



Up next  
**Tense Senate Trump shooting hearing**



3 WEEKS AGO

## Top FBI official confirms there is 'absolutely no doubt' Trump was hit by a bullet

The continued cleanup comes after FBI Director Christopher Wray suggested last week that the former president could have been hit by shrapnel, prompting GOP anger.

**JORDAIN CARNEY**  
07/30/2024, 1:14PM ET



FBI Deputy Director Paul Abbate said on Tuesday that there was “no doubt” that former President Donald Trump was struck in the ear with a bullet during an assassination attempt at his July 13 rally.

“There is absolutely no doubt in the FBI’s mind whether former President Trump was hit with a bullet and wounded in the ear. No doubt, there never has been,” Abbate said when Sen. John Kennedy (R-La.) asked if Trump was hit with a bullet.

FBI Director Christopher Wray sparked GOP fury last week when he said that there were “some” questions about whether Trump was hit in the ear by a bullet or shrapnel. Wray did not question whether July 13 was an assassination attempt, and he did not dispute that Trump was injured. But Trump lashed out at Wray on Truth Social after the comments, and some of the former president's congressional allies publicly called on Wray to “correct” his remarks, accusing him of sowing confusion.

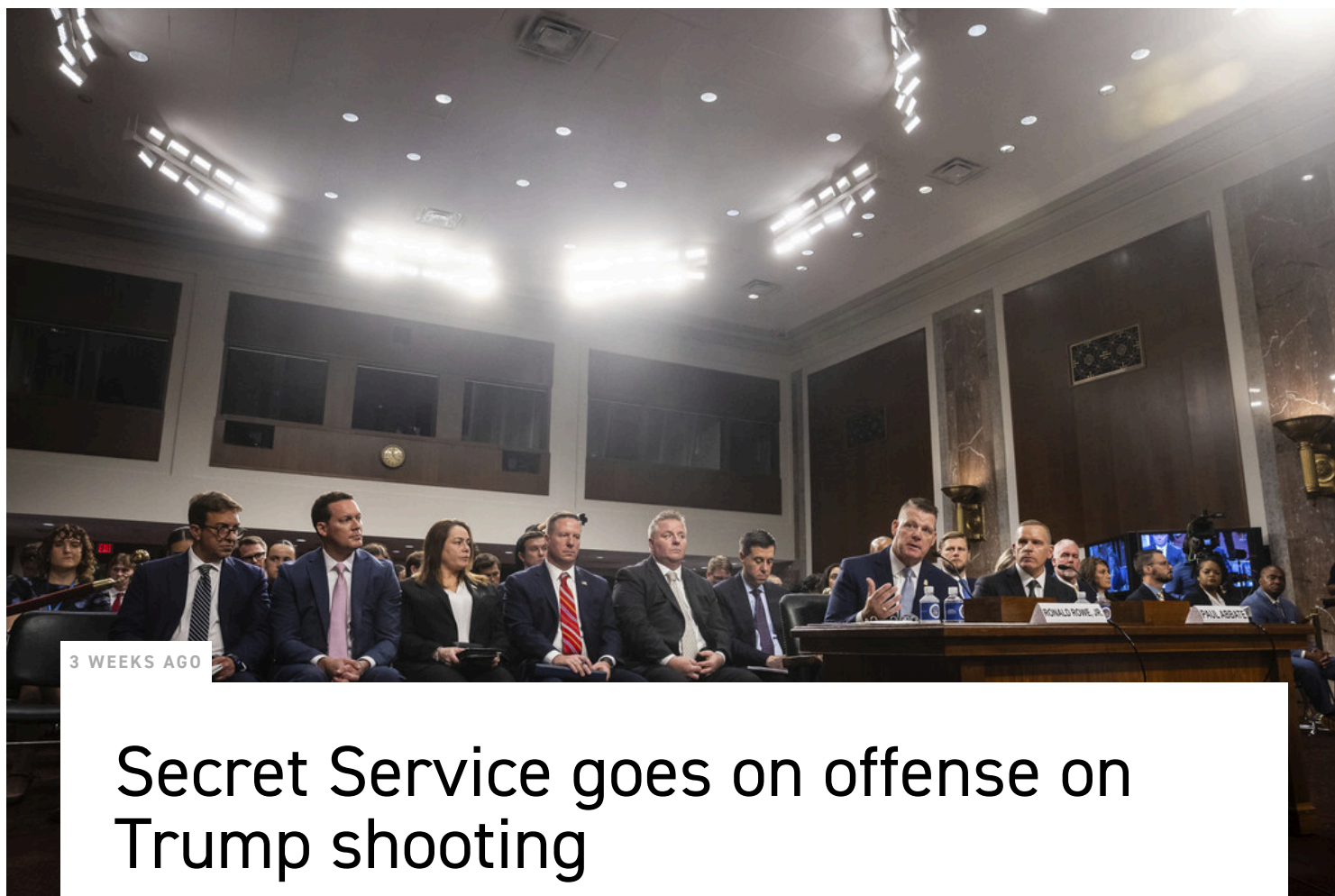
The FBI, in a subsequent statement on Friday, said that “what struck former President Trump in the ear was a bullet, whether whole or fragmented into smaller pieces.” That statement seemed to allay GOP anger, given Kennedy was the first Republican senator to bring it up more than two hours into the

hearing.

