

CHAPTER 16

Nixon

Like JFK, Nixon got rid of the head of the CIA: Richard Helms, who was the liaison officer to the Warren Commission. Also like JFK, Nixon did battle with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who died in 1972. Most importantly, like JFK, Nixon also saw to the retirement/dismissal of the top four Secret Service officials:

- a. Chief James J. Rowley: replaced by H. Stuart Knight, former SAIC of the V.P. LBJ Detail.¹
- b. Deputy Director Rufus W. Youngblood.²
- c. ASAIC of White House Detail William L. "Bill" Duncan:³ was the advance man for JFK's Fort Worth stop November 21–22, 1963.⁴
- d. SAIC of WHD Robert H. "Bob" Taylor (dates back to Nixon's Vice Presidential days).⁵

As was the case with Kenny O'Donnell, the Secret Service was not fond of Nixon's top aide H. R. Haldeman, who tried to keep the agents on a short leash and treated them like the "butlers" and "errand boys" made a precedent ten years before. In fact, former agent Dennis McCarthy wrote: "The agents' animosity toward Haldeman was so violent that they talked among themselves about 'getting' Haldeman. More than once, I heard frustrated members of the White House detail say that if there was ever a gunfight around the President, Haldeman had better get his ass down in a hurry or he might catch a stray bullet from a Secret Service gun."⁶ In addition, John Connally, himself a victim of the shooting on November 22, 1963, was the *Secretary of the Treasury* and Nixon's favorite cabinet member.⁷ Interestingly, Governor Connally was also a "very good friend" of Clint Hill.⁸ (In another irony, Nixon's favorite limousine during his first term was said to be the restored 1961 Lincoln Continental that JFK was murdered in.)⁹

Author Anthony Summers wrote: "... [T]he Secret Service ... was not uncontroversial during the Nixon presidency ... The service allowed itself to be used for political and private purposes, such as spying on Nixon rivals like Edward Kennedy and George McGovern, or surveilling his own brother Donald. *The New York Times* would write of Nixon's 'perversion of the Secret Service' ... Former White House deputy counsel Edward Morgan has claimed that Nixon tried to convert the Secret Service into his personal 'secret police'. 'I was concerned about it,' John Erlichman recalled. 'The Secret Service turned the president down very seldom. They were very willing to please.'"¹⁰

When Nixon became enmeshed in the Watergate crisis, "[He] sometimes liked to be taken on long drives around Washington," journalist James Carney wrote. "In the privacy of his limousine, he would discuss Watergate with his closest

advisers. It never occurred to him to be concerned that his Secret Service bodyguard ... heard everything from his perch in the front seat.”¹¹ Author Anthony Summers reported: “Often genial with those who guarded him, Nixon could also be irrationally unpleasant.”¹²

It was the *Secret Service* who installed the Oval Office taping system that led to Nixon’s downfall. (As we know, SAIC Bouck of the PRS had installed JFK’s taping system.) **Alfred G. Wong**, the former head of the Technical Security Division (TSD) for the Secret Service at the White House, was in charge of installing the listening devices. Wong was a Chinese-American originally from the New York office and was involved in the surveillance of threat subjects on November 29, 1962, a little under a year before the assassination, while detailed to the Washington Field Office.¹³ In addition, Wong served on JFK’s trip to Milford, Pennsylvania, on September 24, 1963, as well as both of Kennedy’s trips to New York in November 1963.¹⁴ Wong soon rose to SAIC of the TSD after the assassination.¹⁵ (The TSD began in 1964 following the Warren Commission “investigation” and other studies. Its mission is the physical security of the White House, the V.P. residence, Camp David, and the homes of former presidents.)¹⁶ Former SAIC of PRS Robert Bouck mentioned during his April 30, 1996 ARRB interview that “... his office was responsible for reading and filing all the voluminous incoming mail and reports regarding the assassination ... an Agent named *Al Wong* was detailed to read, classify, and file all of these incoming official reports.” [Emphasis added.] This means that Wong went from being a mere New York field office agent to (a) an agent in the Protective Intelligence division (formerly known as PRS), and (b) the SAIC of the newly-embarked TSD some time between late September 1963 and 1964. Former fellow PRS agent Frank G. Stoner confirmed to the author that Wong had actually replaced Bouck, as well.¹⁷ Furthermore, one of Wong’s reports actually made it into the Warren Commission’s collection of 155 Secret Service documents.¹⁸ Wong had recommended James W. McCord, Jr., who was later convicted in the Watergate case, for McCord’s position as head of security at the President Nixon’s re-election committee. Secret Service agents **Louis B. Sims**¹⁹ and **Raymond C. Zumwalt**,²⁰ both assigned to the TSD at the White House, were in charge of maintaining the elaborate eavesdropping operation at the White House and changing the tapes.²¹ And **John Ready**, the agent directly in charge of JFK’s area of the limousine in Dallas, guarded the tapes later on!²²

