Preventing Assassination: A Monograph

Secret Service
Exceptional Case Study Project

A project supported by the National Institute of Justice

May 1997

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CHAPTER 1: THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT

The Problem of Assassination

Assassination of political leaders is a rare, but significant, problem in the United States. Since 1835, there have been eleven attacks on US presidents (four of them resulting in the death of the president), three attacks on presidential candidates, several assassinations of national political leaders, and more than a dozen instances in which planned attacks on presidents and other political leaders were intercepted before the attacker came within lethal range of his/her target.

Attacks on national leaders cause immeasurable harm to the political fabric of the nation and to the basic ideal of a free and open society. Mention of the political murders of President John F. Kennedy, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator (and Presidential Candidate) Robert Kennedy causes deep pain for most citizens. More recent attacks on Governor (and Presidential Candidate) George Wallace, President Gerald Ford, and President Ronald Reagan have engendered great public attention and concern.

Political murder is not a new phenomenon.[1] Compared to other countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the United States has experienced relatively few assassinations. But in a democracy, in a society committed to due process of law and to orderly transitions of power, the slaying of a political leader shreds the fundamental fabric of the social order. And in a society committed to open political discourse and the free flow of information, attacks on political leaders cast chilling shadows on the ideal of government "of the people, by the people, and for the people".

The United States Secret Service

The United States Secret Service is the (Department of the Treasury) law enforcement agency designated to protect the president, the president's family, the vice president and family, former presidents, visiting heads of states, candidates for president during a campaign year, nominees for president and their spouses, and certain other national leaders.

To aid in fulfillment of its protective responsibilities, the Secret Service has sponsored conferences of experts to investigate the phenomenon of assassination. The Secret Service has also conducted research related to assassination.

In 1981, the Secret Service, together with the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine, convened a meeting on "Behavioral Science and the Secret Service: toward the prevention of assassination." A second follow-up conference was held in 1984. And in 1990, a joint Secret Service/Institute of Medicine conference explored "stalking"

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[1] Ford, F. L. (1985). Political Murder: From Tyrannicide to Terrorism. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press.

behaviors. Each of these meetings generated suggestions for research and led to a number of research efforts.

Participants at the 1990 conference on "stalking" strongly encouraged the Secret Service to conduct an in-depth research examination of the most serious cases known to the Service. Feasibility of conducting such a research project was then explored. In 1991, then Secret Service Director John Simpson approached the directors of the National Institute of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Prisons for their ideas and assistance. In December, 1991, the three directors and members of their staffs met at the U.S. Supreme Court with Justice Harry Blackmun to initiate this project. The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project began in 1992.

The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project (ECSP)

The primary goal of the Exceptional Case Study Project was to gather information and develop knowledge that might aid law enforcement organizations to fulfill protective responsibilities for public officials and public figures.

There are two related components to protection. Protection encompasses a range of functions and services aimed at deterring or stopping an assault on a protectee. For example, uniformed and plainclothes security officers may maintain positions around a protected person. These protectors are prepared to stop an assailant and to shield the protectee from harm. This protection is obvious and observable.

The other aspect of protection is discreet and less visible. "Protective Intelligence" seeks to prevent lethal access to a protectee. Protection is most effective if persons and groups with the intention and capacity to mount an attack on a protectee are identified and stopped before they come near a protectee.

Protective intelligence programs and systems, therefore, are designed to:

- solicit and gather information about persons who appear to have unusual or inappropriate interest in a protectee;
- investigate any such persons who have come to attention;
- evaluate the information gathered;
- assess whether a person or group poses a risk of violence to a protectee;
- manage the risk and thereby prevent an attack.

The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project was developed to generate knowledge useful to both physical protection and protective intelligence functions.

Objectives

The Secret Service ECSP has had five objectives:

1) to enhance analysis and refinement by the Secret Service of its physical protective and protective intelligence operations;

2) to build a quantitative and qualitative operational database of the thinking, behaviors and backgrounds of assassins and near-assassins;

3) to generate and consider hypotheses about the causes and antecedents of behavior of persons who attempt to harm protectees of the Secret Service, other public officials, and other public figures;

4) to create teaching and training materials for Secret Service employees and others in the law enforcement, social science, and mental health communities who are concerned with the prevention of assassination and prevention of other kinds of targeted violent crimes;

5) to develop an interdisciplinary (law enforcement/behavioral sciences) approach that utilizes qualitative and quantitative research strategies, methods and analyses.

From the outset, the Exceptional Case Study Project was conceptualized as a research study that would produce information and ideas to assist law enforcement organizations that have protective responsibilities. Law enforcement and security professionals are increasingly assuming protective and protective responsibilities for public officials and public figures.

The study was designed to be operational. The ECSP has focused on gathering and analyzing information that law enforcement officials can or could gather during the course of investigations. This focus is consistent with the goal of the study to be of practical use to officials with protective responsibilities.

The most serious cases known would be scrutinized. Information about thinking and behavior would be gathered, tabulated, and analyzed. Assailants would be interviewed, with the focus being on their perspectives and activities regarding assassination.

The decision to examine assailants who select targets by virtue of their public status was made on three grounds: conceptual, data-based, and pragmatic.

Assassination of a prominent person of public status is a discreet form of targeted violence, in which a potential assailant identifies, then attempts to harm a particular target (or targets). Experience and information suggest that many public official assailants and threateners focus their interests on the office (and its current holder), rather than on a particular person. In addition, many of the persons who are evaluated as presenting the greatest risk of directing violence toward a public official or figure have had interests in more than one public official or public figure.

Previous assassination studies either examined the demographic and psychological characteristics of a relatively few assassins or studied persons who made threats but never came close to mounting an attack. The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study

Project has been a departure from this mode. Unlike studies about threateners, the subject group of the ECSP is **persons who have acted in lethal or near-lethal ways**. Unlike most studies of assassins, the ECSP focuses on the **thoughts and behaviors** of study subjects before their attacks and near-attacks, not on demographic characteristics or clinical status.

Law enforcement responsibilities generally involve apprehending a suspect, gathering evidence to be used in prosecution, then pursuing and closing the case. Law enforcement organizations and officers rarely re-interview offenders months or years after the crime. Systematic information about the perspective of the offender is, therefore, rarely integrated into law enforcement practices.

It was hoped that thorough examination of the ideas, behaviors, and activities of persons who have attempted assassination (or come close to attacking) would provide an additional – and heretofore unavailable – perspective on physical protection: namely, how the assailant viewed the attack. For example, how do those who attempt assassination plan their attacks? How do they assess security? What are the expectations of attackers and near-lethal approachers about what will happen to them after their attacks? How do they dress for the attacks? What weapons do they choose and why do they choose these weapons?

Knowledge from a study of attackers and near-assailants may also be useful in the identification, assessment, and management of persons who pose a risk of violence to public officials and public figures. What kinds of communications do assailants have (and with whom) before mounting attacks? What kinds of social systems and organizations have contact with these persons before their attacks? Do any of these organizations or systems routinely have information about a potential attacker which could or should reasonably lead to concern?

How do attackers and near-attackers select their targets? How do they learn where to find their targets? Are there patterns of pre-incident behaviors that indicate an individual or group is considering an attack?

With answers to questions like these, law enforcement professionals might conduct more comprehensive, and more effective, protective intelligence investigations.

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[2] Please see Preventing Assassination: A Literature Review.

CHAPTER 2: FUNDAMENTAL STUDY QUESTIONS

There appear to be a number of commonly held assumptions or beliefs in much of the literature on United States political assassination, and in threat assessment practice and lore. These assumptions include:

⇒ **There are a set of demographic and psychological factors that define a useful "profile" of assassins and attackers.**

⇒ **Attacks on public officials and public figures are acts committed by madmen.**

⇒ **Attacks are preceded by threats communicated by the assailant to the target.**

One of the central purposes of the Exceptional Case Study Project has been to examine the validity of these assumptions. Do the experiences and behaviors of actual assassins, attackers, and would-be attackers affirm these common beliefs?

After review of information about persons known to have attacked public officials, and consultation with law enforcement, behavioral science, and mental health professionals, seven fundamental research questions were developed:

1. **How do attackers develop the idea of assassinating a public official or public figure? How does a person move from the idea of assassination to the action of assassination?** What relationships exist, between ideas and action, in people who act violently toward public officials and public figures?
2. **What motivates people to act violently toward public officials and public figures?** What do persons hope to accomplish by attacking a prominent person of public status?
3. **How do people who direct violence toward public officials and public figures select their target(s)?**
4. **What planning strategies are used by people who direct violence toward public officials and public figures?**
5. **What relationships exist—if any—between threatening to commit violent action and carrying out violent action?**
6. **What relationships exist—if any—between symptoms of mental illness and assassination behaviors?**
7. **Were there key life events and patterns in the histories of people who have directed violence toward public officials and public figures?**

CHAPTER 3: FINDING THE POPULATION

The population to be studied in the ECSP was defined as: all people known to have attacked, or approached to attack, a prominent person of public status in the United States since 1949.[3] This definition was chosen for these reasons:

- The study was designed to provide useful information for law enforcement organizations with responsibilities for protection of public officials and public figures. Therefore the ECSP included people who attacked prominent persons of public status, whether they were public officials or public figures.
- Cases were known in which subjects had been apprehended near or approaching public officials and public figures, with weapons, with the apparent intention of attacking.
- Attacks and assassinations of prominent persons of public status are rare[4]. It was decided to include people who had approached prominent persons of public status with lethal means (weapons) with the apparent intent to attack. Including people who approached with weapons increased the total number of subjects while maintaining the study's focus on behavior that could result in lethal attack;

While subjects who made an approach with weapons and also made threats were included in the study, people who made threats without making approaches with weapons did not qualify for inclusion. Similarly, people who traveled to visit or approached prominent persons of public status, and did not have weapons with them, were not included.

"Prominent persons of public status" were defined as:

- persons protected by the Secret Service (the president, the vice president, their families, candidates for president, visiting heads of states);
- other major federal officials and office holders (cabinet secretaries, members of Congress, federal judges);
- important state and local public officials (governors, mayors of large cities);
- celebrities, such as sports figures, and movie, television, radio and entertainment notables;
- presidents and chief executives of major corporations.

The "Principal Incident" was defined as the most violent of the following types of acts:

1) assassination of a prominent person of public status;

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[3] 1949 was chosen as a start date because in June of that year Ruth Ann Steinhagen, a "fanatical fan" shot star Philadelphia Phillies baseball player Eddie Waitkus after stalking him for over a year.

[4] Since 1949 there have been thirty-four known assassinations or attacks in the U.S. in which the target was a prominent person of public status.

2) attack on a prominent person of public status;

3) approach to a prominent person of public status with a lethal weapon.

The time frame, 1949 to the present, was chosen because the first major public figure and public official attacks after World War II occurred in 1949 and 1950. In 1949 Ruth Ann Steinhagen stalked and shot Philadelphia Phillies first baseman Eddie Waitkus. In 1950 Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola attempted to assassinate President Truman at Blair House.

Once the population of the study was defined, efforts were made to search for cases that met study inclusion criteria. These efforts included:

- review of books, articles, studies, and media accounts about assassinations, attacks, and near-lethal approaches;
- review of Secret Service files;
- consultation with experts knowledgeable about public official and public figure protection;
- requests to selected federal and state law enforcement agencies for cases that might meet study inclusion criteria.

Literature Review

Books, articles, and studies of assassinations and attacks on public figures were reviewed. The literature review is included in the Appendix. Searches of computerized newspaper files provided additional information about cases.

Secret Service Review

Secret Service files and databases were reviewed to identify cases for study inclusion. Secret Service research projects and archival resources from the 1950's to the present were scrutinized for cases that might meet study criteria. Experienced Special Agents, including some who had worked in the Service's Intelligence Division in the 1970's and 1980's, were queried. Former Special Agents in Charge of the Intelligence Division were asked about cases they had investigated that met study inclusion criteria. Several retired former Special Agents were asked to recall cases that might meet study criteria.

Consultation with experts

Experts on public official and public figure protection were contacted and asked if they knew of cases appropriate for the study. This process led to identification of a number of cases that involved celebrity targets, corporate leaders, and public officials who were not Secret Service protectees.

Requests to other law enforcement agencies

A number of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies were asked if they knew of cases that met study inclusion criteria. Contact was also made with the National Governor's Security Association to inquire about cases known to state police executive protection details that might meet study criteria.

The process of reviewing literature, querying databases, examining files, soliciting cases from protection and security experts, and contacting law enforcement organizations resulted in identifying 83 subjects who had assassinated, attacked, or approached with weapons prominent persons of public status in the U.S. since 1949.

CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION

The study plan involved two kinds of data collection and review. First, all available archival information about each subject would be gathered and coded. This record review would enable aggregate analysis of information about all subjects in the study. Second, subject interviews would be conducted. Interviews would permit in-depth exploration of the subject's ideas, motives, behaviors, and activities in the days and weeks before the attack or near-lethal approach.

Record Review

Development of Coding Instrument

The study investigators met several times with senior staff from a social science research organization who were serving as technical consultants to the study and with several other study consultants. They first discussed what information should (and could) be gathered by record review. Three categories of information were determined to be of primary importance:

- information about the "Principal Incident" (PI) that brought the subject into the study. Information about the PI included a description of the event, the subject's apparent motives, the subject's behaviors immediately before the event, injuries or deaths caused by the PI, legal consequences to the subject, and results of mental health evaluations or contact precipitated by the event.
- demographic and descriptive data about the subject at the time of the Principal Incident. In addition to variables like age, gender, level of education, and employment status, information was gathered and coded about each subject's criminal history, history of contact with mental health professionals and institutions, history of involvement with fraternal, religious, political, professional, and other organizations, history of weapons use, travel history, interest in assassination, violence history, and history of harassment of others.
- information about "attack-related" behaviors other than those exhibited in the Principal Incident. These behaviors included:
  - * sustained interest and consideration of harm of any public official or public figure (including the target of the PI);
  - * communications to or about any public official or public figure (including direct or indirect threats);
  - * visits to homes, offices, or temporary sites of public officials or public figures;
  - * approaches to contact public officials or public figures;
  - * following/stalking behaviors; and

* previous attacks on public officials or public figures.

Once key study variables were identified and defined, a codebook was written that permitted orderly capture of archival information about each subject. The codebook contained more than 700 variables. It was piloted, tested, and revised until deemed acceptable for use.

Acquisition of Information

Multiple efforts were made to gather information. For each subject, a Nexis search was conducted to gather newspaper and other media information. Fifty-five of the 83 subjects had been subjects of Secret Service inquiry or investigation. For these subjects, considerable information was available. For other subjects, information was obtained from law enforcement, private security, prosecutors, courts, probation, correctional institutions, and public records. For example, one-fourth of the subjects had been in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Correctional files were reviewed for each of these subjects. In addition, one investigator studied all available books and scholarly articles written about ECSP subjects. In a number of cases, trial transcripts were obtained.

Training of Coders

Five individuals were involved in coding: one of the principal investigators, a Secret Service intelligence research specialist, two Secret Service research staff members, and a research consultant. Each coder was trained in the use of the codebook and coded four to six trial cases until assessed as competent to proceed.

Coding

Each case was coded separately. One of the principal investigators coded all 83 cases. Three other study staff members each coded between 25-29 cases, and one staff member coded one case. Coding time varied from one to ten hours, depending on the amount of information available.

After a case was coded by two coders, it was reconciled. The coders met to discuss each question. For variables which had been coded differently, the coders discussed the question until they agreed on a response. In the rare circumstances in which the coders could not agree, a third coder was asked to resolve the difference. Reconciliation time varied from one to three hours a case.

Data entry

All codebooks (originals and reconciled) for the 83 subjects were keypunched by staff from the social science research organization and entered into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data base.

Interview

The research design of the study involved two principal components: archival reviews, as detailed above, and interviews. The interview was seen as the primary vehicle to get detailed information about the subject's motives, target selection, movement from idea to action, expectations, planning process, previous interest in, and activity concerning assassination.

It was assumed that between 10-15 interviews would be conducted throughout the course of the study. Interviews were planned to last between four to six hours, with provision made for continuation to a second day if necessary. Two persons would be primary interviewers: an experienced Secret Service agent and a senior mental health professional. One of the study co-investigators would observe the interviews, to make sure that all key study questions were explored. If possible, interviews were to be video-taped.

Development of Protocol

A subject interview protocol was developed to guide questioning. Sections in the protocol covered topics such as:

- idea to action
- target selection
- communication
- pre-incident behaviors
- planning
- symptoms of mental illness and violence
- key developmental experiences

The interview explored the subject's thinking and behavior regarding the target of the Principal Incident. Questioning then moved to other public official and public figure targets that the subject had been interested in or had considered attacking.

Development of Interview Teams

Interview teams were composed of one Secret Service agent and one mental health professional. Agents brought the skills and skepticism of criminal and protective intelligence investigators. Mental health professionals brought expertise interviewing persons with serious emotional and mental health problems who had acted violently.

Two experienced Secret Service agents became study interviewers. One was the agent who served as co-principal investigator of the study. He had worked on protective intelligence matters for many years. The other agent interviewer had also worked on protective intelligence investigations for much of his career. Four mental health

professionals were also interviewers. Each had years of experience working with mentally ill persons who had acted violently. Two of the mental health professionals had worked in Federal Bureau of Prisons Medical Centers; one of the mental health professionals was a national expert on violence and had worked with the Secret Service for over 10 years; the fourth mental health professional was the other study co-principal investigator. He had worked with mentally ill violent individuals for fifteen years and had been a consultant to the Secret Service for a decade.

Each interviewer contributed to the development of the interview protocol and participated in a pilot interview.

Informed Consent

An informed consent form was developed for study interviews. The form was designed to:

- explain that the purpose of the interview was to develop research and training materials that might aid in preventing attacks on public officials and public figures;
- indicate that the study was being conducted by law enforcement agencies;
- state that the researchers would make efforts to keep information provided by the subject confidential, other than use for research or teaching purposes;
- caution subjects that the researchers were not interested in information about possible crimes for which the subject had not been prosecuted;
- indicate that subjects could refuse to answer any question and stop the interview at any time;
- note that participation in the interview, or refusing participation, would not affect the subject's court, correctional, or parole status;
- request that subject consent to the interview, consent to having the interview video-taped, and consent to having information from the interview be used in research publications and in teaching and training materials.

Each subject was offered options as to whether the interview would be taped and whether the subject's name could be used in conjunction with teaching and training materials.

Slightly different forms were developed for subjects in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, subjects in state custody, and subjects not in custody.

Approach to Subjects

Efforts were made to contact all persons who had attacked Secret Service protectees and who were still alive. A number of subjects who had attacked or assassinated celebrities were also located and contacted.

Once located, a Secret Service agent (sometimes accompanied by one of the study co-principal investigators) would visit the subject, explain the purpose of the interview, and request the subject's participation. On a number of occasions, the first study contact with the subject was made by the Psychiatric Director of the Federal Medical Center in which the subject was being treated.

Subjects were only contacted after it was determined that their legal case was concluded, including all appeals.

Once a subject agreed to participate, an interview was scheduled, the interview team and video technician (if the subject had agreed to have the interview video-taped) traveled to the site of the interview, and the interview was conducted. In every case, efforts were made to accommodate the wishes of the subject. (For example, in one case, with the permission of correctional authorities, the subject was transported offsite by Secret Service agents, so that the subject did not have to deal with questions by other prison inmates about the interview.) On several occasions, interview teams returned several weeks or months after the first interview to interview the subject again.

Of the 83 subjects, eighteen were known to have died. Several subjects were removed from the interview list because they appeared to be too mentally disordered to participate effectively in an interview. Six subjects had active legal cases or appeals. Several more were judged so likely to refuse an interview that they were not contacted. A number of subjects, especially those whose Principal Incidents occurred in the 1950's or 1960's, could not be located.

