly being tested.
- **The next director of the Secret Service should be a strong leader from outside the agency who has a protective, law enforcement, or military background and who can drive cultural change in the organization and move the Secret Service forward into a new era:** The need to change, reinvigorate, and question long-held assumptions—from within the agency itself—is too critical right now for the next director to be an insider.
- **Establish a leadership development system that identifies and trains the agency’s future managers and leaders:** To promote from within and move the agency forward, however, the Secret Service needs to do a better job of identifying future leaders and preparing them for the role.