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BORDER, AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SEAPOWERS AND PROJECTION FORCES

Subject: *Preliminary Investigative Report to Chairman Mike Kelly*

Investigative Authority: House Bi-Partisan Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Former President Donald Trump.

Author of Preliminary Report: Congressman Clay Higgins

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Note: This report is preliminary, not conclusive. The preliminary observations are considered sensitive, confidential, and intended for investigative purposes. The investigation is ongoing.

After appropriate arrangement through the Congressional office of Task Force Chairman Mike Kelly, whose District encompasses Butler County, Pennsylvania, wherein the Assassination attempt occurred on July 13, 2024, heretofore referred to as J13, I traveled to Butler County on Sunday, August 4, leaving the area on Tuesday, August 6. During my time on the ground in PA, I was able to focus about 20 hours on my initial investigative endeavor. As always, my investigation was focused on hard evidence and facts, specific observations guided by instinct and experience. My overall mission was to personally observe and investigate the available crime scene site, along with consideration of both anticipated and unanticipated interactions with witnesses, the crime scene landscape, hard evidence, corroborative evidence, and circumstantial evidence. My initial investigative intent was to carefully observe and listen to document and consider the “totality of circumstance” surrounding the attempted assassination of President Trump. “Be calm, move slowly to the center, and just let the crime scene talk to you...”. This was advice to me, as a young patrol cop, from a renowned investigator many years ago. That was my purpose, as I traveled to Butler, to let the crime scene talk to me. In many ways, this preliminary report is essentially what the crime scene told me when I listened.

Mr. Chairman, our Task Force has a tremendous responsibility to reveal the full truth, whatever that truth may be, to the American people, and our TF has been granted full Congressional investigative authority. Confidentially, I was on the ground in Butler Sun-Mon-Tues, as clarified above. I was accompanied and assisted by retired SWAT operator John Chautin, my Congressional District Director. Prior to Congress, I served with District Director Chautin in law enforcement for many years. I was fully supported by your office, and my 20 hours of uninhibited, intense investigative effort was quietly and extensively supported by local law enforcement leadership. It is important to note that Pennsylvania law enforcement is coordinated a bit differently than most sovereign States.

During my investigation effort in Butler County, I was greatly assisted by ESU Commander Edward Lenz and Butler County District Attorney’s Office Senior Detective William Mayhugh. The Butler County Emergency Services Unit (ESU) is a well-established, well-equipped, and trained tactical unit drawn from tactical officers across the County who serve in various police departments. ESU is the

equivalent to a combination of a traditional Sheriff's Office SWAT (Special Weapons And Tactics) and SRT (Special Response Team). Butler County ESU handles all tactical missions for the County, including missions that interact with visiting law enforcement agencies like U.S. Marshals, ATF, FBI, ICE, and USSS. Security for J13 was controlled by the United States Secret Service (USSS), and local law enforcement assistance for USSS was coordinated through ESU. This coordination included shared responsibilities for tactical teams on and around the Butler County Fairgrounds (BCFG), where the J13 Trump rally was held. (The BCFG is commonly called "the farm" by mainstream media.) ESU also coordinated non-tactical operator law enforcement assistance for J13, patrol officers in the larger area handling traffic and crowd control, as well as staged at various points as "response units" should there be a need. Protests, fights, vehicle crashes, etc. are all possibilities at large events like J13, so ESU commander Edward Lenz worked for a couple of weeks prior to J13 to coordinate the entire Butler County law enforcement support for USSS, as requested by USSS, and ultimately under the command of USSS as that command related to deployment and areas of responsibility.

For the purposes of the preliminary report, I would like to clarify again that this report is intended to promote discussion amongst Task Force Members and encourage well-disciplined further investigation. Many questions and considerations remain, and our full investigation will require months of endeavor. However, after 20 hours on the ground in Butler, I have indeed listened carefully to the crime scene, and it has whispered to me many answers that America must know, as deemed appropriate by Chairman Kelly. Many, many considerations were cleared up, like clutter, which allows an investigator to focus on central questions that remain, bigger considerations. I'm working on assembling a much more thorough initial investigative report, which will include a tremendous amount of digital imagery and documented observation/explanation. The next report I will submit for Chairman Kelly's review will be much more comprehensive and will require a few weeks to produce because the amount of raw data I have harvested/documentated is vast.