Ultimately, twenty-eight interviews were completed with 21 subjects. Only one subject who was contacted flatly refused to participate. Four subjects were interviewed, but did not consent to having the interviews taped. Fifteen subjects participated in video-taped interviews. Three of these subjects were interviewed on two occasions, and one on three occasions. One other subject participated in two audio-taped interviews. One subject declined to be interviewed in person, but responded to a twenty-five page questionnaire developed from the study interview guide.

CHAPTER 5: LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project is the first study of its kind ever conducted about assassination. The ECSP has collected information about all persons known to have engaged in assassination-type behaviors directed at prominent persons of public status in the U.S since 1949. Thus, ECSP analysis and findings describe the known universe of these persons (in the U.S.), not a sample of the population of known attackers and near-lethal approachers. While the study has been carried out with academic rigor, and with ongoing social science technical review, the study has limitations.

The ECSP has relied on both archival and interview data. Information about some variables, such as age or place of the Principal Incident, is known for all attackers and near-attackers. However, information about some subjects was limited, especially for those who were not subjects of Secret Service investigations and whose attacks or near-attacks occurred some time ago.

For example, archival information often included investigative reports about study subjects. Most investigations were initiated after an incident that resulted in a criminal charge being leveled against the subject. In such a case, investigators gathered evidence about the subject and the incident for possible use in court proceedings. In some cases, since a subject was a defendant in a criminal proceeding, investigators did not interview, or had only limited interviews with, a subject after an incident. Investigative reports, therefore, did not always contain information about all areas of interest for the ECSP.

Questions about a subject's history of interest in assassination may not have been asked in an investigation initiated after an attack or near-lethal approach. Nor were questions about a subject's history of suicidal thinking and behavior, or other areas of interest for the ECSP, always explored. These gaps became clear during subject interviews. Several subjects reported behaviors to the interviewers (such as collecting information about assassination or previous attempts to kill themselves) that did not appear in any of their records.

Consequently, aggregate data from analysis of coded information from the archival review tend, if anything, to underestimate the prevalence of the subject behaviors that were studied.

Interviews were conducted with 21 subjects. These interviews often permitted exploration of the details and depths of subject's motives, thinking, and planning. Since only one fourth of the subjects were willing/able to be interviewed, information about non-interviewed subjects' thinking and behaviors was less comprehensive than that for other subjects.

CHAPTER 6: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS (BASED ON 74 INCIDENTS & 83 SUBJECTS)

Incident Descriptions

Seventy-four incidents

Eighty-three individuals participated in 74 incidents. Thirty-four of the incidents resulted in attacks. Forty incidents were near-lethal approaches. In the following pages, well-known incidents and subjects are named. Incidents which are not publicly known, or which received minimal publicity, have been disguised to protect the privacy of the subject and the target.

Ruth Steinhagen

Ruth Steinhagen attacked Eddie Waitkus in Chicago. Waitkus was a baseball player for the Philadelphia Phillies, who was leading the balloting for first baseman on the All Star team in 1949. Waitkus was shot and wounded in 1949. Ruth Steinhagen was a nineteen-year-old fan who was infatuated with him and who had decided to kill him and kill herself. Steinhagen had been a fan of Waitkus' for more than a year and had attended over fifty baseball games in 1948 when Waitkus played for the Chicago Cubs. Steinhagen lured Waitkus to a hotel room when his team was playing in Chicago, shot him after he entered the room, and then called for help. Waitkus survived the attack. Steinhagen was charged with the crime, sent to a mental hospital, and released several years later.

Francisco Duran

Francisco Duran attempted to shoot President Clinton at the White House in 1994. According to testimony at his trial, in September, 1994, Francisco Duran told fellow employees at a resort in Colorado that he was going to Washington to kill President Clinton. Shortly thereafter, without telling his wife where he was going, Duran left his home and drove across the country. Duran spent three weeks in the Washington, D.C. area. At 2:00 pm on Saturday, October 29, Duran was standing on the Pennsylvania Avenue sidewalk in front of the White House. He withdrew a semi-automatic rifle from under his coat and fired 29 rounds toward the White House, apparently aiming at a man whom he thought was the president. Duran was tackled, subdued, and arrested. No one was injured in his attack. Duran was convicted of attempted assassination.

Targets

Sixty percent of the incidents involved an attack or near-lethal approach on a Secret Service protectee or other federal political figure. The president was the primary target of 34% of all ECSP incidents.

Table 1

Targets of Modern American Assassins, Attackers, and Near-lethal Approachers (1949 – 1996)

Kind of Target	#	%
President	25	34%
Other Secret Service Protectees	14	19%
Members of Congress	5	7%
Federal Judges	4	5%
State and city officials	2	3%
Other national figures	7	10%
Business executives	3	4%
Movie, sports, and media celebrities	14	19%

Location of attack

Fifty-one percent of all incidents occurred at the office or home of the target. Thirty-eight percent of the incidents occurred at a site the target was visiting, such as a campaign rally, a hotel, or a target's walking or jogging route.

Examples of incidents at the target's home or office include Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola's attack on Blair House (where President Truman was staying) on November 1, 1950, and Mark Chapman's shooting of John Lennon as the latter was entering his apartment building on the evening of December 8, 1980. Incidents at temporary sites included FT attending a campaign stop with the intention of shooting a national office candidate; TE being apprehended with a gun in front of a hotel shortly before a national office candidate was due to depart the hotel; and TD spending several days in Washington, hoping to find a way to shoot a senior federal official as he traveled around town.

Distance traveled to the Principal Incident

In 33% of the attacks and near-lethal approaches, the assailant lived in the city in which the incident occurred. In another 27% of the incidents, the attackers or near-lethal approachers traveled from within the same or a contiguous state to get to the site of the incident. In 40%, there was travel from beyond a contiguous state.

FT

FT had lived in a small southern town all his life. FT did not possess a driver's license and had done little traveling. He figured that sometime during a presidential

election year, a major political leader would come to or near his town. FT desired the notoriety that attacking a candidate for national office would bring. He brought a knife to a political rally for a candidate early in the campaign year. He did not attack. Later that year, when a presidential nominee held a rally at a park near his home town, FT attended, carrying a camera and a gun. FT later pled guilty to the crime of threatening a presidential nominee.

LF

LF traveled over 60,000 miles in his quest to shoot a senior federal official. Over an eleven-month period, LF drove, flew, and hiked throughout the United States (and Canada). During this time, he sought to carry out an order that he believed he had been given by "alien forces" to kill the official. LF was ultimately apprehended and pled guilty to various crimes that he committed while he stalked the official.

Alone or Group

In 91% of the incidents, the subject acted alone. Six incidents (eight percent) involved group efforts:

- In November, 1950, Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola, members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist movement, attempted to assassinate President Truman at Blair House in Washington, D.C. In the ensuing gunfire, a Secret Service officer was killed, as was Torresola. Collazo was injured. He recovered, and was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. President Truman commuted the sentence to life in prison.
- In March, 1954, four members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist movement, Delores (Lolita) Lebron, together with Rafael Cancel-Miranda, Andres Figuero-Cordero, and Irving Flores-Rodriquez, entered the House of Representatives gallery and shot their handguns into the chamber, injuring several congressmen. The attackers were arrested, convicted, and sentenced to life in prison.
- In February, 1965, Malcolm X was murdered by members of the Nation of Islam. Norman Butler, Talmadge Hayer, and Thomas Johnson were arrested, convicted, and sentenced to prison for the attack.
- In May, 1979, Charles Harrelson, hired by drug dealers facing sentencing, assassinated Federal Judge John H. Wood, Jr. Harrelson was convicted of the murder and sentenced to prison.
- In June, 1984, Bruce Pierce, Robert Matthews, Richard Scutari, Jean Craig, and David Lane, members of the Order, a radical, anti-Semitic, white supremacist group, traveled to Denver and assassinated Alan Berg, a controversial talk show host. Matthews was later killed in a shoot-out with the FBI; the others were convicted of multiple offenses and sentenced to prison.

- In November, 1990, El Said Nosair, assisted by other Muslim fundamentalist terrorists, shot Rabbi Meir Kahane, outspoken leader of the militant Jewish Defense League, in New York City. Nosair was convicted of several charges related to this attack and sentenced to prison. He was later also convicted of charges related to the bombing of the World Trade Center Building in New York.

Victims

There were 81 persons injured in the 74 incidents in this study. Victims included the target, other public officials, police and security officers, strangers, and family members. In 55% of the 34 incidents in which there was an attack, the target was murdered.

Weapons used

A handgun was involved in 51% of the incidents. Rifles or shotguns were involved in 30% of the incidents; knives in 15%; explosives in 8%, and airplanes in 4%. (More than one weapon was involved in 16% of the incidents.)

Goals and Motives

In 68% of the incidents, the primary goal of the assailant(s) appeared to be harm to the target. In other cases, another goal, such as notoriety, calling attention to a cause, or a wish to commit suicide, was primary. In these cases, harm to the target was secondary. In 38% of the incidents, attention/notoriety was one of the subject's goals. In twenty-two percent of the incidents, suicide was a goal of the assailant.

A number of subjects had multiple goals. For example, TD wanted to shoot a high ranking federal official. TD also sought to be killed by the official's protectors and hoped that his assassination/suicide would bring attention to the problems of military veterans.

Motives – what led the subject(s) to the attack or near-lethal approach – included wishes for notoriety, revenge, idiosyncratic thinking about the target, hopes to be killed, interest in bringing about political change, and desires for money. In 43% percent of the incidents, an idiosyncratic belief, such as a wish to save the world, the desire to bring attention to a perceived wrong, or a longing to achieve a special relationship with the target, appeared to be the subject's major motive.

Charles Koster

In May, 1988, Charles Koster, a retired New York City police officer, went to the home of Federal Judge Richard Daronco in Pelham, New York. Judge Daronco had recently ruled against Koster's daughter in a sexual harassment suit that she had brought against a former employer. Koster, distressed and aggrieved by the verdict, shot and killed Judge Daronco, then killed himself.

VO

VO's parents called the sheriff after they had become concerned about his bizarre behavior (including his firing a weapon in his home). At approximately 2 am on a summer night, VO shot and killed the sheriff after the sheriff had gone to his home to talk with him. After killing the sheriff, VO shot several times at the sheriff's police cruiser. He then sat in the cruiser. When a neighbor came by to ask what had happened, the subject stole his car, which had a revolver in it.

VO was arrested about 7 hours later, near a high public official's residence. He told the arresting officers that he was not going to assassinate the public official, but "I was going to make them think I was and scare the hell out of them." He later told an investigator that he had seen a picture of the public official, had concluded that the public official was "feeble-minded," and had decided that a man who was feeble-minded should not hold high public office.

VO was charged with murder, found not guilty by reason of mental illness, and committed to a forensic hospital.

In five of the six attacks committed by groups, changes in political leadership or direction were major goals and motives. (Charles Harrelson's contract killing of Federal Judge John Wood, Jr., ordered by a group of drug dealers, was an exception.)

El Sayid Nosair

Nosair was a member of a group of Muslim extremists who were living in the New York area. On a November evening in 1990, Nosair attended a lecture in Manhattan given by Rabbi Meir Kahane, the well-known, provocative founder of the militant Jewish Defense League. Nosair arrived at the second floor meeting room at about 6:30 P.M. for the lecture, which had been scheduled to start at about 7:00 P.M. He was seated toward the back of the left side of the room. About 100 persons attended this lecture.

After the lecture, Rabbi Kahane opened the floor to a question and answer period, and once this was over, at about 9:00 P.M., he entertained a small group of well-wishers in the front of the room by the podium. Nosair joined the group. At about 9:05 P.M. Nosair shot Rabbi Kahane.

After struggling to free himself from the grasp of a 73 year-old man who tried to restrain him, Nosair ran downstairs, through the lobby and out onto Lexington Avenue. A fellow member of the Muslim extremist group was waiting for him in a cab. However, Nosair was unable to enter the waiting cab. He fled, and after a chase, was apprehended. Nosair was convicted of charges stemming from his attack and sentenced to prison.

Intent to Harm

In 83% of the incidents, the assailants clearly intended to harm their targets.

Isola Curry

On a September afternoon in 1958, Isola Curry stabbed the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as he autographed copies of his new book in a New York City department store. Curry, who carried a loaded handgun in her purse, said that she had been pursuing Dr. King for several years because he and others from the NAACP had been torturing her. Dr. King escaped death because Curry's weapon, a letter opener, narrowly missed his aorta. Curry was arrested, and ultimately committed to a mental hospital.

However, a number of subjects who approached their targets with lethal weapons did not intend to harm their targets.

KE

KE brought a revolver to a political rally where a nominee for high elective office was speaking. KE's intention was to charge the podium while waving his gun, in order to draw the fire of law enforcement agents and to be killed. KE was a veteran with a history of depression and suicidal behavior who thought that his actions would lead both to his death and to attention to what he saw as injustices against veterans.

Planning

In 80% of the incidents, the subjects engaged in planning before their attacks or approaches. Evidence of planning was present in almost all the thirty-four incidents in which there were actually attacks.

Robert Bardo

On July 17, 1989, Robert Bardo boarded a bus in Tucson, Arizona, bound for Los Angeles, California. Several weeks previously, Bardo had written a letter to his sister, telling her that he was going to go on a "mission" and implying that he and another person would soon be dead. Several days before going to Los Angeles, Bardo had gone shopping with his brother and had purchased a .357 magnum revolver.

Bardo arrived in LA and went to the street where Rebecca Schaeffer lived. Schaeffer was a young actress who starred on the television show, "My Sister Sam." Bardo had gotten her address for $100 by contacting a private investigator who searched motor vehicle records. Bardo had been interested in Schaeffer for three years and had traveled to Los Angeles to try to meet her on three previous occasions.

Early on the morning of July 18, Bardo rang Rebecca Schaeffer's door. She answered and talked with him briefly. He then went away. At about 10 am, he returned to Schaeffer's door and rang the bell. Schaeffer answered again. This time Bardo pulled the gun out of his bag and shot her in the chest, killing her. Bardo was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison.

However, not all attacks were planned.

OD

OD was an professional who worked in Washington, D.C. Over a period of months, OD became convinced that the world was heading for an ecological disaster. He felt that he had to warn national leaders. He attended a function at which a senior public official spoke, but was unable to make contact with the official. Several days later, he approached the motorcade of another senior official in an unsuccessful effort to hand him a letter. Two days later, while walking, OD saw television news cameras filming a man he assumed was a public official. Desperate to bring attention to his concerns about the environment, OD walked up to the man and punched him in the face.

OD was arrested and ultimately pled guilty to assault on a public official.

Grievances

In 67% of all incidents, the subject had some kind of grievance at the time of the incident. More than 80% of the subjects who held a grievance directed their grievance, at least in part, toward their target.

Sirhan Sirhan

Sirhan Sirhan was angry about many things. He felt that he had not received his share of the prosperity he saw so many others enjoying in America. As a Palestinian-American, Sirhan believed that Israel, and Americans who supported Israel, were injuring the Palestinian people. Sirhan harbored resentments against President Johnson for his pro-Israel policy and against U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Arthur Goldberg. Sirhan noted that Senator (and Presidential Candidate) Robert F. Kennedy was supporting a policy of America supplying F-16 aircraft to Israel, a position Kennedy announced during the California presidential primary campaign. Sirhan had no personal grievances against President Johnson, Ambassador Goldberg, or Senator Kennedy. He had never met any of these men. But he did hold grievances against them for what he saw as his unfair life situation and for what he perceived as injustices committed against the Palestinian people.

Shortly after midnight on June 5, 1968, Sirhan assassinated Senator Robert Kennedy, at an event celebrating Senator Kennedy's victory in the California

presidential primary election. Sirhan was convicted of murder and ultimately sentenced to life in prison.

Mental State at the time of the Principal Incident

In 43% of the incidents, subjects were delusional at the time of the incident. Delusional subjects held ideas or beliefs that were not consistent with reality. Most persons with serious mental illnesses become disorganized and disabled by symptoms of mental illness. Mentally ill ECSP subjects, however, often remained organized and able to plan or organize an attack or near-lethal approach.

FI

FI took his wife to a political fund-raising dinner. Present at the dinner was a former public official and a member of Congress. FI's wife thought that her husband's taking her to the dinner was unusual. FI had never joined a political party or contributed to a political event. His wife later reported that when he had talked of politics, he usually spoke against the party holding the fund-raiser that he had taken her to that evening. Mrs. I. thought that her husband had seemed withdrawn recently. FI had spoken of having a life-ending illness, even though two doctors had examined him and found nothing wrong. During the dinner, FI left his wife and did not reappear for an extended period. Irritated, his wife called her daughter, who came and took her home.

Several months later, FI attacked his wife physically. In the aftermath of this attack, he told her that he had planned to kill her, the former public official, the member of Congress, as many others as possible, and himself at the fund-raising dinner. During an investigation after this statement, FI's daughter said that she had seen him load a number of weapons into the trunk of his car before leaving to go to the dinner. Further investigation suggested that at the time of the dinner, FI held the delusional belief that he was dying from a terminal illness.

Population Descriptions (83 CASES)

Gender

Eighty-six percent (71) of the 83 subjects were men; fourteen percent (12) were women. Two-thirds of the women attacked their targets, compared to half of the men.

Age

The average age of subjects was 35. The age range was 16 to 73. Four percent were teenagers; 30% were in their twenties; 36% were in their thirties; 22% were in their forties; 5% were in their fifties; 2% were in their sixties; and 1% was in his 70's.

LT

The youngest subject was LT. At the age of sixteen, he traveled from his home in the south to a midwestern city where he had lived previously. He carried a rifle with him, which he apparently planned to use to try to shoot a prominent federal official, who was visiting the city.

Richard Pavlick

The oldest subject was Richard Pavlick. In December 1960, at the age of 73, Pavlick traveled to Palm Beach, Florida, from his home in New Hampshire. Pavlick's plan was to drive his car, which he had wired with explosives, into President-designate John F. Kennedy. Pavlick was apprehended near the home where the Kennedys were staying. His arrest was front-page news. Pavlick spent several years awaiting trial in jail and mental hospitals. Ultimately, he was involuntarily committed for several more years to a mental hospital.

Race

Seventy-seven percent of the subjects were white; eleven percent black; ten percent hispanic; and two percent middle eastern.

Marital Status

At the time of the Principal Incident, 51% of the subjects were single and had never been married; 23% were separated, divorced, or widowed; and 26% were married.

Number of Children

Sixty-one percent of the subjects had no children; 23% had one or two children; sixteen percent had three or more children.

Educational Attainment

Twenty-three percent of the subjects had less than a high school education; 31% were high school or technical school graduates; 25% had taken some college courses; fifteen percent had graduated from college; and six percent had attended graduate school or medical school. Thus, almost half of all subjects had gone to college.

LF

LF had completed a year of medical school when he became psychotic for the first time. After experiencing increasing difficulty attending to his studies, LF dropped out of medical school. Subsisting with menial jobs, he gradually began to believe that "aliens" were controlling his life and directing him to assassinate a senior federal official. Soon after, he started robbing banks to finance his efforts to find and assassinate the official. LF was arrested after a robbery. He pled guilty to bank robbery charges and was sentenced to prison.

Military History

Fifty-eight percent of the subjects had never served in the military. Thirty percent had received an honorable discharge from military service; ten percent had received other than an honorable discharge; and one percent were serving in the military at the time of the incident.

TS

TS joined the Army in order to become a pilot. He washed out of helicopter pilot school and was trained as a helicopter mechanic. After completion of his training, TS was transferred to a base outside of Washington, D.C. To his dismay, none of the helicopters at the base were the kind he had been trained to repair. Believing himself to be a failure with no future, TS despaired about his life. He considered several ways to kill himself. Late one night, TS stole a helicopter from the military base. After a two-hour chase during which he was pursued by police on the ground and in the air, TS's helicopter was shot down as he tried to land at the White House. After his arrest, TS was court-martialed by military authorities.

Employment

Fifty-two percent of the subjects were unemployed at the time of their attack or near-lethal approach; 25% were employed full-time; ten percent were employed part-time; and thirteen percent were disabled, retired, or students.

Physical Handicaps

Only one of the subjects had a physical handicap.

