



EXCLUSIVE I served in the FBI for 25 years... here's who I suspect is to blame for the Trump assassination attempt security disaster

By [FRANK FIGLIUZZI](#)

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What the hell happened - and how was it possible? These questions will be at the heart of the **FBI** investigation into probable multiple failures by the Secret Service and others in the lead-up to the attempted assassination of **Donald Trump**.

The shooter, who appears to have used a high-powered semi-automatic rifle - possibly an AR-15 - was able to set up his position on the roof of a building in full view of some of the crowd on the 'bleachers', or tiered seating.

Individuals in that crowd tried for several minutes, by at least one estimate, to draw the attention of security officials to this man with a rifle but police appear to have not responded quickly enough.

What we don't yet know is whose job it was to ensure this roof, only 150 yards from the stage, was secure.

During 25 years with the FBI, I have seen how countless similar rallies were organised and I consider it highly likely that the Secret Service was responsible for security within an enclosed perimeter, while the local police took charge of the wider zone outside.

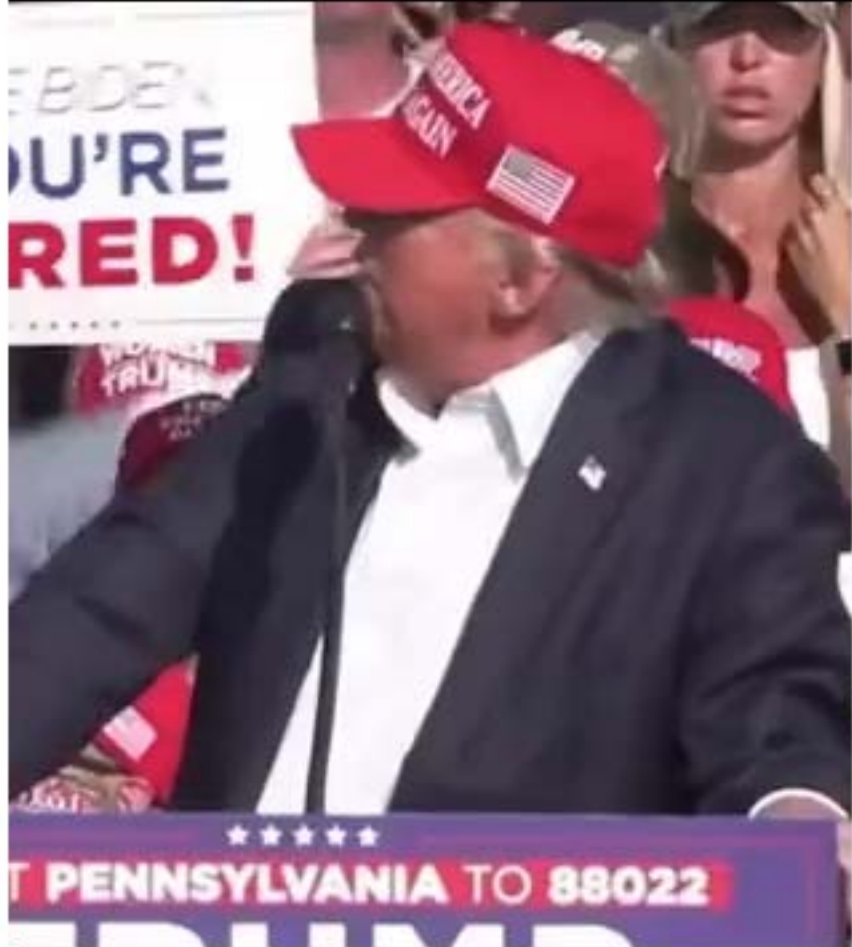


Donald Trump defiantly punched the air after being shot at the campaign rally



Frank Figliuzzi, an FBI agent for 25 years, believes failures of communication between the Secret Service and local law enforcers may be to blame for the failure to prevent the shooting

Watch events unfold during assassination attempt on Donald Trump



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Responsibility for every post, every zone, every rooftop needs to be clearly assigned and this division of roles should have been clear to everyone.

This is standard practice for the Secret Service. It's carried out at hundreds of events during the run-up to an election but it's also potentially new territory for each local police department.

It might have been years since they last saw a political rally in their town. It's even possible that they've never witnessed one there before.