Kennedy also asked Abbate on Tuesday to confirm that Trump wasn't struck by a "space laser," a "murder hornet" or "Sasquatch."

Lead Art: Federal Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Paul Abbate testifies during a joint hearing of the Senate Homeland Security and Judiciary Committees on security failures leading to the assassination attempt on former President Trump on Capitol Hill July 30, 2024. | Francis Chung/POLITICO

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3 WEEKS AGO

# Secret Service goes on offense on Trump shooting

The agency is facing withering criticism for failures that preceded the Trump assassination attempt. On Tuesday, it began to push back.

By **KYLE CHENEY, JORDAIN CARNEY** and **JOSH GERSTEIN**  
07/30/2024, 3:50PM ET



Acting Secret Service Director Ronald Rowe Jr. on Tuesday wanted to talk about how other law enforcement agencies failed in the run-up to the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump. Senators aren't done focusing on the Secret Service.

Rowe, while again acknowledging the Secret Service made catastrophic errors, repeatedly raised his voice as he vowed to prevent his agency's leaders from being "unfairly persecuted" in a joint Senate committee hearing Tuesday. And he laid some blame specifically at the feet of local law enforcement agencies who were working with the Secret Service at Trump's Butler, Pennsylvania rally — saying their decisions left an inexplicable blind spot that the shooter exploited.

However, Rowe's umbrage — a stark contrast to his more muted predecessor, Kimberly Cheatle, who resigned after a disastrous appearance before a congressional panel — may not have landed with senators, who repeatedly clashed with the new head and said the agency was still falling short.

"We assumed that the state and locals had it," Rowe told the committee. "We made an assumption."

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) replied: "Those assumptions can be lethal."

Rowe even brought his own graphics to underscore how little Secret Service snipers positioned around Trump could see of the shooter while he was lying prone on the rooftop 150 yards away. He noted repeatedly that if local police had remained at their posts, all they had to do was "look left" and they would

have seen him. The message was clear, despite occasional emphasis on the crucial partnership the Secret Service shares with local police departments.

Rowe added that the Secret Service sniper who took the shot that killed the

shooter was his “friend” and was not personally responsible for the lapse. That sparked pushback from Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.): “We can’t let our friendships blind us from responsibility.”

While Rowe didn’t face calls to resign, Republicans on the Senate Judiciary and Homeland Security committees repeatedly asked him to identify precisely which officials failed by allowing Trump to take the stage that day and who left the rooftop unguarded. His refusal to do so ignited fierce blowback.

Rowe said the Office of Professional Responsibility is reviewing actions taken in the lead up to and during the rally — but repeatedly declined to get ahead of those reviews.

“Somebody has got to be fired. Nothing is going to change until somebody loses their job,” Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) told Rowe during the hearing.

Rowe’s repeated clashes with the panel overshadowed the presence of FBI Deputy Director Paul Abbate, who was rarely called upon during the hearing but did reveal that the bureau had discovered a social media account — possibly connected to the shooter — that espoused antisemitic and anti-immigrant views.

The hearing was punctuated by a particularly tense clash between Rowe and Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), who pressed him once again to identify people who should be fired for failing to protect Trump and his rallygoers.

“What more do you need to know?” Hawley said when Rowe resisted.

“What I need to know is exactly what happened. ... I cannot put my thumb on the scale,” Rowe replied. “You’re asking me, senator, to completely make a rush to judgment.”

“People will be held accountable and I will do so with integrity and not rush to judgment,” Rowe continued, “and [make] people unfairly persecuted.”

“Unfairly persecuted?” Hawley responded, raising his voice. “People are dead.”

Lead Art: Rowe's repeated clashes with the panel overshadowed the presence of FBI Deputy Director Paul Abbate, who was rarely called upon during the hearing. | Francis Chung/POLITICO



3 WEEKS AGO

# Murkowski slams Vance's 'childless cat ladies' comments as 'offensive' to women

"To be so derogatory in this way is offensive to me as a woman," she told POLITICO.