Wong and his cohorts had the best intelligence network to afford themselves knowledge on all of Nixon’s official—and unofficial—business. Former agent Darwin Horn wrote the author: “Al Wong was Chief of Security for the Supreme Court.”²³

In fact, even Secret Service agents Marty Venker and Dennis McCarthy voiced their suspicions about the taping system. In particular, Mr. Venker believed “Deep Throat” to be a *Secret Service official*.²⁴ (That said, in June 2005, 91-year-old former number 2 FBI man W. Mark Felt revealed himself to be “Deep Throat”. But this does not rule out others who helped in Nixon’s downfall or, at the very least, those with similar compromising information.) As the Nixon tapes demonstrate, the President urged aide Charles Colson to have the Secret Service spy on Democratic opponent George McGovern in 1972. Confidential in-

formation was picked up by an agent on McGovern's detail and promptly passed on to the White House.²⁵ The House Judiciary Committee, who had voted on five articles of impeachment against President Nixon during the Watergate crisis, stated that Nixon had "repeatedly engaged in conduct violating the constitutional rights of citizens ... misused ... the Secret Service ... to conduct or continue electronic surveillance or other investigations for purposes unrelated to national security...."²⁶

H. R. Haldeman stated: "In all those Nixon references to the Bay of Pigs [on the Watergate tapes], he [Nixon] was actually referring to *the Kennedy assassination*"²⁷ [Emphasis added.]

A note regarding the taping system:²⁸ In February 1971, technicians from the TSD of the Secret Service installed listening devices in the White House at the request of the President. They placed seven microphones in the Oval Office: five hidden in the President's desk, and one hidden on each side of the fireplace. They placed two microphones in the Cabinet Room under a small table near the President's chair. The Secret Service technicians wired all devices to central mixers that were then connected to recorders in an old locker room in the White House basement. In April 1971, the Secret Service technicians installed four microphones in the President's office in the Old Executive Office Building (EOB). These microphones were located in the President's desk. Wires from the microphones led to a mixer and recorders in an adjoining room. The Secret Service also tapped the telephones in the Oval Office, in the President's EOB office, and in the Lincoln Sitting Room in the White House residence. These telephone conversations were recorded by tapping the telephone lines from the White House switchboard and relaying the conversations to recorders in a closet in the basement of the residence.

Finally, in May 1972, the Secret Service set up a taping system in the President's study in Aspen Lodge at Camp David. There were three separate recording systems put in place. A single microphone recorded conversations taking place in the study. The President's telephone on his desk was tapped, as was the telephone on a table. This was a secret taping system maintained by the Secret Service. Only President Nixon, H. R. Haldeman and a few of the President's close personal assistants knew the system existed. One of the key features of the system was that the recording equipment in the Oval Office, the EOB office, Camp David, and on the telephones was sound activated, operating without a conscious decision by the President to record a specific conversation. Most participants were unaware that their conversations with the President were being recorded. The system was tied to the Secret Service's Presidential Locator System and would only activate if the President was present in the room. It was designed to continue recording for fifteen to thirty seconds after the President left the room. The Cabinet Room recording system operated somewhat differently. It was a manual system, rather than a sound activated system. It was activated by Alexander Butterfield, a Special Assistant to the President who managed the President's daily activities in the West Wing of the White House. Butterfield activated the system from a switch on his desk (although the Secret Service also placed an on/off switch on the side of the President's chair in the Cabinet Room). When Butterfield inadvertently left the sys-

tem “on”, the tape recorders captured non-historical conversations as well as hours of room noise.

Author Anthony Summers reported: “A former member of the Executive Protection Service, the uniformed branch of the Secret Service, told the author that the President’s tapes were in fact insecure, that duplicate copies existed. The Secret Service had its own microphone, in multiple White House locations, as part of the protection system, and these made Nixon’s privacy additionally vulnerable ... some Secret Service agents involved with the taping were also former FBI agents, and Hoover aides were able to gain access to the tapes.”²⁹

¹ HSCA testimony, September 1978 (audiotape); author’s interview with Rowley, September 27, 1992; author’s interviews with Knight, October 22, 1992 and February 8, 1994; see also Philip Melanson with Peter Stevens, *The Secret Service: The Hidden History of an Enigmatic Agency*, pp. 186, 221; and *The New York Times*, October 23, 1973.