Joseph Franklin

As a child, Joseph Franklin lost the use of one eye. Over a several-year period in the 1970's, Franklin, an avowed racist, traveled across the country, and shot and killed interracial couples with sniper rifles. (He was later convicted of these crimes and sentenced to life in prison.) In May, 1980, Franklin used a rifle to shoot and wound Vernon Jordan, Jr., then president of the National Urban League, after Jordan had left a speaking engagement in Terra Haute, Indiana.

Involvement with Organizations

At the time of their assault or near-assault, 60% of the subjects had no involvement with an organization. Of those who were involved with organizations, several had more than one affiliation.

Organizational involvement at the time of the Principal Incident

- twenty-five percent were involved with militant or radical organizations;
- eleven percent were involved with religious organizations;

- five percent were involved with work or union organizations;
- five percent were involved with professional organizations;
- four percent were involved with fraternal organizations; and
- one percent was involved with a sect or cult.

(Fifteen of the sixteen subjects who attacked as part of groups – all but Harrelson – were members of militant or radical groups; the percentage of subjects *who acted alone* who were involved with militant or radical groups at the time of the incident was **nine percent**.)

History of membership in organizations

- thirty percent of all subjects had a history of membership in a militant or radical group;
- ten percent had a history of membership in a religious group;
- eight percent had a history of membership in a work or union organization;
- four percent had a history of membership in a professional organization;
- eight percent had a history of membership in a fraternal organization; and
- one percent had a history of membership in a sect or cult.

(**Fourteen percent** of those who acted alone had a history of joining militant or radical groups.)

History of interest in organizations

- forty percent of subjects are known to have had a history of interest in militant or radical groups;
- thirteen percent had a history of interest in religious organizations;
- nine percent had a history of interest in a work or union group;
- six percent had a history of interest in a professional organization;
- nine percent had a history of interest in fraternal organizations; and
- four percent had a history of interest in a sect or cult.

(**Twenty-six percent** of those who acted alone are known to have had a history of interest in militant or radical groups.)

History of arrests and incarceration

Sixty-six percent of all subjects had a history of at least one juvenile or adult arrest. But only twenty percent had a history of an adult arrest for a violent offense. Only twenty-

two percent had a history of an arrest for a crime involving a weapon. Sixteen percent had a history of an arrest for a crime that involved a gun or rifle. (Fifty-six percent had a history of an adult arrest for a non-violent offense.)

Sixty-six percent of the subjects had never been incarcerated, either for pre-trial detention or after conviction and sentencing. Only eleven percent of the subjects had ever served a sentence in a state or federal prison.

Lee Oswald

Lee Oswald had been arrested only once in his life before the events of November 22, 1963. Earlier that year, in August in New Orleans, Oswald was arrested after a minor scuffle with anti-Castro Cubans after he handed out "Fair Play for Cuba" pamphlets.

Charles Harrelson

Charles Harrelson was a career criminal with an extensive arrest and incarceration history before he was hired to assassinate Federal Judge John H. Wood, Jr. Judge Wood, who had a reputation as a judge who handed down stiff sentences for drug offenders, was shot in the back as he stepped into his car early in the morning on a day in May, 1979. Harrelson was convicted of murdering the judge.

Ruth Steinhagen

Ruth Steinhagen shot Philadelphia Phillies first baseman Eddie Waitkus in June, 1949, after luring him to her hotel room. Steinhagen, nineteen years old, had never been arrested before shooting Waitkus.

History of weapons interest/use

Seventy-one percent of the subjects had a history of weapons use, other than in military service. Sixty-one percent had used handguns, 51% rifles and shotguns, 23% knives, and eleven percent bombs or explosives. Only nineteen percent of the subjects were known to have a history of formal weapons training (other than training that subjects who served in the military received). Thirty-eight percent were known to have had a history of being fascinated with weapons.

Byron de la Beckwith

Byron de la Beckwith grew up in Mississippi and became familiar with guns and rifles as a child. A hunter and weapons enthusiast, de la Beckwith, an avowed racist, used a rifle to shoot NAACP leader Medgar Evers on an evening in June, 1963, as Evers was returning to his home. After several trials, de la Beckwith was ultimately convicted of murdering Medgar Evers and sentenced to life in prison.

Mental health history

Evaluation and treatment

Sixty-one percent of the subjects had been evaluated or treated by a mental health professional at some point in their lives before the Principal Incident.

Thirty-eight percent had been hospitalized for a mental disorder on at least one occasion. Thirty-nine percent of the subjects had a history of outpatient mental health treatment. Of the subjects who had a history of inpatient or outpatient treatment, 48% had been in treatment at some point in the year before the Principal Incident.

Auditory hallucinations

Twenty-one percent of the subjects had a history of auditory hallucinations. Eleven percent had a history of command hallucinations. Ten percent of the subjects experienced command hallucinations that ordered them to act violently toward others. (Of these seven subjects, only two were known to have acted violently before the Principal Incident.)

PV

PV had a history of severe mental illness that went back to childhood. After years of being involved on an episodic basis with mental health professionals and institutions, at the age of 42, PV moved to the southwest. There he began to hear a set of voices that instructed him to act violently. PV reported that he began to believe that the employees in a bagel shop were putting poison in the bagels. He said that he ignored the instructions he was being given by the voices, and "on my own" decided to kill the employees of the bagel shop. Using a gun he had purchased, PV rode his bicycle to the bagel shop, shot three employees in the head, then rode away, passing emergency vehicles that were traveling to the scene of the shooting.

PV then traveled to California to act on an idea he had had for many years: to kill a famous actor (whom PV believed to be a Nazi). After being unsuccessful in his efforts to locate the actor, PV went to the front gate of a major movie studio. PV then decided to kill the security officers stationed there. He walked up to the gate and shot two officers in the head, killing them. PV was arrested several minutes later. Although he had a history of command hallucinations, PV's violence did not appear to stem from hallucinations. PV's violence appeared to be related to his delusional ideas about anti-Semitism.

PV was charged with murder, found not guilty by reason of mental illness, and committed to a forensic hospital.

Delusional ideas

Forty-three percent of the subjects had a history of delusional ideas. Of subjects with delusions, 30% had delusions that involved a relationship with a person they did not know. Subjects who targeted celebrities were more likely to have a delusion involving a relationship with a person they did not know (usually the target) than were subjects who targeted public officials.

Only eighteen percent of subjects with delusions, however, had histories of taking violent action related to their delusions. (PV was one of these subjects.) Seventy percent of subjects with delusions had a history of taking some non-violent action related to a delusion.

WG

WG flew to Washington, D.C. in order to ask a high ranking public official's "permission" to shoot aliens that WG believed were endangering citizens in his home town. WG placed a rifle in his luggage and checked his luggage through to Washington's Airport. At the airport, WG retrieved his luggage from the baggage carousel. But rather than directly leaving the airport, WG walked through a metal detector, setting off an alarm. WG later said that he brought his rifle to Washington because he was considering shooting himself in front of the public official if he was not granted permission to shoot the aliens. WG was involuntarily committed to a mental hospital.

Depression and suicide thinking and behavior

Forty-four percent of the subjects had a documented history of serious depression or despair.

Forty-one percent had a history of making suicide threats; twenty percent of making suicide gestures; and 24% of making suicide attempts.

TD

TD had considered killing himself for at least ten years before he traveled to Washington, hoping to kill a high ranking federal official and to be killed by the official's protectors. While in the military, TD had spoken of killing himself and, on at least one occasion, had driven his car in a manner designed to crash it and end his life.

In the year before he traveled to Washington, TD considered throwing himself off a boat in the ocean, shooting himself in the woods, and shooting himself in his apartment. He had purchased a handgun and hollow point bullets. He planned to spend down his money and then kill himself. In order to not void his life insurance policy, TD developed a scenario in which he shot himself while cleaning his gun, to make his suicide appear to be an accident.

With his money running out, TD boarded his dog in a kennel and started drinking, in order, he hoped, to get the courage to blow his brains out. But he could not summon the strength to shoot himself. After failing to pull the trigger and end his life by his own hand, TD abruptly drove to Washington, aiming to assassinate a high ranking official and to get himself killed by the official's security detail.

TD was convicted of threatening to kill a federal official and sentenced to prison.

Substance abuse history

Thirty-nine percent of the subjects had a history of substance abuse. Alcohol was the primary substance of abuse (32%), followed by marijuana (25%), hallucinogens (15%), amphetamines (10%), cocaine (9%), heroin (6%), sedatives (6%), other drugs (6%), and inhalants (3%). Thirty-nine percent of the subjects with a history of substance abuse had received substance abuse treatment.

HE

HE stole a small airplane and crashed it into the White House, killing himself. HE had a long history of substance abuse and had been involved in a number of substance abuse treatment programs over the years. It was reported that HE used drugs the night that he died.

Few of the most well known public official attackers had histories of substance abuse. Neither Lee Oswald, Sirhan Sirhan, Arthur Bremer, Sara Jane Moore, or John Hinckley had a history of substance abuse. Lynette Fromme had a history of marijuana, amphetamine, and, possibly, hallucinogen abuse.

History of interest in assassination

Forty-four percent of all subjects are known to have had an interest in assassination prior to their attack or near-lethal approach.

Of subjects with an interest in assassination, 53% gathered information about assassins or assassination, 59% talked with others about assassins or assassination, 38% wrote to or about assassins or assassination, 57% read materials about assassination, 13% visited sites related to assassinations, 27% emulated assassins, and 42% engaged in other activities that demonstrated an interest in assassins or assassination (such as watching movies or TV shows about assassins or assassination).

FD

In the weeks before FD tried to shoot the president, she read extensively about presidential assassins and the Secret Service, wrote a letter to Sara Jane Moore, watched television shows about the Secret Service, listened hours a day to a tape of a musical show about assassination, purchased a particular weapon because a previous assassin had used the same kind of weapon, and kept a journal about her thoughts and plans to become an assassin.

After her arrest, FD pled guilty to threatening the president, and was sentenced to prison.

MD

MD, a sailor in the US Navy, was arrested in France for carrying a gun. He had a long-standing interest in assassination. MD had studied about assassination and fashioned himself after John Wilkes Booth. While in the Navy, he visited Sarejevo, the site of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand that began World War I. MD considered trying to assassinate the president and Prime Minister of France and the US president and Secretary of State.

After returning to the US, MD began a journey to visit assassination memorials and gravesites of presidents and assassins. On one such visit, MD left a note on the grave, saying "Future Home of the President (signed). J.W. Boots". MD then traveled to Washington, D.C. and wrote two letters to the Secret Service about his intentions to kill the president.

Several days later, MD was arrested outside the White House. He was carrying a knife. MD reported that he had been hoping that the president would go for a walk and that he could approach him and kill him. He expected to be killed by the Secret Service.

MD ultimately was found not guilty by reason of mental illness and committed to a forensic hospital.

History of harassment

Fifty-four percent of the subjects had a history of harassing other persons. Many of these subjects had poor interpersonal skills and were known to have bothered or badgered other persons.

Arthur Bremer

Six months before he shot Governor George Wallace, Arthur Bremer had harassed a teenage girl with whom he was enamored. Bremer, twenty-one years old, believing himself in love, and having little idea of appropriate social behavior, bombarded his fifteen-year-old date with personal questions and comments about his sexual prowess. After a number of dates and phone calls, the girl's mother told Bremer that her daughter wanted nothing more to do with him. Two days later, to impress her, Bremer shaved his head, covered it with a stocking cap, then abruptly pulled the hat off in front of her. The girl ignored him.

History of grievances and resentments

Ninety-seven percent of the subjects had a history of resentments or grievances against others.

Thirty-three percent had a grievance against the target. Forty-one percent had feelings of resentment against the target. Thirty-four percent had grievances or resentments against a president (other than the target); twelve percent had grievances or resentments against a non-president Secret Service protectee; 38% against a public official; and 22% against a public figure. Forty-eight percent of the subjects had a grievance or resentment against a government agency.

Sixty-one percent of the subjects had taken some non-violent action against the target of a grievance, while twenty-one percent had a history of violent action against someone they held a grievance against or resented .

Walter Leroy Moody

Walter Leroy Moody carried grudges and grievances for years, and took violent action against those whom he believed injured him. In 1969 Moody bought a used car, which was repossessed in 1971 after he failed to make the car payments. In 1972, Moody's wife found a package in his file cabinet. While opening the package, it exploded. Moody said that someone must have put the bomb package in the cabinet. Reconstruction of the package revealed an address label and an extortion note directed to the name of the man who had sold and repossessed Moody's car. Moody was convicted in connection with the bomb explosion and sent to prison.

Moody also acted on his grievances by filing law suits. He sued his brother and sister, the county where he lived, the police, lawyers, and business associates.

In December, 1989, a mail bomb built by Moody killed U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Robert Vance and seriously injured his wife, Helen. Two days later, another bomb was discovered in the building that housed the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta, Georgia. Later that afternoon, a bomb sent by Moody exploded in Savannah, killing attorney Robbie Robinson. Moody was convicted of murder in both federal and state courts.

Sustained interest in public officials/public figures

Ninety-five percent of all subjects had a sustained interest in at least one public official or public figure before the Principal Incident. Almost all subjects had written or spoken about some prominent person of public status in a manner that suggested that they had an ongoing interest in that person or in the office that he/she held.

Fifty-eight percent of the subjects are known to have had a sustained interest in the target of the Principal Incident.

C C

An anonymous subject sent the Secret Service a letter signed "Lonely and Depressed Will Strike," saying that the writer was going to kill the president. Over the next three years, the same writer sent approximately fifteen letters to the

Secret Service, the FBI, the president, and other political leaders. The writer described himself as on a mission ordered by God to kill the president, whom he believed to be the Devil. The letter writer described a number of incidents where he had gone to events attended by the president and other national leaders.

After a long and intense investigation, the Secret Service and the FBI arrested CC, a twenty-seven year-old man. Further investigation revealed that CC had long been interested in presidents and assassinations and had clipped and saved newspaper articles about assassinations and political leaders since he was a boy.

CC was ultimately placed in a court-ordered pre-trial diversion program and committed to a mental hospital.

Consideration of Harming Public Officials/Public Figures

Sixty-eight percent of the subjects are known to have considered harming their targets before their actual attack or near-attack in the days, weeks, and months leading up to the Principal Incident.

In addition, 34% of the subjects are known to have considered harming at least one non-target public official or public figure before the Principal Incident. Twenty-two percent of the subjects are known to have considered harming a president. Seven percent considered harming a protectee of the Secret Service (other than the president); twenty-one percent considered harming a public official; and fifteen percent considered harming a public figure.

Mark Chapman

On a December evening in 1980, Mark Chapman shot John Lennon at the Dakota building in New York City, where Lennon lived. Chapman, who in his youth, idolized the Beatles, had developed the idea of killing Lennon in September, 1980, after deciding that Lennon was a "phony."

Chapman had traveled to New York from his home in Hawaii on two occasions with the intention of killing Lennon. On this, the second trip, Chapman waited outside Lennon's home most of the day, greeting Lennon as he left to go to a recording studio. Chapman shot Lennon when the latter returned at night. Chapman then waited for the police to come, holding his copy of The Catcher in the Rye.

Chapman had considered several targets, whom he believed to be "phonies", in addition to Lennon. These included a governor, a prominent wife of a political leader, and two leading entertainment figures. Chapman had also considered attending President Reagan's inauguration in January, 1981, with a gun.

Chapman pled guilty to murdering John Lennon and was sentenced to life in prison.

Planning an Attack

Sixty-three percent of the attackers and near-attackers are known to have formulated plans, well before the actual Principal Incident, to attack their target.

Samuel Byck

In 1972, Samuel Byck was a 42-year-old man living in Philadelphia with a history of difficulty holding jobs and with a marriage that had fallen apart. In 1970 Byck had applied for a loan from the Small Business Administration. His application was denied. Faced with increasing financial and family pressures, Byck became convinced that President Nixon and the Republican administration was the source of his, and the country's, problems.

From the fall of 1972 until February, 1974, Byck maintained an intense interest in the Nixon administration. He spoke often about his view of the corruptness of the administration. He wrote to administration and Congressional officials. He traveled to Washington to protest and picket.

Byck was interviewed on several occasions by the Secret Service after he was reported to make comments suggesting that he thought President Nixon should be killed. He was hospitalized on several occasions for depression.

On Christmas, 1973, dressed in a Santa Claus costume, Byck picketed in front of the White House. Two months later, Byck drove all night from Philadelphia to Baltimore. As he drove, he spoke into a tape recorder. He described his plans to attack President Nixon and his expectation that he would die in the attempt.

When Byck got to the Baltimore-Washington Airport, he attempted to high jack a Delta Airlines flight. Byck's aim was to force the pilot to fly the airplane over the White House, then shoot the pilot and fly the plane into the White House, killing the president (and others) and himself.

Byck shot and killed a security officer at the airport. He boarded the plane and shot the pilot and co-pilot, killing the latter. The plane did not take off. As security personnel attempted to enter the plane, Byck shot himself in the head, ending his life.

Communications and threats

Ninety-two percent of all subjects are known to have communicated, either verbally or in writing, about a public official or public figure before their attack or near-lethal approach.

Sixty-three percent are known to have made an indirect, conditional, or direct threat about some public official or public figure at some point before the Principal Incident. Thirty-seven percent are known to have made a direct threat to harm some public official or public figure. Eighteen percent communicated a threat about a public official or public

figure to that person at some point before the PI. *Only six percent ever communicated a direct threat to any public official or public figure.*

Communications about the target

Seventy-eight percent of the subjects either spoke or wrote about the target before the PI. Sixty-three percent made an indirect, conditional, or direct threat about the target before their attack or near-lethal approach. Thirty-seven percent made a direct threat about the target. *But only four percent of all subjects communicated a direct threat about the target to the target before the PI.* And only seven percent of the subjects communicated a direct threat about the target to the target or a law enforcement organization before the PI.

Francisco Duran

Francisco Duran talked about his dislike of President Clinton and of the president's gun control policies with co-workers. According to testimony at his trial, he told co-workers that he was going to try to kill the president. Duran then traveled from Colorado to Washington, D.C. In October, 1994, he fired 29 rounds from a semi-automatic rifle at the White House from the Pennsylvania Avenue sidewalk. Testimony at his trial suggested that he was firing at someone he thought was the president.

Communications about a (non-target) president

Thirty-five percent of the subjects are known to have written or spoken about a president, other than the target of the Principal Incident. Nineteen percent are known to have made an indirect, condition, or direct threat about a president. *Only three percent communicated a direct threat about a president to the president, and only four percent communicated a direct threat to the president or to a law enforcement organization.*

Communications about a (non-target) protectee

Twenty-five percent of the subjects are known to have written or spoken about a Secret Service protectee, other than the target of the Principal Incident or a president. Fourteen percent are known to have made some sort of threat about a protectee, other than the target of the Principal Incident or a president. *None communicated a direct threat about a protectee to the protectee or to a law enforcement organization.*

Communications about a (non-target) public official

Forty-three percent of the subjects are known to have written or spoken about a public official, other than the target of the Principal Incident, a president, or another protectee. Twenty-three percent are known to have made some sort of threat about a public official, other than the target of the Principal Incident, a president, or another protectee. *Three percent communicated a direct threat about a public official to the public official or to a law enforcement organization.*

Communications about a (non-target) public figure

Thirty-two percent of the subjects are known to have written or spoken about a public figure, other than the target of the Principal Incident. Fifteen percent are known to have made some sort of threat about a public figure, other than the target of the Principal Incident. *None communicated a direct threat about a public figure to the public figure or to a law enforcement organization.*

Travel to visit

Fifty-one percent of the subjects are known to have traveled to visit the home, office, or visiting place of some public official or public figure before the Principal Incident.

Travel to visit the target

Forty percent of the subjects are known to have traveled to visit the home, office, or temporary site of their target at least once before the Principal Incident. Twenty-two percent of all the subjects traveled further than from a contiguous state to visit the target. Twenty percent of all subjects are known to have carried a weapon while traveling to visit their target before the Principal Incident.