Observations of Note:

- Prior to arranging travel to Butler, I had reviewed and filed scores of videos and recreations from online sources. Like many Americans, I invested countless hours of personal research. However, effective investigation requires objective investigation. I researched what I could in preparation for any role I might be called upon to serve. When Speaker Johnson advised me that I had been appointed to the Task Force, I had already begun investigating. My first text regarding J13 was 3 minutes after the shooting. I haven't stopped investigating since then.
- The "Butler Farm" County Fairgrounds is a Fairgrounds, not a farm. Yes, it has barns to accommodate agricultural and livestock shows and fairs... but it is not an actual farm in the middle of a broad rural area. It's a longstanding, very well-maintained large Fairgrounds in the middle of Butler, Pennsylvania. The "Butler Farm," a well-known fairground in a small city in a rural County, is, one might concur, an excellent place for a Trump rally. Generations of Pennsylvanians have attended events at the "Butler Farm" County Fairgrounds. Large crowds could be accommodated, and those crowds would be familiar and comfortable in the fairground's environment.
- AGR International is an internationally owned corporation; however, AGR was born of a glass research scientist in Butler in 1927. In 1962, he sold his company, which became American Glass Research. AGR was incorporated into a larger international company in 2024, but the people on the

ground at AGR are generationally connected to the company. One of those men is William Bellis, who assisted my investigation at AGR for several hours on Monday, August 5. He was 100% accommodating.

- According to my investigation, USSS had never, prior to J13, assigned a counter-sniper team to a former POTUS, including Trump. I will not be 100% certain of this assertion without further investigation into documented records, but USSS counter-sniper teams stated clearly to ESU Command that they had never been deployed to a former POTUS event, nor had they heard of a prior deployment by other USSS counter-sniper teams.
- Butler County runs the radio communications tower out of their 911 Call Center. That is pretty much the way radio communications work across America in every County, in every State. If their radios are “interoperable,” a visiting law enforcement agency is assigned a frequency, a “channel” for their operation while in that County. If their radios are not “interoperable” with the County Communications tower, then the visiting agency is assigned/offered actual radios to use while they are running their operation in the County.
- USSS did not retrieve the radios that had been set aside for them by Butler County tactical command. The radio comms were properly and perfectly arranged during the extensive pre-mission planning. On J12, the Butler County ESU Commander personally reminded the USSS counter-sniper teams to pick up their assigned radios at the ESU Command Post RV, which was positioned according to planning at the Butler Fairgrounds, the following morning before 1100 hrs. It didn’t happen.
- Radio traffic transmitted through a County Radio tower 911 Center is recorded. Chairman Kelly and I have a timeline and transcripts of all local radio traffic, as provided by ESU Commander Lenz.
- As provided by ESU Commander Lenz, Chairman Kelly and I also have other ESU/USSS J13 briefing files, including the pre-mission briefing plan from ESU and USSS counter-sniper pre-mission briefing/graphs.
- There are videos circulating on the internet that appear to show a “muzzle flash” from inside the AGR building, from the window below Crooks’ firing position on the roof of the AGR building. I carefully examined this window inside and out, and I interviewed the AGR employee who has worked in that small office area for many years. That window does not open and has never opened. The “muzzle flash” from inside that window was either a digital fabrication or an iPhone light or iPhone camera flash reflected from the glass of the window.
- Crooks did not have a ladder at AGR on J13. He accessed the roof by climbing onto an air conditioning unit. I reenacted his climb with no problem.
- I have not yet investigated Crooks’ origins, how he came to be a shooter, how he manufactured a remote trigger bomb, etc. I have not reviewed the harvested evidence, nor have I examined his home, his vehicle, spoken with his family, his neighbors, his classmates, examined his computer, his emails, or his closet. I have not investigated the life and actions of Thomas Matthew Crooks outside of his actions on J13. But I will. We will. We’re just getting started, Mr. Chairman.
- 8 shots were fired by Crooks from his firing (and dying) position on the AGR rooftop. The position provided excellent concealment for Crooks from the northern counter-sniper team due to the