News cameras also showed soldiers in camouflage present, probably members

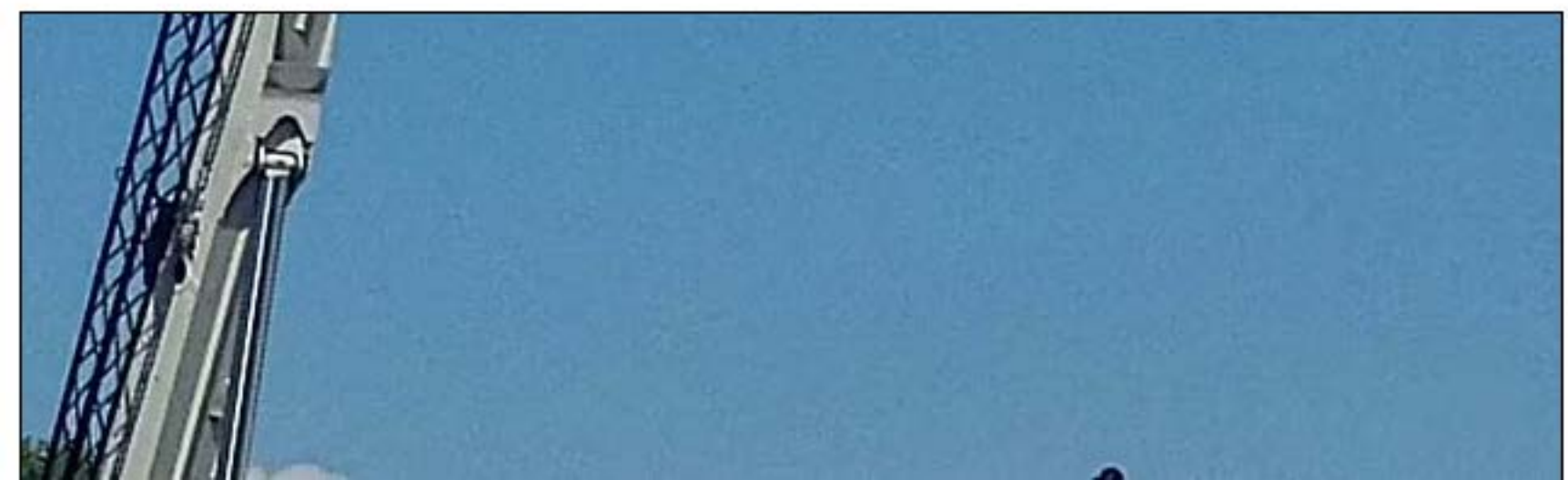
of the National Guard. Their role, and whether their presence hindered security in any way, will have to be probed too.

We know that a Secret Service sniper must have had a clear view of the rooftop because the gunman Thomas Matthew Crooks was **shot dead within a few seconds of opening fire on Trump.**

But why did that sniper ignore Crooks till then? One plausible explanation is that the Secret Service (which is entirely separate from the FBI) assumed the assassin was a police sniper, part of their security team.



Immediately after the shots were fired, former president Trump was bundled to the ground behind reinforced barriers by U.S. Secret Service agents





© Glen Van Tryfle/TMX via REUTERS

Snipers stand on the roof of a building behind the podium at Saturday's campaign rally

Eyewitness captures Donald Trump assassination attempt at rally

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That implies serious failures in communication. When it comes to planning for events such as this, I would expect police and Secret Service teams to not only meet and introduce themselves but map out their specific roles in detail. They ought to have been able to recognise each other by sight.

They should also have double-checked at every stage throughout the rally, ensuring they knew who everybody was and what they were doing. That's just basic.

In the coming days and weeks, the agency will reconstruct every detail of the event in Butler, Pennsylvania, using witness statements, CCTV and media video, as well as amateur footage shot on phones by members of the public.

They will also review audio recordings, including the radio communications between the various arms of law enforcement. These should be released to the FBI immediately and I would expect them to be made public in due course.

Then we'll have a clearer idea of how Crooks was able to access the roof, why his presence appeared not to alarm the security staff and why the concerns of people in the crowd were not met with an effective response.

The inquiry must also focus on the aftermath of the shooting. Former president Trump was bundled to the ground, behind reinforced barriers – those hoardings, painted with slogans, are made of galvanised steel.

As his Secret Service team began to lead him away to his vehicle, they shielded him with their bodies. But it appears from news video that the message 'shooter is down' was sent and at that point Trump was able to turn to the crowd, punch the air and shout his defiance.

It's completely natural that Trump wanted to show his supporters he was bloodied but alive but this doesn't mean it was safe for him to do so.

In that moment, the Secret Service had no way of knowing if the gunman was acting alone. Other shooters might have been present.

Audio also appears to catch Trump asking for his shoes as he is being bundled towards his car – and his bodyguards complying with this request.

That's against all protocol. The protection squad has one job: to protect their man.

They are his human shield. If necessary, they can hog-tie him and carry him but they should never risk his life by looking for his shoes.

The Republican national convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, tomorrow will see unprecedented security levels. But until we understand what went wrong at Butler, it will be impossible to say with certainty that we won't see another act of deadly violence before the election is over.

Frank Figliuzzi is a former assistant director for counter-intelligence at the FBI and the author of Long Haul: Hunting The Highway Serial Killers

[Thomas Matthew Crooks](#)

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