Mark Chapman

In September, 1980, Mark Chapman decided to kill John Lennon. Chapman traveled to New York City from Hawaii in October, armed with a gun. He spent several days visiting New York and looking for John Lennon. Chapman stationed himself outside of Lennon's apartment building, but did not see Lennon.

One day Chapman went to see Ordinary People, a movie about a disturbed young man who received help. After leaving the movie, Chapman called his wife in Hawaii, told her that he had been in New York to kill Lennon, but now he had no more need to kill Lennon. Chapman then traveled home to Hawaii.

One and one-half months later, again feeling that he should kill Lennon, Chapman traveled from Hawaii to New York City. On the evening of December 8, 1980, Chapman shot and killed Lennon as Lennon was entering the Dakota Apartments, where he lived.

Travel to visit a (non-target) president

Four percent of the subjects are known to have traveled at least once before the Principal Incident to visit the home, office, or visiting place of a president who was not the target of the PI. All of these subjects traveled further than from a contiguous state to visit the president.

Travel to visit a (non-target) protectee

Two percent of the subjects are known to have traveled at least once before the Principal Incident to visit the home, office, or visiting place of a non-president protectee who was not the target of the PI. All of these subjects traveled further than from a contiguous state to visit the protectee.

Travel to visit a (non-target) public official

Twelve percent of the subjects are known to have traveled at least once before the Principal Incident to visit the home, office, or visiting place of a non-protectee public official who was not the target of the PI. One-half of these subjects traveled further than from a contiguous state to visit the public official.

Travel to visit a (non-target) public figure

Nine percent of the subjects are known to have traveled at least once before the Principal Incident to visit the home, office, or visiting place of a public figure who was not the target of the PI. Eighty percent of these subjects traveled further than from a contiguous state to visit the public figure.

Robert Bardo

Five years before he murdered actress Rebecca Schaeffer, at the age of fourteen, Bardo traveled from Arizona to Maine, hoping to meet a young girl who had received national attention for having corresponded with Soviet President Gorbachev. Several years later, Bardo traveled to New York, to visit the home town of a female rock singer whom he was interested in.

Bardo also traveled three times to Los Angeles in an effort to meet Schaeffer before the trip on which he murdered her. On one of these occasions, he carried a knife with him, thinking he might use it to stab Schaeffer if he found her.

Approaches

Thirty-six percent of the subjects are known to have approached a public official or public figure before the Principal Incident. These subjects came close enough to make physical, eye, or voice contact with a prominent person of public status.

Approach of the target

Twenty-three percent of the subjects are known to have approached their target at a time before the Principal Incident. Half of all subjects who approached the target were noticed during an approach. Almost one-fifth of the subjects who approached are known to have carried a weapon at the approach.

Joseph Corbett, Jr.

Joseph Corbett spent several years in the late 1950's planning the kidnapping of Adolph Coors III, the chief executive of the Coors brewing company. Corbett studied Coors' patterns of coming and going. But before Corbett could try to capture Coors, the Coors family moved from their home in Denver to a ranch near the foothills of the Rockies.

Corbett resumed his planning and observation. Shortly after eight o'clock on a morning in February, 1960, Adolph Coors III drove away on the dirt road leading from his home and began to cross a small one-lane wooden bridge on his way to work. Corbett's car blocked the other end of the bridge. Coors got out to investigate, and a struggle ensued. Soon thereafter, Coors' abandoned car was found on the bridge, with his hat and glasses having fallen off the bridge and several blood splotches on the bridge and the bridge railing.

The next day a ransom note arrived by mail at the Coors ranch. The Coors family followed the instructions in the note, but received no response.

In September, seven months later, a target shooter at a dump in the hills discovered Coors' clothing and remains. In October, after an extensive investigation and manhunt, Joseph Corbett was captured in Vancouver, British Columbia. He was returned to Colorado, tried, convicted of Adolph Coors III's botched kidnapping and murder, and sentenced to prison.

FO

FO was interviewed by law enforcement officials after he had been observed loitering around the White House and on the Ellipse for several days. FO had a bow and arrow in the trunk of his car and could not give a coherent explanation for his travel to Washington from an eastern state.

Shortly thereafter, FO left Washington and drove to Canada. He then returned to Washington. Early one evening, FO was observed standing on the sidewalk of the White House by a law enforcement officer. The officer thought FO was acting suspiciously and approached him. When he started to talk to FO, the latter unzipped his coat, and started to draw a loaded sawed-off shotgun. After FO ignored warnings to freeze, he was shot one time in the arm by the officer.

Approach of a (non-target) president

Four percent of the subjects are known to have approached a president who was not the target of the Principal Incident.

Approach of a (non-target) protectee

Five percent of the subjects are known to have approached a non-president protectee who was not the target of the PI.

Approach of a (non-target) public official

Twelve percent of the subjects are known to have approached a non-protectee public official who was not the target of the Principal Incident.

Approach of a (non-target) public figure

Eight percent of the subjects are known to have approached a public figure who was not the target of the Principal Incident.

John W. Hinckley, Jr.

John Hinckley is known to have approached President Carter in September and October, 1979, while the president campaigned for re-election.

JJ

JJ brought a rifle into the building in which a former governor had his law office. JJ had developed the idea that the governor was obligated to help him in resolving some minor legal problems. He also had been writing love letters for several months to the governor's daughter.

JJ had come to law enforcement attention several years before, after staff at a Washington hotel found bullets in his room. He visited Capital Hill and left a note in a senator's office, saying that he was running for president and offering to make the senator his vice president. During this visit to Washington, JJ carried a gun with him. Several weeks later, JJ was taken into custody during a national political convention, after being discovered wandering on the floor of the hotel on which a high ranking federal official was staying.

Following/stalking behavior

Ten percent of the subjects are known to have followed or stalked a public official or public figure at some point before their attack or near-lethal approach.

Following/stalking the target

Ten percent of the subjects are known to have followed or stalked their targets before the Principal Incident.

UM

UM was a professional in the midwest who began abusing drugs. He developed an interest in the CIA and wrote the CIA a letter, referring to the tenure of a former Director of the agency.

UM developed an interest in a presidential candidate. He traveled to the candidate's hometown and rented a condominium near the candidate's campaign headquarters. UM later traveled to the national political convention of the candidate's party.

Later in the presidential campaign, UM was arrested at an airport after he attempted to pass through the airport security x-ray machine with weapons. He had a carry-on bag containing an automatic pistol, a clip loaded with five rounds, several boxes of cartridges, and a hunting knife. He became irate when told he was under arrest and was going to be handcuffed and stated, "Nobody is keeping me from getting on this flight."

When interviewed by law enforcement agents, UM said that he was going to the west coast for his music business and for politics, which he stated, "went hand in hand." He indicated he did not care for the candidate and said that he could not accept him as president if he won the election.

The candidate was scheduled to be in the west coast city UM was flying into during the several-day period that UM planned to be there.

The "Order": Robert Jay Matthews, Bruce Pierce, David Lane, Jean Craig, Richard Scutari

Robert Jay Matthews, Bruce Pierce, David Lane, Jean Craig and Richard Scutari were members of the Order, a racist, anti-Semitic far-right group based in eastern Washington state and Idaho whose members believed in Christian Identity doctrine. Matthews had broken off from the Aryan nation in 1983, believing that the time had come for revolutionary action to overthrow the government and to prevent a Zionist conspiracy from running the country. He and his followers developed a list of targets to be assassinated. At the top of the list was Alan Berg, an abrasive, popular, Jewish talk show host based in Denver.

Matthews sent Jean Craig, a fifty-year old grandmother and member of the group, to Denver to gather information about Berg. Craig spent several weeks in the spring of 1984 learning about Berg and following him on his routines after his radio show. Pierce and Lane went to Denver on at least one occasion to check on Berg.

On an evening in June, Alan Berg drove into the driveway of his home in Denver. As Berg got out of his car, he was shot to death by Bruce Pierce. Pierce shot Berg at least twelve times with a Mac-10 .45 caliber automatic machine gun. Pierce then got into an automobile driven by David Lane and left the area. Also participating in Berg's assassination were Robert Matthews, Richard Scutari, and Jean Craig.

Matthews was killed in a confrontation with the FBI in December, 1984. Pierce, Lane, Craig, and Scutari were all convicted of crimes related to their violent activities and sentenced to prison.

Following/stalking a (non-target) president

Four percent of the subjects are known to have followed/stalked a president.

Following/stalking a (non-target) protectee

None of the subjects are known to have followed/stalked a protectee.

Following/stalking a (non-target) public official

None of the subjects are known to have followed/stalked a public official.

Following a (non-target) public figure

Two percent of the subjects are known to have followed/stalked a public figure.

CHAPTER 7: MAJOR FINDINGS

Assassination is the end result of an understandable, and discernible, process of thinking and behavior

Assassinations and attacks on public officials and public figures, almost without exception, are not sudden, impulsive acts. Assassination is the end result of an understandable, and discernible, process of thinking and behavior.

JD

JD, age 45, was working in a west coast city as a delivery man. He was married, but a self-described "loner." JD was interested in guns and rifles and shot regularly at a range with a number of other gun aficionados. A fan of action movies, JD had seen "Day of the Jackal", a movie about assassination, six times (more than he had seen other films). JD had been deeply distressed in 1963 by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, whom he thought was leading the country in the right direction. But he had little respect for the current president, whom he believed was taking the country in the wrong direction.

Within a period of several months, JD's wife left him and he was fired from his job. Taking his cash savings of about $18,000, JD packed his belongings in his car and started driving. He also took a sniper rifle, which he had modified, and a number of bullets he had filled with mercury, to make them devastate a target on impact. JD was feeling deeply depressed about his life. He was filled with anger, seeing his life moving in a downward spiral.

JD first went to visit his elderly mother, with whom he had had a strained relationship. The visit did not go well. He next drove to see his sister. From there, he drove across the country, then visited Canada.

Back in the U.S., driving in the southwest, JD began to think of assassinating the president. He reasoned that if he killed the president, the country would no longer be led in the wrong direction. He figured that he would be killed in the attempt, which would resolve another problem: he wanted to die, but feared he didn't have the guts to kill himself. Also, assassinating the president would bring him notoriety: he would no longer be a non-entity.

JD traveled towards Washington, D.C. On his way, he bought a tape recorder and recorded a number of statements about his intention to kill the president. He did not identify himself on the tapes. Wearing gloves (to avoid fingerprints), JD put the tapes in envelopes, addressed the envelopes "To the FBI," and dropped them in mailboxes.

When he arrived in Washington, D.C., JD looked for sites where he might be able to shoot the president. JD then drove to visit several cities in the northeast that he

thought the president was likely to visit. He then returned to Washington, D.C. There he got a hotel room and spent several days thinking about how to shoot the president. Frustrated by the difficulty of attempting an assassination, he left Washington.

Several months later, JD was feeling desperate. He sold his car and traveled by bus to Washington. He spent several days walking around the White House and sitting in Lafayette Park, across from the White House. Increasingly troubled, he spent hours sitting in a church debating within himself whether it was right to assassinate the president. He wrote several letters which he did not send. In one he said:

> Every time I awake in the morning, I am in mortal fear for my life. I do not know if I can go through with this plan to kill the president. I have even contemplated suicide, but I do not know if I can do it. I have never killed anything in my life and I don't want to start now. You may think that I am crazy, maybe I am and maybe I'm not. I do not know. All I do know is that I am scared of what I may do if I am not stopped soon. I know that I need help but I am afraid to ask for it. Will someone help me or am I asking too much?

Shortly thereafter, the Secret Service received a call from a man who identified himself as "Smith". The caller said that he had observed a man hanging around Lafayette Park who was there to kill the president. "Smith" called to report the same information the next day. A day later, he called again and told an agent that **he** was planning to kill the president and would turn himself in if the agent would agree to aid him to get help and if he could keep his Bible. Shortly thereafter JD was arrested across the street from the White House.

JD was sent by the court to a psychiatric hospital. Ultimately he pled guilty to threatening the president. He remained hospitalized for several years.

For JD, the "process" of assassination took place over a six month period. Consideration of assassination appeared to be precipitated by major changes in JD's life (loss of marriage and job) and feelings of hopelessness, desperation, and rage.

Although the first thought about assassinating the president occurred to him while he was driving across the country, JD had prior interest in assassination. JD saw assassination as a solution to his problems: he would stop the president from (in his view) taking the country in the wrong direction, get himself killed, and achieve a degree of notoriety. His feelings about the wrongfulness of killing ultimately led him to turn himself in before he attempted harm.

Arthur Jackson

Born and raised in Scotland, Arthur Jackson traveled to the United States in 1955 and enlisted in the Army. While serving in Germany, Jackson gradually became

convinced that there was an Army-CIA mind control plot afoot that was pressuring him to become homosexual. Hospitalized for psychiatric reasons, Jackson was discharged from the military. He traveled around the U.S., until he was deported in 1961 after he had written a letter to President Kennedy that was perceived as threatening.

Jackson lived in Scotland and England for the next twenty years, while occasionally taking trips to other countries. In early 1981, Jackson, a movie buff, saw Raging Bull, a movie in which the actress, Theresa Saldana, played a minor role. Jackson became convinced that Saldana was connected to the Army-CIA mind control conspiracy he had experienced in 1955. He decided that he must embark on a mission to kill Theresa Saldana and thereby force the U.S. Government to execute him.

In December, 1981, Jackson departed Scotland to begin his "mission". Believing that he would die as a result of his actions, he visited Europe to see the sights before traveling to the United States. Jackson arrived in New York in January, 1982. He attempted to determine Saldana's whereabouts by pretending to be a journalist. He learned that she was living in Los Angeles. Traveling by bus, sleeping in bus stations, keeping careful track of his money, and writing a detailed journal, Jackson visited cities in the East, South, and West before arriving in Los Angeles in March. He wanted to get a handgun, because he believed that it would be more "merciful" to kill Saldana by shooting her, but he was not able to procure one. He could not buy one because he did not have proper identification. He considered attacking a police officer in the dark, knocking him out, and stealing his service revolver, but did not find the opportunity to attempt such an attack.

After being unable on his own to discover Saldana's address in Los Angeles, with his money supply dwindling, Jackson spent $100 to pay a private investigator to find Saldana's address. Two days later, he walked in front of the apartment building in which she lived. He carried a knife and a hammer with him. In his knapsack was a "manifesto" in which he explained that he was on a mission to kill Saldana and requested to be executed by the Federal Government at Alcatraz Prison.

On March 15, 1982, Jackson went to Saldana's home early in the morning. He had never laid eyes on Theresa Saldana, other than in the movies. He saw a woman leaving the building whom he identified as Saldana. Walking quickly, he grabbed her from behind and stabbed her repeatedly in the chest. A bystander came to Saldana's rescue and pulled Jackson off Saldana while Jackson screamed at her.

Saldana staggered back to her home and collapsed. She had suffered multiple injuries. An ambulance rushed her to a hospital that fortunately was only several minutes away. Despite being gravely wounded, Saldana survived her attack. She

was hospitalized for three and one-half months and then again on subsequent occasions for follow-up surgery and care.

Jackson was arrested and tried and convicted of attempted murder. In 1996, after completing his original sentence, and a second sentence he was given for threatening Saldana late in the 1980's, Jackson was extradited to England to be tried for a murder he was alleged to have committed in 1976.

Arthur Jackson's journey toward assassination was thoughtful and deliberate. Once he had selected his target, he made determined efforts to locate her address, to acquire a weapon, and to secure her and his fates.

Even the one attack on a public official that appeared to be spontaneous and impulsive was the end result of a process of thinking and action.

OD

OD was a professional who worked in Washington. Over a period of months, OD became convinced that the world was heading for an ecological disaster. Believing that he had special information and an obligation to prevent disaster, OD tried to contact high level government officials. He attended a public function at which a major figure in the Executive Branch spoke, but was unable to make contact with the public official. Several days later, he approached the motorcade of another public official in an unsuccessful effort to hand him a letter.

Several days later, OD, increasingly worried about what he believed to be a rapidly approaching apocalypse, and the world's lack of preparation to deal with it, was out walking. He saw television cameras surrounding a man whom he did not recognize but whom he assumed to be a prominent figure. Desperate to get his message out, OD walked up to the man and, in front of the cameras, punched him in the jaw.

On the surface, OD's attack appeared spontaneous and idiosyncratic. However, striking the official was the end result of several months of OD's ruminations about what he believed to be an approaching world disaster and of his making unsuccessful attempts to call attention this crisis.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers do not fit any single – or several – descriptive or demographic "profiles"

Many writers about American assassination have tried to paint profiles of assassins. The 1969 statement by the staff of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (the Eisenhower Commission) has become a classic:

> Although we cannot unravel the significance of the similarities between the assassins, we could make this statement: we could predict after President Kennedy's assassination that the next assassin would probably be short and slight of build, foreign born, and from a broken

> family--most probably with the father either absent or unresponsive to the child. He would be a loner, unmarried, with no steady female friends, and have a history of good work terminated from one to three years before the assassination attempt by a seeming listlessness and irascibility. He would identify with a political or religious movement, with the assassination triggered by a specific issue which relates to the principles of the cause of movement. Although identifying with the cause, the assassin would not in fact be part of or able to contribute to the movement. Not every presidential assassin has had every one of the foregoing traits, but some combination of the above has characterized them all.

There have been four assassins of U.S. presidents: John Wilkes Booth (victim: Abraham Lincoln); Charles Guiteau (victim: James Garfield); Leon Czolgolz (victim: William McKinley); and Lee Oswald (victim: John F. Kennedy). Eight other persons have mounted attacks on presidents or presidents-elect: Richard Lawrence (target: Andrew Jackson); Guiseppe Zangara (target: Franklin Roosevelt); Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola (target: Harry Truman); Lynette Fromme (target: Gerald Ford); Sara Jane Moore (target: Gerald Ford); John W. Hinckley, Jr. (target: Ronald Reagan); and Francisco Duran (target: William Clinton). Additionally, three other persons have attacked candidates for president: John Schrank (target: Theodore Roosevelt); Sirhan B. Sirhan (target: Robert F. Kennedy) and Arthur Bremer (target: George Wallace).

The age of these fifteen persons at the time of their attacks ranged from twenty-one to forty-five; thirteen were male, two female; thirteen acted alone; two together. They had different sizes and shapes, and varied educational backgrounds, work histories, and family relationships.

There are no accurate – or useful – descriptive, demographic, or psychological "profiles" of American assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers. ECSP subjects were both male and female, and ranged across ages, educational backgrounds, employment histories, marital status, and other demographic and background characteristics.

Two examples that do not fit a "profile":

Richard Pavlick

On a Sunday in December, 1960, Richard Pavlick, a 73-year-old retired postal worker parked his car in front of the residence of President-elect John F. Kennedy in Palm Beach, Florida. Pavlick had ten sticks of dynamite in his car and was prepared to detonate them in order to kill Kennedy and himself. Pavlick watched the president-elect leave his house and enter a car to go to church. He hesitated, thinking that Mrs. Kennedy and the children might be behind the door of the house and might be killed or injured in the explosion.

Pavlick was arrested in Palm Beach five days later. He reported that he had driven from New Hampshire to Florida to kill Kennedy. He said that he had been at the airport when Senator Kennedy arrived in Florida. He indicated that he had taken pictures of Kennedy's house and had visited the church attended by the president-elect. Pavlick said that he had intended to go to the church the following Sunday to attack Kennedy.

In Pavlick's possession was a letter addressed to "the citizens of the United States of America." In the letter, Pavlick wrote that he believed that the Kennedy family bought the election and that Kennedy was not qualified to be president. He added, "if my actions have caused the decease [sic] of the president elect then a better qualified and experienced man will have to take over...It is regretted that this unlawfull [sic] action was necessary. Many may have been hurt, killed and property destroyed, but if the ambitions of untrained and unqualified are destroyed this vicious action will have been worthwhile."