foliage/branches of two trees. Crooks' firing position did NOT offer excellent concealment from the southern counter-sniper team. However, it should be noted that the would-be assassin perfectly positioned himself to minimize the threat of counter-fire from the ground or the USSS counter-sniper teams. Crooks' firing position was also several feet back from the actual peak of the AGR rooftop. By choosing this position, Crooks effectively minimized the sky-lined profile of his head and upper body.

- All 8 casings were recovered and are allegedly in proper possession of the FBI. Thomas Matthew Crooks' rifle is also allegedly in the proper possession of the FBI. I will need to examine all of the physical evidence that has been harvested by law enforcement and is in the possession of the FBI. All of it.
- The 9th shot fired on J13 was from a Butler SWAT operator from the ground about 100 yards away from the AGR building. Shot 9 hit Crooks' rifle stock and fraged his face/neck/right shoulder area from the stock breaking up. The SWAT operator who took this shot was a total badass; when he had sighted the shooter Crooks as a mostly obscured by foliage moving target on the AGR rooftop, he immediately left his assigned post and ran towards the threat, running to a clear shot position directly into the line of fire while Crooks was firing 8 rounds. On his own, this ESU SWAT operator took a very hard shot, one shot. He stopped Crooks and importantly, I believe the shot damaged the buffer tube on Crooks' AR. I won't be certain of this until I can examine Crooks' rifle, but I'm 99% sure, based upon reliable eye-witness ESU tactical officers who observed Crooks' rifle before the FBI harvested it as evidence. This means that if his AR buffer tube was damaged, Crooks' rifle wouldn't fire after his 8th shot.
- Crooks "went down" from his firing position when shot 9 was fired, and the SWAT officer was certain of his hit. According to the ESU SWAT operator, Crooks recovered after just a few seconds, and "popped back up".
- The 10th (and, I believe, final) shot was fired from the southern counter-sniper team. I will not be 100% certain of this until further investigation. However, I am quite sure that the USSS southern counter-sniper team fired the killing shot, which, according to my investigation, entered somewhere around the left mouth area and exited the right ear area. Instant over. This entry-exit aligns with USSS southern counter-sniper team position.
- The FBI released all First Responders that evening, much to everyone's surprise. I interviewed several... EMS, cops, etc.
- The FBI released the crime scene after just 3 days, much to everyone's surprise. I interviewed several First Responders who expressed everything from surprise to dismay to suspicion regarding the fact that the FBI released the crime scene so early after J13. It should be noted that the FBI was fully aware of the fact that Congress would be investigating J13. The FBI does not exist in a vacuum. They had to know that releasing the J13 crime scene would injure the immediate observations of any following investigation.
- The FBI cleaned up biological evidence from the crime scene, which is unheard of. Cops don't do that, ever.
- On J13, one of Crooks' shots hit a pressurized hydraulic line on a staged piece of heavy equipment. My effort to examine the hydraulic line evidence revealed that the tractor belonged to a rental

company. It is unknown if that hydraulic line was harvested properly as evidence by the FBI, but it certainly should have been. It remains a question for further investigation. I need to examine that hydraulic line because confirmation of the caliber of the rifle projectile that hit the line would be helpful to our investigation. That's how the examination of evidence works; we have to look at everything.

