

Ranking Member Jason Crow

Opening Statement

Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump

“The Ongoing Investigation of the Butler, Pennsylvania Security Failure: The Secret Service’s Reliance on State and Local Law Enforcement”

Thursday, September 26 at 9:30 a.m. in 1100 Longworth HOB

Thank you, Chairman. I want to start by thanking all of the witnesses for coming here willingly on your own time to provide really important information for this panel, and for the American people as we seek answer that they need.

Political violence has no place in our democracy, period. We must be united in our belief as Americans—not as Republicans or Democrats—that political disagreement is settled through rigorous debate, not violence. That is why this Task Force's investigation and today's hearing are so important. Since the establishment of this Task Force just two months ago, I have worked closely with Chairman Kelly to ensure this investigation is and remains bipartisan. The members of this Task Force and our staffs are coordinating closely to ensure we establish the facts of the security failures of July 13, so that we can help ensure those failures never happen again. It is our hope that today's hearing will provide the public with critical insight into our progress.

The Secret Service is a critical dual mission. First, the protection and investigations to ensure the safety and security of protectees, key locations, and events of national significance, and investigation of crimes against the U.S. financial system committed by criminals around the world. Its protection mission operates by the Secret Service's own admission on a zero-fail mentality. As it must. While numerous other state and local law enforcement agencies were present leading up to and during the July 13 event, the Secret Service is ultimately responsible for the safety of its protectees. A mission the Secret Service has had full-time since 1902. It is clear that the Secret Service failed on July 13.

It is also impossible to ignore, however, the fact that the world has changed dramatically since the Secret Service first took over full-time presidential protection in 1902. Political events are bigger. There is a significantly great number of protectees. Access to information about protectees' movements are more accessible to the public. Times have clearly changed. The Secret Service must be expected to accomplish its zero-fail protection mission without any errors. But Congress must also ensure that the Secret Service has the resource it is needs to accomplish that mission.

It has become apparent since July 13 that the Secret Service is stretched too thin. It takes years to create a Secret Service agent qualified to protect the president or a former president. Right now, there are simply not enough Secret Service agents. As a result, the Secret Service must rely

heavily on Department of Homeland Security agents and other federal agencies whose responsibility may not primarily be personnel protection. The Secret Service also relies heavily on local and state law enforcement, particularly with large-scale events like July 13.

In the first part of this investigation, it has become clear that local law enforcement played a critical role in security on July 13, and efforts by individual local law enforcement officers may have saved lives and prevented a far greater tragedy. It is also clear, however, that the communication between the Secret Service and local and state partners was disjointed and unclear. For example, there was no single command post for all law enforcement on site to receive and relay information. Give how critical the partnership is between the Secret Service and local state law enforcement agencies, clear lines of communication are crucial. The Secret Service must do better. This Task Force has a solemn, urgent responsibility uncover the failures and help stop them from being repeated.

The American people deserve clear answers about what happened on July 13. This hearing will provide the first pieces of what we learned, make no mistake, this investigation is still early days and there is much more to do. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, and learning more about their perspectives on what happened, what went wrong, and how we might prevent these failures moving forward.

Thank you, Chairman. I yield back.