LT

An anonymous caller told a secretary at the state attorney's office in a southern state that if she did not go out with him, he would kill a high ranking federal official. After an investigation, LT, age eighteen, was arrested at his family's home. A search of the residence turned up a handgun, a number of rifles with scopes, over 1,000 rounds of ammunition, a sawed-off shotgun, books about assassins, and a several-year-old diary in which LT talked about his intention to become an assassin and to emulate Lee Harvey Oswald. Further investigation revealed that LT had called Marina Oswald, widow of Lee Oswald, and asked her how her husband's actions had affected her and her children.

During the investigation, information was discovered that suggested that two years before, police in a midwestern city had been called by LT's father. The police were told that LT, then age sixteen, was in the city, was armed with a rifle, and was in an emotional state that might lead him to harm someone. The same high ranking federal official that LT later threatened to kill was conducting a highly publicized visit the city on that day. LT was located close to the official's motorcade route, found to possess a rifle, and arrested.

Characteristics of attackers and near-lethal approachers

Findings about the histories and personal characteristics of attackers and near-lethal approachers include:

- **Their ages ranged from 16 to 73.**
- **Almost half had attended some college or graduate education.**
- **Attackers and near-attackers often had histories of mobility and transience.**

- **About two-thirds of all attackers and near-lethal approachers were described as social isolates.**
- **Few had histories of arrests for violent crimes or for crimes that involved weapons.**
- **Few had ever been incarcerated in state or federal prisons before their public figure-directed attack or near-lethal approach.**
- **Most attackers and would-be attackers had histories of weapons use, but no formal weapons training.**
- **Many had histories of harassing other persons.**
- **Most are known to have had histories of explosive, angry behavior, but only half of the subjects are known to have had histories of violent behavior.**
- **Many had indicated to someone their willingness to exert violence against government officials.**
- **Attackers and near-lethal approachers often had interests in militant/radical ideas and groups, though few had been members of such groups.**
- **Many had histories of serious depression or despair.**
- **Many are known to have attempted to kill themselves, or known to have considered killing themselves, at some point before their attack or near-lethal approach.**
- **Almost all had histories of grievances and resentments.**
- **Many subjects had contact with mental health professionals or care systems at some point in their lives before their attack or near-lethal approach.**

  (But relatively few were in contact with mental health professionals or organizations in the year before their attack or near-attack. And few subjects ever indicated to mental health staff that they were considering attacking a public official or public figure.)
- **Many subjects had histories of delusional ideas.**
- **Few had histories of command hallucinations.**
- **Relatively few had histories of substance abuse, including alcohol.**

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often demonstrated "attack-related" behaviors.

Persons who have attacked, or come close to attacking, prominent persons of public status often exhibit "attack-related" behaviors.

Attack of a public official or public figure is a particular kind of violence, involving different preparations and circumstances than those for other kinds of violence, such as, for example, an armed robbery of a convenience store or an assault on a domestic partner. A potential assassin must determine where the target is likely to be. He or she must decide on a weapon. The attacker must travel to the site where the target lives, works, or is visiting. To mount an attack, often the assailant must confront security personnel and measures. These are all relatively complex tasks which require considerable thought and planning.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often developed interests in assassination.

More than 40% of the subjects are known to have had an interest in assassination before they attacked or approached their targets. Interest in assassination ranged from detailed knowledge about previous American assassins and the literature written about them, to familiarity with the protective functions of law enforcement agencies. A number of subjects emulated past assassins, even using the names of past assassins to sign notes and letters. Other ways subjects demonstrated interests in assassination included: watching movies about assassination, following television shows about the Secret Service and other law enforcement agencies, listening to tapes of musicals about assassination, writing to incarcerated assassins and attackers, talking with others about assassins and assassination, and collecting articles about assassins and assassination.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often considered more than one target for attack.

One-third of the subjects are known to have considered more than one target before their attack or near-lethal approach.

Lee Oswald

Seven months before he shot President John F. Kennedy, Lee Oswald fired a shot at retired General Edwin Walker in Dallas, Texas, when Walker was working at his desk. The bullet nicked the molding on the window and narrowly missed Walker. Walker was a favorite of the radical right. Oswald apparently believed that by assassinating Walker, he would win notice and favor from politically extreme organizations on the American left.

Arthur Bremer

Arthur Bremer traveled to Ottawa, Canada, in the spring of 1972 to attempt to assassinate President Richard Nixon who was conducting a state visit. Bremer wrote in his diary that he was unable to get close to Nixon because of the security. He shifted his target to a public official he thought he could attack. In May, 1972, Bremer shot Presidential Candidate George Wallace at a campaign rally in Laurel, Maryland.

There was little overlap in target selection between subjects whose primary target was a public official and subjects whose primary target was a public figure, such as a celebrity. For example, of the thirteen attackers and near-lethal approachers whose targets were celebrities, only one (Mark Chapman) considered a public official as a target.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often communicated their intentions.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers generally let others know – or wrote or gathered materials that might let others know – about their intentions to harm a target. They rarely, however, communicated direct threats to do harm to their targets or to law enforcement authorities. Convicted attacker Francisco Duran did not communicate his intentions to harm President Clinton to the target or to law enforcement. But testimony at his trial suggested that Duran had let co-workers know about his intentions. Arthur Bremer did not send threat letters to President Nixon or Governor Wallace. Bremer is not known to have communicated to others his intention to shoot Wallace (or other persons) before his attack. However, a search of his automobile revealed a diary Bremer had written that documented his travels in 1972 to Canada to kill President Nixon, and his interest in shooting, Nixon, Wallace, or another participant in the presidential race.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often traveled to find their targets.

Subjects were likely to travel in search of their targets. Travel ranged from LF's driving over 60,000 miles in an effort to kill a senior federal official, to FT's waiting for a prominent public official to visit his home town during an election year.

At least half of the attackers and near-lethal approachers whose targets were federal public officials are known to have visited Washington, D.C. in the months and years before their attacks or near-attacks.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers used a range of planning strategies, ranging from naive to relatively sophisticated.

LF

LF was in a southern city when he heard on the news on a Friday that a senior federal official was scheduled to give a speech in the midwest on the following Monday. LF drove all night and arrived at the speech site on Saturday. He walked around the area to check it out. He then bought a suit and overcoat to look like a

law enforcement officer and got a haircut. On Sunday, LF found a place where he could practice shooting his gun.

Early on Monday, LF drove near to the site of the official's speech. Walking around, he attempted to figure out how he might get close to the official. Convinced that he would be unable to get close, LF attempted to find a place overlooking the site from which he might shoot at the official. He was unable to find such a position.

In planning and mounting attacks and near-lethal approaches, ECSP subjects usually behaved quite rationally.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often went to sites that targets were scheduled to visit temporarily, rather than trying to attack at targets' homes or offices.

More than half of all attacks and near-lethal approaches on protected officials occurred at temporary sites, rather than at their offices or homes of targets. More than half of attacks and near-lethal approaches of non-protected public officials and of non-protected public figures occurred at their homes or offices.

Lynette Fromme

Lynette Fromme attempted to shoot President Gerald Ford in September, 1975, as he walked from his hotel to the State Capital building in Sacramento, California. Fromme was subdued before she fired a shot. She was convicted of attempted assassination and sentenced to life in prison.

Dan White

Dan White, a recently resigned Supervisor on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, shot and killed Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk as they sat in their offices in San Francisco City Hall in November, 1978. White was arrested, convicted, and sentenced to prison.

Byron de la Beckwith

Byron de la Beckwith shot civil rights leader Medgar Evers as Evers was walking from his car to his home on an evening in June, 1963.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers dressed to look normal.

Ninety percent of the subjects appeared to be dressed and groomed normally at the time of their attack or near-lethal approach. Some subjects made special efforts to dress like others so they would not stand out and attract attention from security personnel.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers got to sites early.

FK

FK left his home on the west coast to travel east, after telling friends that they would see him on television. FK visited an east coast city and appeared at the office of a federal official. There he made comments suggesting that he had a plan to remove a high ranking federal official from office.

Several months later, the high ranking federal official was scheduled to visit a health care facility in a southern city. Early in the morning on the day of the visit, FK arrived at the facility, dressed to look like a staff member. FK tried to pass a security checkpoint by saying that he worked in the facility, but he was not permitted to enter. It was later discovered that FK had tried to purchase a gun the day before, with the apparent intention of shooting the federal official.

FD

FD read in the newspaper that the president was due to appear at a campaign rally around noon. She arrived at the site around 8:30 in the morning, in order to check out the security arrangements. When she saw metal detectors and police lines restricting entrance to those who passed through the metal detectors, FD realized that she would not be able to get close to the president. FD waited outside the security perimeter and considered trying to shoot at the president's limousine as it entered and later left the site of the rally.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often expected to be killed or to die after mounting an attack.

More than one-third of the subjects are known to have wished to be killed or expected to die during their attacks. For some subjects, being killed was the primary reason for approaching a public official with a weapon. For others, being killed was a desirable consequence of assassinating their target. For still others, such as the Puerto Rican nationalists Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola, dying while shooting the president was a price they were willing to pay to achieve their goals.

Attackers and would-be attackers frequently demonstrate interests in radical or militant groups, though few join such groups.

More than a fourth of attackers and would-be attackers who acted alone are known to have had interests in radical or militant groups. But fewer than a tenth were members of these groups at the time of their attack or near-lethal approach.

Some attackers and near-lethal approachers might be characterized as "fringe of fringe" persons. At some point in the years before an attack or near-attack, a potential assassin might become interested in the ideology and activities of a group(s) that espoused violent action. He or she might collect information about the group and perhaps attend a meeting

or two. But the potential assassin generally would not join the group and become a steady member. Rather, he or she would stay on the fringe. Such a person might use the ideas or rationale of the group to justify his or her violent thinking and later plans for violence.

TD

TD had flirted with radical ideas for several years before he decided to try to kill a high ranking federal official. He had read widely about totalitarian regimes and societies, had gathered material about several far-right groups in the U.S., and had even considered starting his own political party.

CHAPTER 8: SEVEN FUNDAMENTAL STUDY QUESTIONS

How does a person move from the idea of assassination to the action of assassination?

It seems obvious, and it is true: assassinations are rarely attempted by persons who see themselves as doing well in life. Almost all American assassins, attackers, and would-be attackers were persons who had – or believed themselves to have had – difficulty coping with problems in their lives. However, while assassination is rare behavior, the kinds of problems experienced by ECSP subjects were, with few exceptions, neither rare nor extreme.

- FT was a lonely, angry young man with few job skills, living with a mother who was ill with cancer and other ailments and who demanded his constant attention.
- Ruth Steinhagen, although employed as a secretary, believed she had no future, and thought she would be better off dead.
- JD had lost a marriage (and his family), his job, and hope.
- Sirhan Sirhan had few employable skills and was living at a level far below his expectations.
- FD, although married, steadily employed, and a member of a church singing group, perceived herself as unlovable and as a failure.
- Sara Jane Moore, a woman with considerable intelligence and job skills, found herself caught in a swirl of turbulent social forces and causes in a place (the San Francisco Bay area) and at a time (1975) when there was great tension between political radicals and law enforcement authorities. She could not see how to safely extricate herself from her situation.
- Mark Chapman, although at one time a successful child care worker and counselor with the YMCA, believed himself to be a failure and a "nobody."
- NN, although once having earned a master's degree, was debilitated by chronic mental illness, and was living a nomadic, isolated life;
- GI felt constantly harassed and overwhelmed by the voices emanating from what he believed to be a secret, illegal spy satellite program developed by the federal government.

Each of these men and women, at some point, came to see an attack of a prominent person of public status as a solution, or way out, of their problems.

- FT was watching a television show about the state gubernatorial election when he suddenly thought "how weird it would be to assassinate the governor." He then

started to read and learn about assassination and assassins and spent the next eighteen months preoccupied with selecting and shooting a national leader.

- Ruth Steinhagen became obsessed with first baseman Eddie Waitkus. She collected clippings about him, went to more than 50 baseball games, wrote many letters to him (unanswered), and slept with his picture under her pillow. Steinhagen came to believe that she could achieve her goals of getting in the limelight and of dying by shooting Waitkus.

- JD had long been interested in movies about assassination and in weapons. He was driving aimlessly through the southwest, feeling hopeless, when he began to think that by assassinating the president he would achieve three ends: 1) the country would no longer be taken in the wrong direction; 2) he would no longer be a "non-entity"; and 3) he would be killed, ending his pain and misery.

- Sirhan Sirhan was failing at work, at school, and in social life. He began to think that if he shot a national figure whom he believed to be an enemy of the Palestinians – President Lyndon Johnson, Ambassador Arthur Goldberg, or Presidential Candidate (and Senator) Robert F. Kennedy – he could achieve the status he wished for and perhaps even change the situation of the Palestinian people.

- FD, a history buff, felt unloved by her husband, meanly treated and unappreciated by her demanding boss, and in pain from a chronic medical condition. She began to read about the Civil War and John Wilkes Booth. FD developed an interest in the lives of American assassins and read avidly about them. She came to belief that she was like previous assassins, a "loser." FD determined to get herself "removed" from society by attacking a prominent public official.

- Sara Jane Moore worked and lived in a community and in a political climate where talk of "offing the pigs," and shooting the president was not uncommon. Moore fastened on the idea of shooting President Ford once she realized that her situation as both political radical and police informer was becoming increasingly untenable and dangerous.

- Mark Chapman was obsessed with being a "nobody," felt betrayed by cultural figures whom he saw as "phonies," and saw John Lennon as the "biggest phony of all." In September, 1988, Chapman decided to kill Lennon. This action, he believed, would send a message about phonies, and would bring attention to the book, The Catcher in the Rye, which Chapman believed held important lessons for the world.

- NN blamed her declining fortunes on what she perceived as mismanagement of the commodities company that she believed she owned. When the company experienced difficulties, she came to company headquarters with a gun, confronted the president, and killed him.

- GI's life, over a course of several years, was overwhelmed by the experience of hearing voices that he believed came from an illegal satellite program. He developed a strategy he called "brinksmanship" to stop the voices. Over a period of months, GI bought a number of weapons. He threatened the voices that if they did not leave him alone, he would go to Washington to do harm. GI believed that each time he made such a threat the voices would diminish in intensity. But each time they came back. Finally, at the limits of his patience, GI decided to travel to Washington to shoot a cabinet officer or other high ranking federal official. This action, he was convinced, would lead to a "Watergate-type" investigation and expose the illegal satellite program.

For FT, Ruth Steinhagen, JD, Sirhan Sirhan, and Mark Chapman, assassination would bring notoriety, recognition, public attention and elevation of their personal status. For FD and Sara Moore, assassination would result in their being taken from situations that they found intolerable. For GI, assassination would lead to a national investigation of the program that he believed was torturing him. For NN, assassination of the company president would right what she believed to be a series of wrongs done to her. For JD, Ruth Steinhagen, and FD, assassination might also result in their deaths, removing them from lives they found unbearably painful.

For these, and other subjects, the path to assassination, from their original idea to the attack or near-attack, had several – or many – steps.

- FT considered attacking several political leaders, and even attended one political rally with a knife, before bringing a gun to rally for a presidential nominee.
- Mark Chapman traveled to New York to find and kill John Lennon. Chapman left New York to return to Hawaii, feeling that he no longer needed to kill Lennon. Several weeks later, he again began to feel "compulsed" to kill Lennon and returned to New York.
- GI debated with himself for months about how to stop the satellite program. He started to drive to Washington on several occasions, but each time turned back when he believed that the satellite voices were diminishing. Ultimately, when the voices continued, GI traveled to Washington, D.C., where he was arrested with a trunk full of weapons and ammunition .

Three reasons appear to explain why assassination attempts rarely follow initial ideas of assassination directly and immediately:

1) it takes considerable personal organization to formulate and execute a plan to attack a public official or public figure: there are pragmatic difficulties associated with mounting an attack (such as finding the target) that must be overcome;
2) most subjects bring mixed, or conflicting, feelings and moral values to the idea of attacking a target who is selected on the basis of their public status;

3) chance, or opportunity, is a large factor in an attack.

Some persons deliberated about assassination for years before moving into action. Others latched on to the idea of assassination or attack as a way to solve their problems and moved within a period of weeks or months into action.

While it is difficult to identify with precision specific precipitants, or triggers, that led subjects to move from ideas of assassination to action, almost half of the subjects are known to have experienced a major loss or life change in the year before their attack or near-lethal approach. These losses or changes included marital problems and breakups, death of a family member, failure at school, work, or in social relationships, personal illness or illness of a family member, or a personal setback that precipitated feelings of despair or desperation.

What motivates persons to act violently toward public officials and public figures?

Motives of attackers and near-lethal approachers have more often been assumed than explored and analyzed. Assailants and near-lethal approachers of public officials and figures have motives that influence their choice of targets and their actions. Sometimes these motives are not obvious and are difficult to ascertain.

Students of assassination in the U.S. have generally seen assassins and attackers of political leaders either as possessing "political" motives or as being "deranged." This is a narrow and inaccurate view of assassination.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers of public officials rarely had "political" motives. Only one subject who acted alone (Sirhan Sirhan) might be seen to have a primary political motive or have a primary interest in changing government policies. (And even in Sirhan's case, there is considerable evidence to suggest that his primary interest in assassinating Senator Robert F. Kennedy was to achieve notoriety.)

An attacker or would-be attacker with motives that clearly are not "political" is likely to be seen as "crazy." It has often been assumed that mentally ill assailants or potential assailants either have motives that are so irrational that they cannot be understood or have no motives other than their illness. This perspective is incorrect.

Subjects who were clearly mentally ill often had defined (and rational) motives. For example, GI reasoned that if he attacked a high ranking federal official, there would be a major investigation. During that investigation, GI figured, the illegal CIA spy satellite system that had harassed him would come to public attention. While, in reality, there was no satellite system harassing GI, had he attacked a major federal official, there would have been a major investigation.

Assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers have a range of motives, with a subject often having more than one motive. Motives for attacks and near-lethal approaches included:

- to achieve notoriety/fame;
- to avenge a perceived wrong;
- to end personal pain; to be killed by law enforcement;
- to bring national attention to a perceived problem;
- to save the country or the world;
- to achieve a special relationship with the target;
- to make money;
- to bring about political change.

Examples:

To achieve notoriety/fame (frequency: common)

FT was straightforward about his motives for planning to shoot a high ranking federal official. "Anyone who would shoot such an important and powerful person would receive a lot of attention. That attention was very appealing to me. I would be in newspapers and on television. People would know my name. They might even write a chapter about me in a book."

To avenge a perceived wrong (frequency: most common)

NN developed the idea that she owned a world-famous commodities trading company. Over a period of years, while mentally ill and living a nomadic life, NN called, wrote, and visited the president of the company. She was dismissed as a crank. Apparently concerned about an alleged scandal regarding the firm's activities, and its loss of reputation and money she believed to be hers, NN visited the company's headquarters. She entered the president's office suite and demanded to see him. When he came to the reception area to find out what the commotion was about, she took out a gun and shot him.

To end personal pain; to be killed (frequency: occasional)

KE brought a revolver to a rally where a nominee for high elective office was speaking. KE's intention was to charge the podium while waving his gun, in order to draw the fire of law enforcement agents and to be killed. KE was a veteran with a history of depression and suicidal behavior who thought that his actions would lead both to his death and to attention to what he saw as injustices against veterans.

To bring national attention to a perceived problem (frequency: occasional)

GI, a decorated veteran, was working as a supervisor at a utility plant when he first developed the idea that voices from a CIA secret satellite were monitoring his thoughts and interfering with his life.

Over several years, GI became preoccupied with what he believed to be this illegal satellite program. He spent hours arguing with the voices of the satellite operators, urging them to stop bothering him. GI's productivity and attitudes at work decreased markedly. He was sent by his employer to see a psychiatrist, but, fearing that the doctor would think he was "crazy", he did not tell him about his concerns about the satellite program.

Shortly thereafter, GI was fired from his job. His preoccupation with the satellite program, which he believed to be directed by high level government officials, continued to grow. Ultimately, GI decided that to stop the program, he would have to take dramatic action. He decided to shoot a high level government official, figuring that such an attack would lead Congress to initiate a "Watergate-type" investigation and thereby expose the illegal satellite program.

