

# Trump Assassination Task Force to Hold Final Hearing: What to Know

The hearing follows an interim report by the task force detailing 'stunning security failures.'

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Acting Secret Service Director Ronald Rowe Jr. testifies before a joint hearing of the Senate Judiciary and Homeland Security and Government Affairs committees in the Dirksen Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington on July 30, 2024. Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images



By Joseph Lord

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WASHINGTON—The House Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump will hold its final hearing on Dec. 5.

The panel, which is investigating the United States Secret Service (USSS) missteps that led to two attempts on President-elect Donald Trump's life, will hear from USSS Acting Director Ronald L. Rowe Jr, who previously addressed the panel in a Sept. 26 hearing.

**Share** The hearing comes in the wake of an interim [report](#) by the task force that listed a series of “stunning security failures” likely to take front stage during the hearing. A final report is expected around Dec. 13.



The attempt on Trump's life in Butler, Pennsylvania, on July 13 marked the agency's first lapse from its “zero-failure mission” since 1981. A



second attempted assassination in West Palm Beach, Florida, only intensified questions about the agency's ability to protect presidents and candidates.



Rowe, who took over as USSS director following his predecessor Kimberly Cheatle's resignation, has acknowledged significant agency shortcomings in previous testimony and pledged to implement reforms.

Some of those shortcomings, he's said, are due to underfunding for the agency, particularly during the busy election season. But his testimony will need to convince lawmakers that the agency deserves such additional resources.

Rep. Mark Green (R-Tenn.), a member of the panel, told The Epoch Times he expects Rowe to be “very introspective,” citing closed-door meetings with Rowe in the past.

“He will share some serious mistakes that were made,” Green said.

The 13-member task force includes seven Republicans and six Democrats, but both parties have said that the issue is nonpartisan.

Rep. Mike Kelly (R-Pa.), who co-chairs the task force, said, “This isn’t about one party or one person—it’s about ensuring this never happens again.”

His Democratic counterpart, Rep. Jason Crow (D-Colo.), echoed the sentiment, calling the investigation “an opportunity to address systemic failures and set a new standard for protection in an increasingly volatile political climate.”

The hearing marks the culmination of a months-long investigation into an array of security failures.

Here’s what to know about the hearing—and what questions remain unanswered.

## **Butler Comms Breakdown**

The attempt on Trump’s life in Butler, Pennsylvania, on July 13 came within millimeters of being successful.

During a rally held in a large open field and flanked by low buildings, would-be assassin Thomas Matthew Crooks opened fire on Trump, wounding his ear. Attendee Corey Comperatore was killed, while several others were wounded.

Moments after he opened fire, Crooks, who had taken up a position atop the nearby AGR International building, was killed by a USSS sniper.

The incident immediately raised a series of questions both about how Crooks had gotten so close and how law enforcement had failed to apprehend him as a threat.



The American flag, which served as the backdrop for a campaign rally by former President and then-Republican candidate Donald J. Trump, blows in the wind at Butler Fairgrounds in the aftermath of the attempted assassination of the former president in Butler, Pa., on July 14, 2024. Jeff Swensen/Getty Images

According to the task force’s interim report, that happened in part because of major communication failures that limited information exchange between USSS and local law enforcement.

Though Crooks had been identified by local law enforcement, this information couldn’t be quickly transmitted to the USSS due to the lack of a unified command post as well as general errors in coordinating with local law enforcement.

During his previous appearance before the panel, Rowe also said he “cannot defend” why the AGR International building, which had a clear line of sight to Trump’s podium, wasn’t better secured.

“I went to the roof [of the AGR International building] ... what I saw made me ashamed,” Rowe told lawmakers.

Still, in the wake of the panel’s report, Rowe is likely to face further prodding on the magnitude of the oversights his agency made that day.

# West Palm Beach

He'll also be probed on the second incident, which occurred on Sept. 15 near Trump's National Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida.

There, Secret Service agents intercepted and opened fire on Ryan Wesley Routh, armed with an AK-47-style rifle. Routh fled but was shortly thereafter apprehended by West Palm Beach law enforcement due to a civilian tip.

Still, it's another black mark for the USSS, which, until the two incidents, had a relatively high standing in public opinion even as other federal agencies have seen declining trust.

It was later discovered that Routh had been posted along the fence for 12 hours prior to his being intercepted—another oversight Rowe may face questions about.

The Secret Service did not reply before publication to a request for comment.

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**Joseph Lord**

Author

Joseph Lord is a congressional reporter for The Epoch Times.

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