**ANTHONY ADRAGNA**

07/30/2024, 1:35PM ET

UPDATED: 07/30/2024 1:54PM ET





Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) hit her party's own vice presidential nominee, Sen. JD Vance (R-Ohio), for what she called "offensive" comments about "childless cat ladies."

"If the Republican Party is trying to improve its image with women, I don't think that this is working," Murkowski told POLITICO, calling Vance's comments unfortunate, unnecessary and "offensive to many women."

"To be so derogatory in this way is offensive to me as a woman," she added.

Democrats have excoriated Vance over 2021 remarks, when he said the Democratic Party was being run by "a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices that they've made, and so they want to make the rest of the country miserable, too."

As for Senate Republicans, they have mostly stuck by Vance after his tough week, but [advised him to choose his words](#) more carefully.

Murkowski often breaks with her party and has said she won't vote for Republican nominee Donald Trump. Other Senate Republicans [criticized Vance's choice of words as a mistake](#), but largely moved past them.

Lead Art: "If the Republican Party is trying to improve its image with women, I don't think that this is working," Lisa Murkowski told POLITICO. | Francis Chung/POLITICO

3 WEEKS AGO

Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.), who oversees funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, said senators are discussing whether to fast-track legislation to address a looming budget shortfall at the VA before leaving for recess at week's end.

The agency has warned that without action from Congress by Sept. 20, veterans benefits are at risk as soon as Oct. 1. A bipartisan bill unveiled this week by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and others looks to deliver almost \$2.3 billion in extra fiscal 2024 funding to cover compensation and pensions in the near-term, along with almost \$597 million for readjustment benefits.

The agency is serving more veterans than ever thanks to a major expansion of health care and benefits under the PACT Act, which President Joe Biden signed into law in August 2022. Even if Congress addresses the short-term shortfall, the VA is facing a larger, roughly \$12 billion budget gap into next year.



**CAITLIN EMMA**  
07/30/2024, 1:31PM ET



3 WEEKS AGO

## Secret Service head clashes with Hawley, vows agency officials will



# not be 'unfairly persecuted'

It was the most hostile exchange on a tense day, as Rowe acknowledged agency-wide failures but declined to say which individual officials were responsible for those failures.



**KYLE CHENEY**

07/30/2024, 12:44PM ET



Tensions boiled over Tuesday as Sen. Josh Hawley pressed acting Secret Service Director Ronald Rowe to fire officials involved in critical decisions ahead of the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump.

“What more do you need to know?” Hawley asked Rowe.

“What I need to know is exactly what happened, and I need my investigators to do their job,” Rowe said. “You’re asking me, senator, to completely make a rush to judgment about somebody failing.”

Hawley said it was clear that fireable offenses occurred given that Trump was shot and a rallygoer was killed.

Rowe replied, "I have lost sleep over that for the past 17 days."

"Then fire somebody!" Hawley responded.

"I will tell you, senator, that I will not rush to judgment, that people will be held accountable and I will do so with integrity and not rush to judgment and [make] people unfairly persecuted," Rowe responded.

"Unfairly persecuted?" Hawley replied. "People are dead!"

It was the most hostile exchange on a tense day, as Rowe acknowledged agency-wide failures but declined to say which individual officials were responsible for those failures. He acknowledged and confirmed widely reported stories that local law enforcement in Butler, Pa. had offered drones to the Secret Service that the agency turned down.

Lead Art: Sen. Josh Hawley said it was clear that fireable offenses occurred given that former President Donald Trump was shot and a rallygoer was killed. | Francis Chung/POLITICO



3 WEEKS AGO

## Acting Secret Service director blames local law enforcement for key failure in Trump shooting

“We were told that building was going to be covered,” Ronald Rowe told a joint Senate committee hearing.



**JOSH GERSTEIN**  
07/30/2024, 11:04AM ET



Acting Secret Service Director Ronald Rowe angrily suggested at a Senate hearing Tuesday that local law enforcement was primarily to blame for a shooter getting access to a building where he attempted to assassinate Donald Trump.

“We were told that building was going to be covered. There had been a face-to-face that afternoon. ... Our team leads met,” Rowe said at a joint Senate committee hearing. He added he had personally laid on the roof to assess what the shooter could have seen. “I cannot understand why there was not

better coverage or at least somebody looking at that roofline when that's where they were posted.”

“Why was the assailant not seen?” Rowe added, displaying photos of the roof, which were taken from where police should have been posted and from the position of the countersniper who eventually shot the shooter.

Rowe seemed to be walking a tightrope between blaming local law enforcement for abandoning the post while also trying not to alienate state and local police that are essential to securing events.