Over several months, GI bought shotguns and other rifles and ammunition. One day, armed with his weapons and about $5,000 in cash, he left his home and traveled to Washington, D.C. A family member, who was concerned about him, notified the police. GI was arrested before he could initiate an attack.

To save the country or the world (frequency: occasional)

Early in a campaign year, VF placed signed pages of a written statement on cars parked in a public area in Washington, D.C. The statement said that a candidate for high office would soon be dead. Later that day, the candidate's office told law enforcement authorities that VF had visited the office in an attempt to see the candidate.

Located and interviewed, VF said that he believed he might be president one day, and might ultimately become president of the world. VF gave permission for a search of his car. In the trunk, there was a .22 rifle with a scope and 200 rounds of ammunition. In a search of VF's home, clippings about assassinations were discovered.

In later interviews, VF admitted that he had believed that if the candidate was elected, it would mean doom for the world. VF said that he had resolved, if need be, to kill the candidate in order to save the world. When another candidate was elected, VF said, he felt relieved that the world would not be destroyed.

To achieve a special relationship with the target (frequency: rare, except with celebrity targets)

LS was infatuated with a well-known actress. She desperately wanted a relationship with the actress. LS knew where the actress lived and regularly parked her car near the house, trying to watch the actress' comings and goings.

Early one morning, police were called to the actress' home after a security alarm was activated. They observed that three windows were broken and that LS was in the house with a rifle. When the police entered, LS pointed the rifle at herself and

said to the police officer, "Don't come any closer. I am going to kill myself or kill you." The police officer said that LS also said, "If I can't have her, nobody can."

After a standoff which involved the SWAT team, LS was arrested. She told police: "I want to make her love me. I would have done anything." Asked why she had a gun, she replied, "So she would know I meant business. I would have been aggressive with her. She would have known I meant business. She would have done what I said."

To make money (frequency: rare)

Joseph Corbett spent several years in the late 1950's planning the kidnapping of Adolph Coors III, the chief executive of the Coors brewing company. In February, 1960, Corbett attempted to kidnap Coors, hoping to receive a large ransom. Corbett botched the kidnapping and shot Coors dead.

To bring about political change (frequency: occasional)

In March, 1954, Delores (Lolitą) Lebron, together with Rafael Cancel-Miranda, Andres Figuero-Cordero, and Irving Flores-Rodriquez went to the Visitor's Gallery of the U.S. House of Representatives and started shooting at congressmen, who were meeting in session. Five congressmen were wounded. Over 25 bullets were fired. Lebron shot into the ceiling. The others shot into the assemblage of congressmen.

Lebron, Cancel-Miranda, Figuero-Cordero, and Flores-Rodriguez were members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. They saw themselves in a position similar to American colonialists before the Declaration of Independence from England, and hoped to bring attention to the cause of Puerto Rican independence. They believed that their attack would generate public sentiment that would force Congress to grant independence for Puerto Rico.

Some subjects are known to have had more than one motive. JD, for example, wanted to kill the president, (whom he believed to be leading the country in the wrong direction), to be killed in the attempt, and to gain notoriety (no longer be a "non-entity"). Sirhan Sirhan longed for notoriety and to change United States policy regarding the Palestinians. Lynette Fromme wanted to retaliate against a government she believed had wrongly convicted and incarcerated Charlie Manson and to call attention to corporate and government activities that she believed threatened the environment.

How do persons who direct violence toward public officials and public figures select their target(s)?

Attackers' and near-lethal approachers' selection of targets was influenced by several factors:

- the potential attacker's place on his/her path to assassination;

- the potential attacker's motives;
- found or perceived opportunities to attack.

Almost half of the subjects are known to have considered attacking a target other than the one that they finally selected. Most subjects picked either public official or public figure targets and did not consider both kinds of targets.

Location on the path to assassination

Since assassination is the end result of a process of thinking and behavior, the place of a would-be assailant on the path toward an attack may affect target selection.

FT

FT began to think about attacking a public official over a year before he brought a gun to a political rally for a presidential nominee. He went to the library and read about assassination. He spent much of his time thinking about becoming an assassin. Several months after starting to think about becoming an assassin, FT attended a rally of candidates for governor in his state in order to observe security arrangements at the rally. Some months later, he carried a knife to a rally for a presidential candidate which was held in his home town. FT thought about attacking the candidate but decided to wait for someone "more important and powerful." Had FT not been moving from dreaming about becoming an assassin to acting on his ideas, the candidate would not have become a target.

Motives

There is a clear relationship between motive and target selection. The relationship is most obvious for subjects whose principal motive was revenge.

John Buettner-Janusch

John Buettner-Janusch was a distinguished fifty-five year-old anthropologist who served as chair of the Anthropology Department at a major university. In 1979, Buettner-Janusch was arrested for operating a laboratory making illegal drugs in his office. After a jury trial in 1980, he was convicted. Buettner-Janusch was sentenced to prison by Federal Judge Charles L. Brieant, Jr. He served three years of his sentence and was released on parole in 1983. Unable to secure employment, he existed on social security and retirement benefits.

On the evening of February 13, 1987, Judge Brieant returned to his home to find his wife lying unconscious on the floor of their living room. Mrs. Brieant was rushed to the hospital, where she was diagnosed as suffering from atropine and sparteine poisoning. Judge Brieant reported to the investigators that earlier that day, his wife had received and opened a box of Valentine's Day chocolates addressed to "Mr. and Mrs. Charles Brieant, Jr." Mrs. Brieant ate four pieces of chocolate, became ill, and lost consciousness.

Investigative analysis revealed that Buettner-Janusch's fingerprint was on the box of chocolates. Further investigation suggested that Buettner-Janusch had sent four other boxes of poison chocolates to persons toward whom he held grudges and resentments.

Buettner-Janusch was convicted of attempting to murder Judge Brieant. He died in prison several years later.

Subjects whose motives were : 1) to achieve notoriety/fame, 2) to bring national attention to a perceived problem, 3) to save the country or the world, or 4) to bring about political change, usually picked targets because of their perception of target's importance.

John W. Hinckley, Jr.

John Hinckley wanted maximum attention for his actions. While he visited the offices of a number of major Washington figures during the fall and winter of 1980, Hinckley focused his attention on the Presidency. In the fall of 1980, Hinckley attended campaign appearances for President Carter. After the presidential election of 1980, Hinckley shifted his attention to President Reagan.

EJ

EJ, who had a long-standing alcohol problem, was dismissed from his job of twenty years. His father died around the same time. Soon after, he separated from his wife. EJ became increasingly concerned with the national unemployment problem. He spoke to colleagues and neighbors and wrote to national leaders about the "plight of the American working man." His friends thought he was becoming obsessed with the nation's employment problems.

Several weeks later, waving a revolver, EJ took a number of men and women as hostages at a store near a location being visited by several high ranking national officials. EJ stated to the hostages that he had acted for the purpose of seeing and talking with a high level official. He was reported to have said: "I want to talk to the [official]. He must do something about the country's unemployment problems. I will kill him if I have to. I know I am going to be punished for this. I may have to do time. I may be killed but maybe someone will benefit from this."

EJ selected the official as his target because he wanted to bring his concerns to high level attention. He released his hostages without causing injury and was arrested. He was convicted and sentenced to prison.

C C

CC believed that God had sent him on a mission to kill the Devil and save the world. He believed the Devil was the president and that other politicians supportive of the president were the "Devil's helpers." Over a period of several years, CC made efforts to approach the president in order to shoot him.

Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola

Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola were members of the Puerto Rican nationalist movement and were active supporters of Puerto Rican independence. On October 31, 1950, they traveled from New York City to Washington, D.C. At approximately 2:20 pm on November 1, Collazo and Torresola attempted to shoot their way into Blair House, where President Truman was residing during White House renovations. One Secret Service officer was killed, as was Torresola. Collazo was injured. President Truman was not injured.

Interviewed two days later, Collazo said, "I did not come to Washington to shoot Mr. Truman. I came to Washington to kill the president of the United States." In later years, Collazo spoke of his and Torresola's hope that their attack on the president would generate international publicity and thereby lead to Puerto Rican independence.

Subjects whose major motive was to be killed or removed from society often chose a target whom they saw as well protected.

FD

FD chose the president as her primary target because she wanted to be removed from society and because she believed that the president had the highest degree of protection of any official. FD figured that since the president was so well protected, she would inevitably be stopped before she carried out an assassination. She reported that she hoped to be "subdued, arrested, and removed, possibly for the rest of my life."

For a number of subjects, choice of a target involved several motives.

Arthur Jackson

Living in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1981, Arthur Jackson chose the actress Theresa Saldana as his target because she reminded him of an experience that he had when he was in the U.S. Army in 1955. He decided to kill Saldana both because he desired a special relationship with her and because he believed that murdering her would force the U.S. Government to execute him. Jackson hoped to be executed at Alcatraz Prison, the site of the escape and death in 1946 of Joseph Cretzer, a criminal whom Jackson admired and with whom he felt a special bond.

A subject who wishes to die in the spotlight of national attention might attempt to attack any high ranking public official who is protected and who receives media coverage. For such a potential assassin, personal feelings about a target, or opinions about a target's politics or policies, may not enter into the decision about which target to select for attack. What matters is that the target is surrounded by armed protectors and that the assassination attempt will receive media attention.

A subject who does not wish – or is not prepared – to risk death, might not consider attacking a public official or public figure known to be well protected. Such an attacker might rule out a situation where his/her escape options would be limited. On the other hand, an assailant who wishes to be killed in the attempt might not consider his/her escape options.

A subject primarily interested in revenge for a perceived or actual wrong might have a specific target(s) who is seen as responsible for the injustice. Such a subject would not be interested in attacking another public official or figure who does not appear to bear responsibility for the subject's grievances and pain.

Opportunity to attack

Several subjects chose their targets because the targets happened to be near the attacker or near-lethal approacher at a time when the subject was ready to attack.

Delores (Lolita) Lebron, Rafael Cancel-Miranda, Andres Figuero-Cordero, Irving Flores-Rodriguez

Delores (Lolita) Lebron, Rafael Cancel-Miranda, Andres Figuero-Cordero, and Irving Flores-Rodriguez did not pick individual members of Congress as targets before they entered the visitors gallery of the House of Representatives on March 1, 1954. The Puerto Rican Nationalist attackers did not apparently even decide whether to attack congressmen or senators. They entered the Capital, asked for the visitor's gallery, and were pointed to the gallery for the House of Representatives. Once there, they drew their guns and started shooting. Since their primary motive was to bring attention to the cause of Puerto Rican independence, they figured that an attack at the Capital on any members of Congress would achieve their objectives.

OD

OD selected a high level official as a target for assault without knowing the name of his target. He attacked the official because the target was standing near a public building in Washington, D.C. and was being interviewed by television reporters. OD was preoccupied with the idea that he needed to warn the world of an impending environmental catastrophe. Unsuccessful in his efforts to contact other officials several days earlier, OD assumed that his target was an important person, approached him, and hit him in the jaw in the presence of television cameras.

And a number of persons became targets of assassins and attackers because they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

PV

PV traveled to Los Angeles (after killing three persons in a bagel store) in order to kill a famous actor. Frustrated by his inability to find the actor, suicidal, and

believing that if he killed the two security guards at the studio gates, he would go to heaven, PV went up to each guard and shot him in the head.

Multiple targets

Almost half of the subjects are known to have considered attacking a target(s) other than the target of the Principal Incident.

For example, members of the Order had a list of targets to assassinate. Denver radio talk show host Alan Berg, who was murdered by group, was the first name on the list.

GI thought about attacking several high ranking government officials. GI ultimately decided to attack his primary target because he believed that target would be less well protected than the other officials on his list, and therefore that he would have a better chance to succeed in his attack.

Mark Chapman considered a number of possible targets, all of whom he saw as "phonies."

Overlap between public official targets and celebrity targets

None of the fifty-one subjects whose Principal Incident target was a public official are known to have selected or considered celebrity targets in addition to their PI target. One subject, Mark Chapman, whose primary target was a celebrity is known to have considered a public official as a possible target.

What planning strategies are used by persons who direct violence toward public officials and public figures?

Attackers and near-attackers evinced a range of sophistication and attention in their planning. Some subjects planned their attacks with great care; others gave only slight or superficial attention to planning. Still others tried to plan but were thwarted by security provided for their targets.

Despite sometimes thoughtful planning efforts, no attacker or near-assailant approached the task of assassination with the sophistication and technical expertise that has been presented in popular culture images of assassins. No subjects, with the exceptions of Walter Moody, alleged "Unibomber" Theodore Kaczynski, and poisoner John Buettner-Janusch manufactured his/her own weapons. Only Buettner-Janusch used esoteric substances, such as poisons or chemical agents. Other than possibly Moody, Kaczynski, and Buettner-Janusch, no subjects developed complex or elaborate schemes or ruses to outwit a target or his or her protectors.

On the other hand, with the possible exception of OD, who hit an official being interviewed for television, and PV, who murdered two security guards, no attackers selected the target of their violent attack without some degree of planning and consideration.

Comprehensiveness of planning

With some exceptions, the most careful planners were the subjects who attacked for money.

Charles Harrelson

Harrelson studied the routines of Judge John Wood, Jr., whom he was hired to kill. Harrelson considered shooting Judge Wood on several occasions. He attacked the judge early in the morning when Judge Wood was leaving his home for work and shot him in the back with a high powered rifle.

Joseph Corbett

Corbett observed and analyzed the lifestyle and habits of Adolph Coors III for several years before he attempted to kidnap him. Foiled at first when Coors and his family moved to a new home, Corbett drew back, watched, and developed new plans. On a February morning in 1960, Corbett used his car to block a one-lane wooden bridge that Coors had to cross on his way to work. The would-be kidnapper confronted Coors with a gun. Coors resisted, Corbett fired, and Coors was killed. Corbett fled to the East Coast where he abandoned his car, traveled to Toronto, and was arrested in Vancouver in October, 1960. A tip from a reader of Reader's Digest Magazine, which had published an "the FBI is looking for this man" article, led to Corbett's capture.

Group attackers generally planned their assassinations with some care.

The "Order": Robert Jay Matthews, Bruce Pierce, David Lane, Jean Craig, Richard Scutari

Members of the Order spent several months preparing to assassinate Alan Berg. Jean Craig traveled from Idaho to Denver and spent several weeks surveilling him and learning about his schedule and travel patterns. David Lane and Bruce Pierce made at least one trip to Denver before the assassination to plan the attack. The group also planned their escape.

A number of individual attackers planned with considerable sophistication.

Mark Chapman

Chapman bought special shoes and dressed carefully to prepare himself to assassinate John Lennon. He thought that he might have to stand for hours outside Lennon's apartment building. He cultivated a relationship with the doorman of the building and carried a copy of Lennon's most recent album with him, so that he would look like any other Lennon fan.

Chapman wore a trench coat and carried his gun in the right front pocket of the coat. Concerned that a police officer might notice a bulge in the coat, Chapman

placed his copy of The Catcher in the Rye in the pocket over the gun. His plan, if asked about the bulge, was to pull out the book and show it to the officer.

Samuel Byck

Byck planned for over a year to carry out "Operation Pandora's Box," as he called his effort to assassinate President Nixon. He was foiled the first time he intended to initiate his plan, when Secret Service agents, who had been told that Byck had talked about assassinating the president and were concerned about the risk he might pose, had him committed to a psychiatric hospital in February, 1973. Byck's foiled intention to implement his assassination plan in February, 1973, was not discovered until after his death.

In the winter of 1973-1974, Byck sought and received permits to picket in front of the White House on over a dozen occasions. He applied for, and received, permits to picket, for a number of days in February and March, 1974. When he applied for these permits, Byck had already decided to launch his attack on February 24. He secured permits for late February and March in order to deceive authorities about his intentions.

Byck killed himself after he failed in his attempt on February 24, 1974, to high jack a commercial airline flight and force the pilot to dive-bomb the plane into the White House.

Sixteen of the 25 subjects whose Principal Incident target was the president visited Washington before the date of their attacks or near-lethal approaches. Visits to Washington often were part of efforts to plan an attack. Many of these subjects are known to have walked around the White House and pondered how to launch an attack on the president. Only three of these subjects actually mounted attacks at or near the White House (Collazo, Torresola, and Duran).

Planning strategies

Generally, the subjects' planning strategies were thoughtful and reasonable. For example, many attackers and would-be attackers of public official targets chose locations where the target intended to be for a temporary period, such as a rally or speech site. Choice of a temporary site was often predicated on a subject's belief that it would be impossible to mount a successful attack at the target's home or office. This belief was particularly prevalent in subjects whose target was the president.

Given a choice, attackers and near-lethal approachers opted for sites they were more, rather than less, familiar with.

FT

FT had taken a knife to a rally for a presidential candidate at the main hotel in his hometown and had considered trying to attack the candidate. When, several months later, he read in the newspaper that a presidential nominee was coming to

> attend a rally at a local park, FT wanted to "jump on the opportunity." The nominee attended the rally, and also attended an unpublicized reception at the hotel. Asked later about his choice of location, FT reported that had he known that the nominee was going to the hotel, he would have gone there rather than to the park. FT said that he knew the layout of the hotel. He believed that he would have had a better chance to penetrate security and attack the nominee at the hotel rather than at the park.

Assailants and would-be assailants generally dressed to fit in when they were preparing to mount an attack, especially if they were planning to appear at a public site. FT carried a camera and wore a sport shirt so that he would "look normal" in the crowd at the park rally for the presidential nominee. LF bought a suit and overcoat so that he would look like a law enforcement official at an outdoor speech of a senior federal official. Mark Chapman wanted to look like any other fan of John Lennon. FK dressed to look like a health care worker when he tried to get inside the health care facility which a high ranking federal official was scheduled to visit.

Fewer than a quarter of the subjects are known to have developed escape plans. No subject whose primary target was the president is known to have had an escape plan. Subjects whose target was the president often assumed – or hoped – that they would be killed or captured after an attack.

Other subjects had similar thoughts. Robert Bardo thought that he would be killed after he murdered Rebecca Schaefer. Mark Chapman ruled out developing an escape plan. One of his purposes in shooting John Lennon was to bring attention to the book, The Catcher in the Rye. Being caught after shooting Lennon would secure attention to the book. Chapman shot Lennon, then waited for the police to come arrest him.

Subjects who planned or made efforts to avoid detection or escape included those whose motives were money, members of the Order, the assassins of Malcolm X, Joseph Franklin (the sniper killer who shot Vernon Jordan, Jr.), Byron de la Beckwith, El Sayid Nosair, and three of the four judicial attackers.

Having a wish to be killed, or a willingness to die, affected planning for attackers and near-lethal approachers. Almost one-third of the subjects are known to have wished to die or expected to die or be killed in their attack or near-lethal approach. These persons included the three subjects who used airplanes as weapons, one subject who planned to detonate explosives to kill a president-elect, and several subjects whose primary motive was to be killed. Other subjects, whose target was an official protected by law enforcement officers, expected to be killed.

What relationships exist—if any—between threatening to commit violent action and carrying out violent action?

Much literature on assassination, often unthinkingly, links threateners and attackers, as if the two categories are one. The assumption of many writers is that those who make

threats pose threats. While some threateners *may* pose threats, sometimes those who pose threats do not make threats.

The problem of unthinkingly linking threateners and attackers is seen perhaps most graphically in Rothstein's 1964, oft-cited study of eleven psychiatric patients at the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri, whose offenses involved threats to the president. Rothstein entitled his report, "Presidential Assassination Syndrome," although *no assassins, attackers, or near-lethal approachers* were included among the eleven men in his study. Each of the subjects had made verbal or written threats to harm the president.

No assassin or attacker communicated a direct threat about their target to the target or to a law enforcement agency before their attack or near lethal-approach. Fewer than a tenth of all subjects communicated a direct threat to the target or a law enforcement agency. These subjects were all approachers.