² Venker, *Confessions of an Ex-Secret Service Agent*, p. 45; author’s interviews with Youngblood, October 22, 1994 and February 8, 1994 (same dates as Knight); see also Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon* (Penguin USA, 2001), p. 247; and *The Washington Post*, October 19, 1971.

³ A. Dale Wunderlich (a PRS agent who went to Dallas after the assassination for the investigation) and William L. Duncan now are leaders of an established executive protection firm as of 2003 (although Duncan appears to have left the company around 2001): see www.careerlab.com/safeteam.htm.

⁴ Rush (Venker), p. 58; see also *The Fort Worth Press*, November 22, 1963: captioned photo of Duncan.

⁵ Rush (Venker), pp. 56–58, 149; Dennis McCarthy, *Protecting the President*, pp. 198, 201–2; see also *The Flying White House*, pp. 260–1; and Melanson, *The Politics of Protection*, p. 67. Also: April 17, 1972 memo, Nixon to Haldeman, following the Canadian trip: “The situation in Canada was intolerable,” Nixon wrote. “[Robert H.] Taylor insisted on sitting on the jump seat where he could have just as easily sat in the front seat because there were only two in the front seat. The jump seats were constructed in such a way that they bent completely back on both Pat [Nixon] and me so that in her case she had to put her legs over on the other side, and I, of course, was totally uncomfortable all the way.” Looking forward to a trip to the Soviet Union, he wanted better arrangements. He did not want “some interpreter or some Secret Service man sitting on my lap.”

⁶ Dennis McCarthy, *Protecting the President*, p. 202. See also Rush (Venker), pp. 44–46.

⁷ James Reston, Jr., *The Lone Star: The Life of John Connally* (photo section); see also Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon*, pp. 330, 441, 525, 534.

⁸ *60 Minutes*, December 8, 1975.

⁹ *Confessions of an Ex-Secret Service Agent*, p. 176.

¹⁰ Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon*, p. 247.

¹¹ James Carney, “The Bodyguard: Shadows and Shields,” *Time* (July 27, 1998); see also David Seidman, *Extreme Careers—Secret Service Agents: Life Protecting the President* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2003), p. 52.

¹² Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon*, p. 434.

¹³ 3 HSCA 418, 422.

¹⁴ RIF#180–10089–10262: September 20, 1963 Secret Service Protective Survey Report; RIF#154–10002–10419: second New York trip.

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- ¹⁵ 3 HSCA 358; Youngblood LBJ Library Oral History, December 17, 1968, p. 41.
- ¹⁶ *Looking Back and Seeing the Future: The United States Secret Service 1865–1990* by the AFAUSSS (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1991), p. 134.
- ¹⁷ Interview with author January 17, 2004.
- ¹⁸ “August 10, 1964 Thomas & Wong Memo from James Rowley, Chief, w[ith] attached Report #1724 entitled ‘Lee Harvey Oswald’ re: Interview of bank officials concerning Waldemar Boris Karapatnitsky (presently in West Berlin), d[a]t[e]d August 5, 1964.”
- ¹⁹ Louis B. Sims: 1950s: served three years with U.S. Army Intelligence at Fort Holabird, Maryland (entered Secret Service in April 1961 and assigned to Chicago office until January 1964; January 1964 – December 1965: WFO; December 1965 – July 1969: Intelligence Division; July 1969 – November 1972: Liaison Section; November 1972 – September 1974: Technical Security Division; September 1974 until at least May 1978: Chief of Interpol); a member of the Chicago office with Bolden; also attended Bolden’s trial.
- ²⁰ Interestingly, Nixon’s chief of naval operations was Admiral Elmo Zumwalt: Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power*, p. 353.
- ²¹ *The Washington Post*, July 17, 1973; see also Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power*, pp. 348, 588 (regarding Alfred Wong testimony in O’Brien et al. v. McCord et al., CA no. 1233–72, p. 861).
- ²² March 1, 1978 HSCA interview with John Ready.
- ²³ Email to author dated February 23, 2004; former agent Walt Coughlin confirmed this fact. In addition, the former agent noted that Wong is still alive. The author has been unable to locate Wong for an interview. (Email to author dated March 1, 2004.)
- ²⁴ *Confessions of an Ex-Secret Service Agent*, p. 149; McCarthy, *Protecting the President*, pp. 30–31.
- ²⁵ Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power*, p. 411.
- ²⁶ Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power*, p. 474.
- ²⁷ H. R. Haldeman and Joseph Dimona, *The Ends of Power* (New York: Dell, 1978), pp. 68–69.
- ²⁸ Based on National Archives and Records Administration statement, Office of Presidential Libraries, Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, Nixon White House Tapes.
- ²⁹ Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power*, p. 535.