“Our state and local law enforcement partners are the best. So, this this belief that somehow they are less than federal law enforcement or they're less than the Secret Service — they're out there patrolling communities every day,” Rowe said. “We need them and we need them to be partners with us. And I

think we need to be very clear to them and that may have contributed to this situation.”

Later though, Rowe was more blunt: “We assumed the state and locals had it.”

The acting secret service director also referred to a series of technical and communications shortcomings that may have impacted security on the day of the shooting. That included officials relying on text messages to communicate the threat Crooks posed rather than using a radio channel, as well as difficulty with cellular service at the site.

Rowe acknowledged that the agency's radio communications from the rally on the day of the shooting were not recorded, and he revealed Tuesday that he had ordered the Secret Service to begin retaining those recordings in the future.

“We will have them moving forward,” Rowe said.

Lead Art: Acting Secret Service Director Ronald Rowe Jr. and FBI Deputy Director Paul Abbate testify during a joint hearing of the Senate Homeland Security and Judiciary Committees on failures leading to the assassination attempt on Donald Trump on July 30, 2024. | Francis Chung/POLITICO

3 WEEKS AGO

The House's cybersecurity operation will “initiate the block and removal of all ByteDance products from all House-managed devices and app stores,” according to a notice sent to House staffers Tuesday. The process will begin August 15.

The House Administration Committee had already authorized booting TikTok off of House devices, but this latest purge will include apps such as Capcut, Lemon8, Lark and Hypic. The Chief Administrative Officer's cybersecurity office will begin with mobile devices and then move onto desktop versions.



**KATHERINE TULLY-MCMANUS**

07/30/2024, 10:58AM ET





3 WEEKS AGO

FBI Deputy Director Paul Abbate told a joint Senate hearing Tuesday that investigators had identified a social media account from 2019 and 2020 that they believe — but are still confirming — belonged to the shooter behind the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump.

The account had 700 posts, which reflected “anti-Semitic and anti-immigration themes” and also appeared to “espouse political violence,” Abbate said.

The comments, Abbate added, were described as “extreme” in nature.

The note about the potential social media account comes as the FBI is conducting an ongoing investigation into the shooter and has conducted 460 interviews. Abbate noted that as of Tuesday they still had not figured out a motive and had not identified a co-conspirator.

**JORDAIN CARNEY**

07/30/2024, 10:46AM ET





3 WEEKS AGO

# Senators set to grill FBI, Secret Service officials on Trump shooting failures

"The basic question is, how did he get the gun on the premises?" asked Sen. Dick Durbin.



**ANTHONY ADRAGNA**  
07/30/2024, 8:54AM ET



Senior officials from the Secret Service and FBI head to Capitol Hill on Tuesday for a rare joint hearing examining the security lapses leading up to the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump.

Ronald Rowe Jr., acting director of the Secret Service, and Paul Abbate, deputy director of the FBI, will appear before the Judiciary and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committees beginning at 10 a.m.

Up to 32 different senators will have the chance to ask questions between the two panels. Four senators — Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Jon Ossoff (D-Ga.), Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) and Laphonza Butler (D-Calif.) — are members of both committees.

“The basic question is, how did he get the gun on the premises?” Judiciary Chair Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) said to reporters Monday, adding he’d also like to know what security changes will be implemented ahead of the August DNC in Chicago.

He noted: “There are half a dozen kids like [the shooter] in every high school in America. This kid didn’t appear — the 20-year-old — did not appear to have a specific political agenda. He had a gun. He used it. Sadly, a person died.”

The leaders of the Homeland Security panel [made a sweeping request for records](#) related to the attempted assassination as part of the committee’s bipartisan investigation last week.

Expect plenty of questions about FBI Director Christopher Wray’s remark last week [that there was “some question” as to whether a bullet or shrapnel](#) caused the injury to Trump’s ear during the attack. The agency later clarified [it was indeed a bullet](#) that hurt the former president.

An FBI official said Monday that [Trump agreed to sit for an interview](#) about the incident.

Rowe and Abbate will hope to improve on the performance of then-Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle, who [infuriated members from both parties](#)

during House testimony by offering vague answers about the assassination attempt. She [later resigned](#) following the Hill appearance.

Lead Art: An FBI official said Monday that Trump agreed to sit for an interview about the incident. | Gene J. Puskar/AP





3 WEEKS AGO

## NJ Rep. Pascrell breathing on his own as doctors discuss hospital discharge, staff says

The 87-year-old Democrat checked into St. Joseph's University Medical Center in Paterson on July 14 with a fever.



**MATT FRIEDMAN**  
07/30/2024, 8:25AM ET

Lead Art: Rep. Bill Pascrell is the oldest member of New Jersey's congressional delegation and if reelected will become the oldest member of the House. | Mark Schiefelbein/AP

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