This finding does not suggest that investigators should ignore threats that are sent or spoken to or about public officials or public figures. Many persons have been prevented, or deterred, from taking action because of a prompt response to their threatening communications. The finding that attackers do not communicate direct threats to their targets does suggest, however, that attention should be directed toward identifying, investigating, and assessing persons whose behavior indicates that they might pose threats of violence, whether or not they communicate direct threats to their targets or to authorities.

Edward Taylor

Jim Hicklin was a popular radio personality in Los Angeles who reported about traffic and other events from his helicopter. In August, 1971, Hicklin received a letter at his home from a listener and fan, Edward Taylor. Over the next eighteen months, Taylor sent Hicklin a stream of letters. The first letters were friendly, supportive, even laudatory. But they made Hicklin uneasy.

Hicklin was bothered by the letters. He hired a private detective to go see Taylor and to get him to stop writing. The detective's intervention had the opposite result: Taylor continued writing. Only now Taylor's letters were hostile and accused Hicklin of offending and threatening him.

Taylor wrote to Hicklin's boss and to the FAA, complaining about him and suggesting that he should not hold a pilot's license. He filed a civil complaint in court, demanding that Hicklin apologize to him. Taylor accused Hicklin of harassment and of "strafing" and "terrorizing" his household.

Hicklin, increasingly troubled by Taylor's incessant barrage of complaints, asked the District Attorney's office to get Taylor to stop. Taylor was visited by investigators from the DA's office and told that, from the DA's perspective, he was the offender and Hicklin was the victim. But Taylor believed that he was the

victim and that the authorities were unresponsive to his fears and concerns. He became convinced that he needed a gun to protect himself from Hicklin, so he bought a handgun, which he kept with him at all times. And he continued writing. He made no threats in his letters, but he continued to complain about Hicklin.

In March, 1973, during a visit by his elderly mother, Taylor was visited by the police who arrested him on a charge of misdemeanor libel for continuing to write to and about Hicklin. Taylor spent the weekend in the county jail. Released, Taylor stopped writing letters. He stayed at home, thinking about Hicklin and what he believed Hicklin had done to him.

On April 2, 1973, Jim Hicklin and his wife boarded a ship for a vacation cruise. Hicklin had mentioned over the radio when and where he was leaving for his holiday. A number of friends and well-wishers came to see the Hicklins off. So did Edward Taylor, who shot and killed Jim Hicklin.

At no point before he murdered Jim Hicklin had Edward Taylor communicated a direct threat of violence to or about him. .

While few subjects delivered explicit threats to their targets or to law enforcement officials, attackers and near-lethal approachers were not completely secretive about their aims and intentions. Almost two-thirds of the subjects are known to have made some threat about their targets in the days, weeks, and months before their attack or near-lethal approach. Attackers and would-be attackers usually expressed their intentions, either by letting someone know or by writing notes, letters, or journals that described their thinking and state of mind. Some subjects told family members that they intended to attack the target; others mentioned their aims to co-workers or friends; still others kept detailed journals in which they recorded their hopes and plans. These subjects engaged in pre-incident behaviors that included, but were not limited to communications, that revealed information about their future behaviors.

While few family members are known to have been told directly or specifically about plans for attack of a public official or public figure, some potential assailants indicated to family members that they were intending to harm others. For example, Robert Bardo wrote a family member before he left to go to Los Angeles to kill Rebecca Schaefer, then made at least one telephone call from Los Angeles. In his communications, Bardo indicated that he was thinking of committing harm. Ruth Steinhagen apparently mentioned the idea of harming Eddie Waitkus to family members, who dismissed it as idle talk. Lee Oswald made his wife take his picture while he held a rifle and was dressed in combat clothes shortly before he attempted to kill General Edwin Walker. After learning from media reports that Walker was not injured by his attack, Oswald also communicated to his wife his disappointment that he had missed hitting Walker with his bullet.

Mark Chapman

Mark Chapman was unsuccessful in October, 1980, on his first trip from Hawaii to New York City to kill John Lennon. After waiting and looking for Lennon for several days, Chapman went to see the movie, "Ordinary People," a story about a disturbed young man who received help. Leaving the theater, he called his wife in Hawaii, told her that he had come to New York to kill John Lennon, and said that he was coming home. Chapman's wife apparently told no one about her husband's behavior or intentions. Nor did she apparently tell anyone when Chapman, in early December, abruptly left Hawaii again for New York. On December 8, Chapman shot and killed John Lennon.

Other subjects communicated their interests in harming public officials or figures to associates or co-workers.

Still other subjects kept journals or diaries that indicated, or gave strong clues about, their intentions.

OV

OV was a professional who had been fired from his government job after his security clearance was revoked for psychiatric reasons. He appealed his dismissal and was unsuccessful.

OV developed the idea that he was "World President." He believed that national, state, and county officials had committed crimes. OV frequented the halls of Congress and tried to make appointments with public officials, including senior officials in the Administration.

One afternoon, a person sitting in a Congressional Hearing room to observe a hearing noticed that the man sitting next to her had a pistol in his open brief case. The gun was reported to the police, and OV was arrested. In his possession were letters indicating that as "World President," he had sentenced national, state, and county officials – including the chair of the committee holding the hearing – to prison terms.

The idea that the persons who pose the greatest risks to public officials and public figures are those who make explicit threats is a myth. People make threats for a variety of reasons: to intimidate, to coerce, to express anger, to bring attention to themselves, to get help, to force a change in their circumstances, to warn before they act, to be stopped.

But why would a person who genuinely desired to attack a person of public status send or call a threat to the target before mounting an attack? FT was asked why he did not send a threat letter before he brought a gun to the presidential nominee's rally. "If I had sent a letter," he said, "the police would have come and arrested me. I didn't want to be stopped then." Other subjects seemed puzzled at the question.

What relationships exist—if any—between symptoms of mental illness and assassination behaviors?

Many writers about assassination in the United States have asserted or assumed that most, if not all, American assassins have been mentally ill. Some say that mental illness is the *cause* of assassination. Others argue that mental illness is a key factor in understanding assassination behavior.

Focus on mental illness may be comforting to those who seek simplistic explanations for attack behaviors directed at public officials and figures. However, it deters careful analysis of the motives, thoughts, and behaviors of assassins. In the final analysis, whether or not mentally ill, almost all assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers utilized rational thought processes as they sought to achieve their goals. Focus on mental illness is therefore not useful for those with responsibilities to prevent attacks.

There is much at stake in understanding the relationship between mental illness and assassination behavior. Unquestioned assumptions that "mental illness causes assassination" or that "all assassins are crazy" may lead threat assessors and protectors to determine prematurely that a subject of investigation does or does not pose a risk of attack. Investigators with these beliefs may not examine the thinking and behavior of subjects as carefully as they should. Assumptions about relationships between mental illness and assassination behaviors deflect attention from more important – and more useful – questions about a subject's motives, capacities, communications, and pre-attack behaviors.

The flawed logic of arguments that most, if not all, American assassins have been mentally ill and that mental illness is a key factor – or key cause – in assassination flows from four starting points.

One is the assumption that assassination in the United States – particularly of the president – is inherently an irrational act. Historically, in most societies the primary goals of assassins of national leaders have been to remove certain persons or elites from power and/or to bring down the government in order to install other persons/elites into positions of power. Assassination of one (or several) national leaders in a constitutional democracy that has separate and equal branches of government will not achieve these political goals. In the United States, there are clear lines of succession to power. There are also regular, constitutionally mandated, elections, so that persons in positions of governmental leadership can be removed through a political process.

Assassination of national leaders in the United States, therefore, will not achieve the traditional political goal of changing those in control of the government. Thus, assassination in the United States is not a "rational" political act. To this manner of thinking, those who attempt assassination in the U.S. cannot have rational goals and must – by definition – be mentally ill.

The second starting point for those who assert that American assassins have been mentally ill are reports (often incomplete) about the ideas and behaviors of a few assassins. For example, Richard Lawrence, who attacked President Jackson in 1835, was reported to believe that he was King Richard III of England and that he was entitled to a large sum of money from the federal government. John Schrank is reported to have said that he shot presidential candidate Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 to prevent the United States from becoming a monarchy. (If elected, Roosevelt would have been the first president to serve for three terms.) Schrank apparently believed that Roosevelt's election would destroy a vital precedent and lead to tyranny in the United States. Since some assassins have been mentally ill, this argument suggests, most (if not all) assassins and attackers are likely to be similarly deranged.

A third reason that many consider assassins and attackers to be mentally ill stems from the nature of the act itself. Reasonable people abhor the thought of assassination. It is hard to accept the idea that a few persons might see assassination as an acceptable way to resolve their problems and to achieve their goals.

A fourth factor also helps explain the widespread assumption of a relationship between mental illness and assassination. With rare exception, trials of assassins and attackers of national leaders and celebrities in the last thirty years have featured testimony by mental health professionals to the effect that the defendant was suffering from mental illness at the time of his/her attack and should not be held criminally responsible. Since each of these defendants was observed committing the attack – and therefore did not have an alibi defense – the only defense available in most cases was that of the defendant's mental status at the time of the crime. The trials of Sirhan Sirhan, Arthur Bremer, Sara Jane Moore, Mark Chapman, John Hinckley, Robert Bardo, and Francisco Duran brought forth such testimony. Although only John Hinckley was found to lack criminal responsibility by reason of mental illness, the idea that assassins are mentally ill has been broadcast repeatedly to millions of Americans.

In fact, fewer than half of American assassins, attackers, or near-lethal approachers since 1950 who chose public officials or figures as their primary targets exhibited symptoms of mental illness at the time of their attacks or near-lethal approaches. The argument that almost all assailants and near-assailants of public officials in the United States are mentally ill – and that mental illness, therefore, is a major factor in understanding and preventing assassination – is incorrect. It is also misleading, in that it may obscure the fact that effective attempts at assassination require careful thinking and planning..

Contacts with mental health professionals

To be sure, sixty-one percent of the assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers had in fact been evaluated or treated by a mental health professional at some point before their attack or near-lethal approach. These contacts ranged from several meetings with a counselor during adolescence for upsetting behavior to years of care for chronic mental disability. Thirty-eight percent of the subjects had been hospitalized at least once for

psychiatric reasons. These hospitalizations ranged from brief admissions for suicidal threats or gestures to longer stays for treatment of psychotic disorders.

Moreover, some subjects did suffer from major mental illnesses. Others had episodes or patterns of disruptive, self-destructive, or upsetting behavior that had triggered contact with mental health professionals. However, all could think clearly enough to mount an attack or make a near-lethal approach to a prominent person of public status. And about forty percent of the subjects had no known contact with mental health professionals or systems.

Delusional ideas

Thirty-eight percent of the subjects appeared to hold delusional ideas at the time of their attack or near-lethal approach. But only a small number of subjects were prompted by voices ordering them to kill, or mounted attacks for reasons that, when examined carefully, appear obviously irrational. Even these subjects were capable of thinking and planning.

Motives of delusional subjects included: to achieve notoriety/fame; to avenge a perceived wrong; to end personal pain or to be killed by law enforcement; to bring national attention to a perceived problem; to save the country or the world; and to achieve a special relationship with the target. Subjects whose primary targets were celebrities (and whose motives often were to develop a special relationship with the target) were more likely to be mentally ill than subjects whose targets were public officials.

No subjects whose motives were to effect political change or to get money were delusional at the times of their attacks or approaches.

Mental illness is not, in and of itself, a cause or a motive for assassination

In no case was mental illness, per se, a motive for assassination behavior. Attacks on persons of prominent public status are actions chosen by persons who see assassination as a way to achieve their goals or solve problems. Even for those subjects who were acutely mentally ill and not firmly in touch with reality, assassination, in almost every case, was a rational means for achieving some ends.

GI

GI chose attack on a public official as a last resort when he felt himself to be "at the end of [his] rope." GI desperately wanted to stop what he believed to be a secret, illegal CIA satellite program that he thought was behind the intrusive voices that bedeviled him. After attempting to threaten the voices, in a strategy that he called "brinksmanship," GI decided that the only way to stop the satellite program was to call attention to it. He decided to attack a high ranking government official because he believed that such an attack would cause Congress to initiate a "Watergate-type" investigation which would expose the supposed satellite program.

GI's choice of attack on a public official as a means to an ends was a desperate – but ultimately not irrational – decision. Had he mounted an attack on a high ranking official, there would have been massive attention and an extensive investigation.

TD

TD's decision to attack a high ranking, protected official was motivated by his wish to be killed and his interest in dying with publicity. For almost a year, TD had been preoccupied with ideas about ending his life. On a vacation, he considered jumping off a cruise ship, but he did not want to be "fish bait." He bought a powerful handgun and "devastator" bullets because he was convinced that anyone shot in the head with that combination of gun and ammunition would die instantly. TD practiced putting the gun in his mouth. He debated where to best kill himself. He was concerned that if he shot himself in his apartment, the bullet might pierce the wall and injure a neighbor. If he shot himself in the woods, and his aim was off, he might suffer a painful, lingering death. If he shot himself on his porch, in front of a concrete wall, "the person who found me might have a heart attack."

TD planned his last weeks and months carefully. He apportioned his dwindling money; maxed out his credit cards; boarded his pet. He started drinking again, hoping that alcohol would disinhibit himself and overcome his "survival instinct," so he could put the gun in his mouth and pull the trigger. But he was unable to pull the trigger, so he traveled to Washington, in order to confront a public official with a gun, to be killed by the official's protectors, and to call attention to the problem of veterans.

While some might argue that anyone so suicidal is mentally ill, it is also true that TD's plan to attack a protected national leader was a "rational" means of achieving his apparent goals. Had he successfully shot at his target, it is possible, if not likely, that he would have been shot and killed by the target's protectors. By attacking the official, TD would in fact have "solved" his problems.

Sara Jane Moore

Sara Jane Moore was 45 years old and living in San Francisco with her eleven year-old son when she decided to shoot President Gerald Ford in September 1975. Moore, an accountant by training, had become deeply enmeshed in the tumultuous political scene of the San Francisco area. After the kidnapping of Patty Hearst by the Symbionese Liberation Army, Moore had volunteered to work with the food-for-the-poor program begun by William Randolph Hearst.

Sympathetic to the ideas and personalities of radicals on the political left, Moore joined radical groups and was a regular attendee at meetings and protest rallies in the San Francisco area. But wanting to be law abiding and of assistance to the

authorities, Moore chose to serve as an informer to the police, working with both the San Francisco Police Department and the FBI.

When it became known that she had given information to the police about radical friends, colleagues, and organizations, Moore's situation became increasingly tense and untenable. Shooting President Ford, she decided, would solve her problems by removing her from the dangerous situation she was in (either by death or imprisonment) and by giving her renewed status within the radical community.

Reliance on ideas that "mental illness causes assassination," or "assassins are mentally ill," may block and cloud analysis that can lead to clearer understanding, and perhaps prevention, of assassination attempts. Mounting an attack on a person of public status requires preparation and planning. It is far more productive – and ultimately, more accurate – to examine the thinking that leads a person to see assassination as an acceptable, or necessary action, and to attend to behaviors that may precede an attack, than to simply label assassins and assassination as "irrational" or "crazy."

Were there key life events and patterns in the histories of persons who have directed violence toward public officials and public figures?

It would be easy to conclude that attackers and would-be attackers are troubled persons, with histories of pain, interpersonal difficulties, losses, and failures. No subject who acted alone was living an exemplary life, as defined by success in both work and family spheres. Many, if not most, subjects had great difficulty building and maintaining consistent relationships in their lives, let alone mutual and intimate relationships. Few, if any subjects, had histories of continuing job performance and achievement.

But it would be inaccurate to dismiss these attackers and near-attackers as inadequate, unaccomplished losers or simply look among "losers" to find those who may pose a threat. Almost half of the subjects had attended some college. Several had completed successful tours of military service. One subject had earned a bronze star for valor in combat. One subject had attended law school. Another had attended medical school. Two had served as college professors. One was a retired police officer. Another had retired from the postal service. Another had served as a firefighter and as an elected official. Several others had worked as engineers.

What does seem clear for almost all subjects was that their attack or near-lethal approach occurred after a period of downward spiral in their lives. A tenth of the subjects are known to have had a major illness or accident that affected their behavior in the twelve months before their attack or near-attack. A fifth are known to have lost a significant person or relationship in that twelve-month period. And almost a quarter are known to have suffered a significant failure or loss of status that affected their behavior. Significantly then, almost half of attackers and near-lethal approachers are known to have experienced an accident/illness, loss of relationship, or failure/loss of status that

influenced their behavior in the twelve months before their violent or potentially violent actions.

For many subjects, one or several severe situational stresses appeared to trigger the process of thinking and action that led to assassination behavior.

CHAPTER 9: IMPLICATIONS

Findings from the Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project have direct and specific implications for law enforcement and security professionals with responsibilities for the protection of public officials and public figures or for investigation of threats to the safety of these persons. Many of these implications are explored in the "Guidebook to Protective Intelligence Investigations," an ECSP document written for state and local law enforcement and security professionals.

Perhaps the major overall implication of the study is that *many, if not most, attacks, on public officials and public figures are potentially preventable*. Persons intending to mount attacks against persons of public status follow paths to their attacks. They often engage in "attack-related" behaviors, discernible activities that precede an attack. They may demonstrate interest in previous assassins and assassination attempts. They are likely to communicate their intentions to others or to keep a journal or diary about their thinking and activities.

Disciplined investigators who approach their work with thoroughness, healthy skepticism, and common sense, can develop information and evidence which strongly suggests that a given subject of concern does or does not pose a risk of violence against a given target(s).

For the first time, a comprehensive operational data base has been developed of all persons known to attempt, or to have come closest to attempting, lethal violence against prominent persons of public status. While some of the information is sensitive, this database might serve as a resource for those with responsibilities to prevent assassination in at least three ways:

- to compare the thinking and behavior of current subjects of investigation with those who have taken violent action in the past;
- to train protectors and investigators about the perspectives and pre-attack activities of perpetrators of public official and public figure-directed violence; and
- to stimulate new areas of inquiry.

CHAPTER 10: FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS FOR STUDIES OF ASSASSINATION

Fortunately, assassination of prominent persons of public status, compared to other forms of violence, is rare. While some have argued that the rate of these attacks has risen dramatically since 1950 compared to the previous 150 years of American history, the fact remains that assassinations, attacks, and near-attacks (that are discovered) occur infrequently.

However, the magnitude of harm from a single assassination can be great[5] and the effects equally far-reaching. For example, Robert Bardo's murder of actress Rebecca Schaefer in 1989 triggered social concern about the crime of stalking. This expanding concern has led forty-nine state legislatures and the U.S. Congress to pass anti-stalking legislation in the past six years.

Students of assassination in the United States have never before had the opportunity to explore information about the universe of persons who have attacked, or come close to attacking, prominent persons of public status. Likewise, information that comes from the perspective of the assailant has never before been gathered or examined in assassination research.

Future research about assassination should expand on the Exceptional Case Study Project. Research efforts should:

- **Keep the ECSP database current and comprehensive.**

As new cases come to light, they should be added to the ECSP database, so that the database continues to encompass information about all persons known to have engaged in assassination behavior directed at prominent persons of public status. Investigations of future cases suitable for inclusion in the ECSP should include areas of inquiry not routinely covered in past assassination investigations. Areas such as a subject's interest in assassination, history of travel, interests in other public official/figure targets, communications regarding attack, and approach and following/stalking behaviors should be systematically explored.

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[5] Dr. Lawrence Friedman observed in 1965:
"An epidemic of anorexia, insomnia and acute bodily discomfort swept this nation late in 1963. One-half of its victims could not eat or sleep. If the illness from which they were suffering had been diagnosed as influenza, infectious mononucleosis or an unnamed virus, the relevance of the syndrome to an audience of conscientious physicians would be obvious. You might wonder why this syndrome of epidemiologic proportion has not found its way into the medical literature. When I add to this symptom complex the finding that more than two-thirds of those affected also were nervous, tense and depressed, you may shift conceptually from physical pathology to psychopathology. When I tell you that this epidemic lasted about one week and began on the afternoon of November 22, 1963, you may be tempted to abandon the model of either pathology or psychopathology and, recalling that it followed immediately the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, see it instead as a widespread but normal reaction to a terrible political event."