- My effort to examine Crooks' body on Monday, August 5, caused quite a stir and revealed a disturbing fact... the FBI released the body for cremation 10 days after J13. On J23, Crooks was gone. Nobody knew this until Monday, August 5, including the County Coroner, law enforcement, Sheriff, etc. Yes, Butler County Coroner technically had legal authority over the body, but I spoke with the Coroner, and he would have never released Crooks' body to the family for cremation or burial without specific permission from the FBI.
- The coroner's report and autopsy report are both "late." As of Monday, August 5, they were a week late. The problem with me not being able to examine the actual body is that I won't know 100% if the coroner's report and the autopsy report are accurate. We will actually never know. Yes, we'll get the reports and pictures, etc, but I will not ever be able to say with certainty that those reports and pictures are accurate according to my own examination of the body. Again, similar to releasing the crime scene and scrubbing crime scene biological evidence... this action by the FBI can only be described by any reasonable man as an obstruction to any following investigative effort. Please note, Mr. Chairman, that on J23, the day that Crooks was cremated, both the Homeland Security Committee and the Oversight Committee had begun House Committee jurisdictional investigation into J13, and Speaker Johnson had already stated that he was forming an Official Congressional investigative body. Why, then, by what measure, would the FBI release his body to the family for cremation? This pattern of investigative scorched earth by the FBI is quite troubling.
- It should be noted that my initial investigation on the ground in Butler was greatly assisted by the County Tactical team's commander and the head investigator for the Butler County DA's office. Those gentlemen had nothing to hide, and they were 100% accommodating despite my rather intense demands on their time and resources due to the compressed schedule I was working with.
- My assessment of the local law enforcement's overall performance on J13 is that the ESU was very professionally deployed and commanded. Yes, it was quite chaotic, and every single police officer reflects upon dangerous and extreme engagements, and we universally critique our own performance because crazy things happen on the street. However, my professional assessment for the purposes of this preliminary investigative report is that the Butler County ESU performed quite well under the circumstances.
- The owner/top management of the business, AGR, stayed with me and the 2 County investigators for 3 hours as I covered every inch I needed to inside/outside/on rooftops/climbing AC units, etc. He was very helpful and 100% squared away. I recreated every step of the County tactical team that was inside and every movement of Crooks outside. Examined every window, etc. It was long and hot, and the AGR exec stayed with us. No area was restricted in any way.
- The water tower was cleared by drone J13 AM by the County tactical commander, ESU Commander Lenz himself.

- The water tower ladder was never lowered that day. Two local cops, non-ESU officers, were assigned to be parked in the water tower area as “response” units for traffic issues or whatever. They DID leave that post, but only in the hour prior to shooting.
- There are videos on the internet showing a dark figure or a shadow on the water tower on J13. If there had been someone on that tower on J13, it would have to have been some top-shelf operator way beyond anything I’ve ever actually seen. Regular SWAT operators or snipers would not have the skills and gear to quickly overcome the first 25 feet of no ladder and then climb the remaining 75 feet to the catwalk, and then climb the quite intimidating and precarious dome vent access ladder. It is true that the vent area at the very top of the water tower is the only point that would have allowed a clear line of sight to both Trump and Crooks’ firing position. I sighted out this fact very carefully during my hours on the ground at the Butler Farm/AGR/ water tower crime scene area. However, I do not believe it was possible for a “2nd shooter” sniper to be on top of that water tower on J13, nor have I seen any evidence that supports the theory of a 2nd shooter. I’m not saying conclusively that there was no other shooter somewhere or that no other conspirators were involved in J13, but I’m saying that based on my investigation thus far, there were 10 shots fired on J13, and all shots are accounted for, and all shots align with their source. Crooks’ 8 shots (3 plus 5), ESU SWAT 1 shot, USSS southern sniper team 1 shot. Over.
- I will be allowed to climb the tower at some point, perhaps next month, but it’s quite a climb. The Butler County Water Works directors were very concerned about accommodating my climb, although they did agree to a later date. I’ll have to return when I can coordinate with their safety team because we just ran out of daylight, but Butler County Water Works was cooperative, and I got a very close look at the water tower on Monday, August 5.

Mr. Chairman, many questions remain, yet several theories have been examined, and several questions have already been answered. I am prayerful that our Task Force can move forward effectively and professionally, guided by our shared love for America and our determination to seek full truth. Please know, as we continue our investigation into the attempted assassination of our former President, you can rely upon me as a solemn investigator of fact. It is with that spirit that I submit this confidential preliminary investigative report.

Respectfully,



Congressman Clay Higgins