- **Compare cases of assassination, attack, and near-lethal approach in the United States with cases in other countries.**

Assassination is a world-wide problem. The extent to which the perspectives and behaviors of American attackers and would-be attackers are similar to – or differ from – attackers in other countries should be examined. For example, published reports about Yigal Amir, the assassin of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, suggest that Amir followed a path to assassination, planned carefully, communicated his interests in attack to several other persons, and engaged in "attack-related behaviors" similar to those of United States attackers and assassins.

Comparison of cases from other societies may aid protectors and investigators to enhance their capabilities to prevent attacks.

- **Compare assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers with:**
  - **other protective intelligence cases deemed serious by investigators;**
  - **cases of subjects who have made threats but who have not engaged in other attack-related behaviors;**
- **Conduct other studies of "targeted violence" that use a behavior-based perspective similar to that used in the ECSP, with the goal of aiding investigators to intervene to prevent targeted violent attacks.**

For example, researchers should examine the perspectives and behaviors of persons who have engaged in stalking, workplace violence, and other targeted violent crimes.

Only rarely have researchers of violence or criminal behavior started by collecting a sample of perpetrators of violent actions and then worked backward to understand the thinking and behavior that preceded the offenders' attacks. For example, most research on "stalking" examines characteristics of persons charged with the crime of stalking. Few of these subjects are likely to have attacked their targets. Persons who stalk, and then attack and injure or kill their targets, are more likely be charged with assaults or homicide than with the crime of stalking.

Researchers who wish to gather information that may help to prevent stalking behaviors should identify subjects who have attacked targets, and then examine the ideas and activities the led to the attacks.

Ultimately databases should be developed that permit comparison of the pre-incident thinking and behavior of persons who attempt or carry out different kinds of targeted violent attacks.

CHAPTER 11: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Assassinations of public officials and public figures

An assassination attempt is the end result of a process of thinking and behavior. Many attackers and near-lethal approachers move through life on a path that leads them to consider assassination of one or another prominent person of public status as an acceptable way to improve their situations or resolve their problems. These persons are often relatively bright and/or well educated. They may appear to be socially isolated, but they often look, dress, and act in ways that do not readily distinguish them from others.

Assassins, attackers and near-lethal approachers may have histories of harassing others. Some feel threatened by close contact with other people. Many hold on to grievances and resentments, especially toward public officials and leaders. Often they have histories of acting impulsively, angrily, or explosively. Significantly, while more than half have a history of a juvenile or adult arrest, only one-fourth have a history of an arrest for a crime involving a weapon and only one-sixth have a history of an arrest for a violent crime. Three-fourths of attackers and near-lethal approachers have no history of incarceration. Those who have been in jail have usually been there for pre-trial detention, not while serving a sentence.

Almost a third of attackers and would-be attackers are known to have developed interests in radical or militant groups in the years and months before their attacks or approaches. They may have made efforts to contact or even join a radical or militant group. But few become active members of any such group or organization.

Many attackers and near-lethal approachers are evaluated by mental health professionals at some point before they step out on the path toward assassination., Some have histories of inpatient psychiatric hospitalization. Few, however, remain in mental health treatment for a significant time. And, significantly, unlike most persons with mental illness, attackers and near-lethal approachers who are seriously mentally ill maintain the capacity to plan and carry out organized activities.

Many assailants and near- assailants of public officials and public figures have considered killing themselves. They may have talked of suicide, threatened to kill themselves, or made a suicide gesture or attempt.

At some point – often after a life crisis – attackers and near-lethal approachers begin to see the idea of assassination as acceptable and desirable. They may gather information about previous assassins, take special interest in one or more potential public official targets, and/or begin to view assassination as a way to achieve their objectives, such as becoming famous or notorious, being removed from society, or getting killed. Some write about their ideas and activities, in a journal or diary. Others tell friends, family, or colleagues – but usually not the target – about their thoughts and intentions.

The fact that few attackers and near-attackers communicated explicit threats to their targets or to law enforcement authorities underscores the importance of careful attention to attack-related behaviors as indicators of potential attacks.

Persons who continue along the path to attack often carefully consider how to carry out an attack. They may travel to visit an office, home, or temporary visiting place of a target. Their travels may take them far from home. Many with an interest in the president visit the White House on their journey toward attack. Attackers and near-lethal approachers may practice with a weapon they have chosen for assassination. They may try to learn about security arrangements, and see the presence (or absence) of security as a deterrent (or as an opportunity).

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often consider more than one target, ultimately choosing a target for attack after concluding than an opportunity for attack exists and that an attack on the chosen target is likely to fulfill their goals. But many of these persons have mixed feelings about actually attacking. Some, who feel propelled to move along the path to assassination, search for reasons why they should not attack, and are stopped from mounting attacks by the belief that they will not be successful.

Some prospective assassins think about – and plan for – escaping after their attack. Others approach their assassination attempts with the expectation they will be killed, or, for the purpose of being killed.

Few attackers or near-lethal approachers possessed the cunning or the bravado of assassins in popular movies or novels. The reality of American assassination is much more mundane, more banal, than assassinations depicted on the screen. Neither monsters nor martyrs, recent American assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers engaged in pre-incident patterns of thinking and behavior. Understanding these patterns of ideation and action may permit those with protective responsibilities to prevent future attacks.

Preventing Assassination: A Literature Review

Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project

A project supported by the National Institute of Justice

May 1997

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PREFACE

The following literature review is part of the Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project (ECSP). The ECSP has been an operationally–based study of all 83 persons known to have engaged in attack and assassination behaviors directed toward public officials and public figures in the United States since 1949.

The Secret Service ECSP has studied individuals who have assassinated, attacked, or approached with lethal means, Secret Service protectees, other public officials, or other public figures. The ECSP has been conducted in collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Prisons, with support from the National Institute of Justice.

INTRODUCTION

Assassination, seen by many observers as a form of political violence, has existed, and been written about, since biblical days. The history of political murder, including assassination and tyrannicide, records violence directed toward political leaders, and commentaries about violence against political leaders, in every age and on each continent.

In the United States, there have been flurries of writing about assassination since Richard Lawrence attacked President Andrew Jackson with two pistols in 1835. Each presidential assassination, or assassination attempt has sparked a series of books and articles, both in the popular and scholarly press. The assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy, and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the 1960's, provoked many efforts to describe and analyze the phenomenon of American assassination. Attempts on the lives of Presidential Candidate George Wallace, President Gerald Ford, and President Ronald Reagan, in the 1970's and in 1981, also led to writing about assassination.

Since 1963, more than 130 reports, articles, and books have been written about assassination and behaviors that were seen as directly related to assassination. Added to this number are the several thousand articles and books about particular assassinations and attacks, such as the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Work on assassination has included studies within and across scholarly disciplines and has involved efforts of historians, political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and other social and behavioral analysts. Interestingly, there are few works about assassination or attacks on public officials and public figures that have been written from a law enforcement perspective. The lack of law enforcement studies about assassination, including those from an operational perspective, stands in contrast to the findings of Pontell, *et al.*, who surveyed 173 police chiefs in the United States and asked them to rate sixty selected offenses in terms of seriousness. Assassination of a public official was seen as the most serious offense.[1]

The following literature review is written in three sections, with three objectives:

- to provide an overview of scholarly discussions of assassination, with emphasis on analyses of American assassins and assassination behaviors;
- to consider what literature about assassination in the United States says with regard to the seven fundamental questions of the Exceptional Case Study Project;
- to critique three major beliefs about American assassins that are prevalent in the academic literature and in popular thinking about assassination in the United States.

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[1] (Pontell,Granite,Keenan, & Geis, 1985)

CHAPTER 1: SCHOLARLY CONSIDERATIONS OF ASSASSINATION

Overviews of Assassination

A number of writers, commentators, and scholars have examined the phenomenon of assassination and have placed assassination behavior into historical, political, social, and individual contexts. H.H.A. Cooper noted: "In perspective, the history of assassination is the story of men killing other men, at the behest or suggestion of others who would profit by the death; in some way a very human, albeit ugly story with no real, discernible beginnings and no foreseeable end. It is the story of the changing fortunes, moods and temperaments that encourage those killings and make them possible, even likely."[2]

Early in their report, *Assassination and Political Violence*, written for the National Commission on Causes and Prevention of Violence in 1969, Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty summarized five categories of assassination:

1) assassination by one political elite to replace another without effecting any substantial systemic or ideological change;
2) assassination for the purpose of terrorizing and destroying the legitimacy of the ruling elite in order to effect substantial systemic or ideological change;
3) assassination by the government in power to suppress political challenge;
4) assassination to propagandize a political or ideological point of view;
5) assassination unconnected with rational political goals which satisfies only the pathological needs of the mentally disturbed attacker.

Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty suggested that elite substitution and assassination by the government have not occurred in the United States. Terroristic assassination was used in the South after the civil war to remove Northerners from political power and to re-establish southern control and lifestyles. Propaganda assassination has been attempted in the United States (for example, attacks on President Truman in 1950 and on Congressmen in the House of Representatives in 1954 by Puerto Rican nationalists). Idiosyncratic pathological assassination "represents the typical attacker of presidents of the United States."[3]

Societies ruled by autocracies are obviously more vulnerable to assassination attempts sponsored by elites or conducted in opposition to elites than are democracies. Removal of the head of government may quickly lead to major changes in the government and in the groups and individuals which control the society. Democracies, especially those in which

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[2] (Cooper, 1984), p .35.

[3] (Kirkham,Levy, & Crotty, 1969)

power is distributed among separate branches of government, are less vulnerable to attacks by elites who strive to gain power through assassination. J. Bowyer Bell has commented that "serious revolutionary violence and hence the concomitant possibility of political assassination is unlikely--though not impossible--in efficient democratic states without a nationality problem. There is no need for an armed challenge to the form of the nation or the means of rule..."[4]

Several writers have described contexts within which assassinations occur. Bensman observed that political turbulence, conflict, and violence precede assassination. There may be issue conflict: "Assassination thus becomes one technique of political action, an alternative to other violent or nonviolent means."[5] Kirkham,. Levy, and Crotty described preconditions for assassination. These include physical oppression or its equivalent created through:

> (1) a weakening of shared democratic values, or a crisis in which the democratic institutions are incapable of taking effective remedial action; and (2) a pre-assassination process of defamation and vilification of democratic politicians and institutions. The remaining preconditions are also shared with the oppressive rule situation—(3) the existence of a party or groups of persons with an ideology and tactics of direct violence, and (4) the presence of persons with propensities for violence once the antecedents are present.[6]

Crotty wrote of the environment and climate that may lead to assassination: "The contention here is that a climate of violence, uncontrolled rhetoric, and vindictive and debasing personal attacks provide cues and a receptive background for anyone who wishes to act on his own sick impulses."[7]

Individual Assassins

Whether or not conceived and planned by elites, assassination is an action of individuals. Bell commented that "no matter what the objective socio-political conditions that might encourage recourse to assassination, there must be those who plan and carry out the deed. Is there then an archetypical assassin?"[8]

Cooper proposed three categories of assassins: employee, agent, independent:

> Independent assassination is distinctly and distinctively aberrational. To most people, the very notion of such a lone undertaking is preposterous, if not downright crazy. On a commonsense view, the odds are strongly against it; the risks seem disproportionate to the personal gain to be

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[4] (Bell, 1979), p. 195.
[5] (Bensman, 1971), p. 348.
[6] (Kirkham et al., 1969),p. 5.
[7] (Crotty, 1971), p. 49.
[8] (Bell, 1979), p. 191.

> anticipated. Hence the obvious and immediate focus upon the mental status of the lone assassin and the difficulty, in the absence of overwhelming evidence, of believing that he truly acted in the matter alone. At times, the action seems to have a sacrificial quality that is difficult for the common man to comprehend; and in truth, the state of mind of the lone assassin can hardly ever be regarded as normal. The act requires a fixity of purpose that, in its intensity, borders on the obsessive, and the assertion of independence necessary for the act requires the setting aside of objective reality. Everything must be subordinated to the assassin's purposes; the death of his chosen victim becomes his own reason for living.[9]

Among Cooper's "independent" assassins, there are altruists and non-altruists. Altruistic assassins kill for purposes related to the interests of others. Non-altruistic assassins kill for personal satisfaction.

The effects of assassination may be concrete and/or obscure. Leaders may be changed; government policies affected. But the meaning of assassination may be unclear. Cooper noted:

> The intended death is somehow felt to have a special quality of meaning that the assassin, by his act, seeks to underscore and demonstrate to the world at large. But the symbolism itself may be obscure or highly convoluted, depending upon the purpose and state of mind of the perpetrator. An assassination is a gesture expressed in code. The symbolic quality tends to confer upon the crime of assassination a terrifyingly impersonal character.[10]

Ordinary persons do not think of a king, a pope, or a president in human terms. The killing of such a person has a larger-than-life quality: "The symbolic aspects of the assassination transcend the personal tragedy. The killing, through its symbolism, envelops and embraces the community at large so that total strangers to the private tragedy incorporate its message into their lives."[11]

Who are the assassins? What does it take for a man, or a woman, to attempt to kill a national leader? Are individual assassins, who proceed with little likelihood of changing leadership elites or toppling governments, mentally ill? How related to the overall cultural and political environment is the attack behavior of individual assassins?

Bensman described a view of assassination that accepts

> the idea that individual assassinations may be the work of emotionally disturbed individuals, but rejects the idea that political assassination itself is an isolated, individual phenomenon. The basic assumption of such a

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[9] (Cooper, 1984), pp. 83-84.
[10] (Cooper, 1984), p. 5.
[11] (Cooper, 1984), p. 6.

> theory is that the assassin operates within a political, social, and historical 'climate' that, despite individual emotional problems, leads him to direct his disturbance into violent political channels...the existence of mental illness does not explain how such emotional disturbance becomes politicized nor does it explain why it uses violence as a means of expression.[12]

Cooper suggested:

> What we do see is a pattern of poorly adjusted, disturbed, somewhat inferior specimens with unsatisfactory work histories, whose 'professionalism' is almost nonexistent. These assassins are the rule rather than the exception. According to the evidence, so far as personal qualities are concerned, it does not take much to be an assassin. Those whose judgment does not oblige them to dwell upon the risks of the undertaking are excellently equipped for the task.[13]

Many analysts of assassination have struggled to come to terms with assassination carried out by persons whose motivations "appeared unconnected with rational political goals."[14] Cooper observed:

> Those assassins classified as mentally disturbed present the most serious problems for the analyst. In every age and every society, there have been assassins whose actions could not be aligned with objective reality; the drummer to which they march is unheard by those around them. Whatever private game they may be playing, their actions are out of accord with the political - and hence, the public - realities of their time and culture. Whether this says anything pertinent about their mental state is a matter of perspective. The question generates the greatest heat between medicine and political science.[15]

Historical Studies

History of Assassination

The most comprehensive book on the history of assassination is Professor Franklin Ford's **Political Murder: from Tyrannicide to Terrorism**.[16] Ford began by asking five questions:

> (1) Why do humans kill, and risk being killed, for political reasons at all?...(2) Is murder thus motivated endemic, more or less continuous, and in that respect an inevitable feature of the human condition?...(3) Or does

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12 (Bensman, 1971), p. 350.
13 (Cooper, 1984), p. 64.
14 (Kirkham et al., 1969), p. 5.
15 (Cooper, 1984), p. 27.
16 (Ford, 1985)

> history record the opposite, an uneven oscillation between high and low incidence of political murder?...Are there, in short, 'things to watch out for?'...(4) In that record as a whole, do enigmatic loners or elaborate conspiracies predominate?...(5) What connections are there between political murder, on the one hand, and, on the other, only tangentially political concerns including religion, sex, exhibitionism, self-fulfillment, and suicide? Is there in fact any such thing as a purely political crime?[17]

Ford reviewed assassination from biblical through modern times. He defined assassination as "the intentional killing of a specified victim or group of victims, perpetrated for reasons related to his (her, their) public prominence and undertaken with a political purpose in view."[18]

Ford analyzed periods of history with exceptional rates of assassination and those without assassination. He noted that the city-state Athens witnessed few political murders: "Something must surely be said about institutionalized alternatives. Trial, dismissal by vote of the Council and/or the Assembly, ostracism proposed by any citizen--all these were potential threats to the position of a leader. At times they were misused, but they were safety valves for the registering of opposition without resort to poison or the knife."[19]

The ancient Greeks debated the political wisdom of assassination, asserting a right to resist tyranny, but staked out the position that "political murder equals bad politics far oftener than its momentary admirers care to admit."[20]

Ford observed that the Roman Republic lived for almost four hundred years without a politically motivated slaying of a leading public figure:

> Like every other people, they indulged in brawls, vendettas, and occasional group attacks, especially the stoning of individuals condemned by public opinion for private transgressions. The public sphere, however, was long considered beyond the permissible reach of lynch mobs or wreakers of personal vengeance. One result of this crucial distinction was that from the end of the sixth century before Christ until two-thirds of the way through the second, the persons of Rome's political officials were virtually immune to assault...restraint in behavior toward figures of public authority, takes its place as the most important of all for any student of assassination.[21]

Ford described three groups in the middle ages who helped shape later day attitudes and behaviors about assassination: the Zealots who terrorized Palestine, Teutonic "barbarians," and *Hashishiyyin* "who made their name a synonym for the premeditated

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[17] (Ford, 1985), pp. 2-3.
[18] (Ford, 1985), p. 2.
[19] (Ford, 1985), p. 31.
[20] (Ford, 1985), p. 46.
[21] (Ford, 1985), p. 49.

slaying of rulers."[22] The Order of the Assassins was an Islamic sect founded by Hasan-i Sabbah at the end of the 11th century whose members had the task to "carry the Ismaili word to the many and strike down the powerful few among the Sunnite majority..."[23] Ford added that "A word is in order about the term 'assassin'...The Arabic original generally found in medieval documents is Hashishiyyin, not the related but different word denoting users of hashish."[24]

Debate about the morality, and practicality, of tyrannicide and regicide continued through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. In the *Rule of Princes*, Saint Thomas entertained "serious doubts" about the justice of killing a legitimate monarch. Ford observed that "here words seven centuries old have the snap of present truths--'good kings would be likely to be slain more often than tyrants, for the rule of good kings was hard on evil-doers and evil men were more likely than good men to resort to such a desperate measure as tyrannicide.'"[25] Several hundred years later, Machiavelli took a similar position about the practical wisdom of assassination: "Because conspiracies rarely succeed, they most often bring about the ruin of those who plan them, and they bring greatness to those against whom they are directed."[26]

While not common, assassinations committed by individuals who appeared to be mentally disordered occurred in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. In 1610, Henry of Navarre (Henry IV) of France was assassinated by Francois Ravaillac. The killer claimed to be "ordered to destroy a king of France...Ordered by whom?...The prisoner doggedly replied that it had been God."[27] Many in the public refused to believe that Ravaillac had acted alone, "Not for the first or last time in history, both public and official opinion began by resisting the awful simplicity of a deranged killer's impulse, searching instead of an explanation more nearly befitting the magnitude of the consequences."[28]

There was an abrupt decline in political assassination from the middle of the seventeenth century until the final decade of the eighteenth. How did this happen? Ford pointed to:

> the role of political institutions, the attitudes required to sustain them, and the opportunities they provide for peaceful change as well as the restraints they place on violent protest. External conflict and internal tension abounded in ancient Greece, republican Rome, and medieval Europe; the same was true of the period separating the end of the English Civil War from the onset of the French Terror in the 1790s. In all four epochs, however, governmental machinery seems to have been relatively effective in providing the domestic security that populations normally

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22 (Ford, 1985), p. 86.
23 (Ford, 1985), p. 101.
24 (Ford, 1985), p. 103.
25 (Ford, 1985), p. 125.
26 (Ford, 1985), p. 145.
27 (Ford, 1985), p. 166.
28 (Ford, 1985), p. 167.

> demand...each of the four eras being compared followed times of frightening disorder, memories of whose anarchy contributed to a climate more than a little friendly to the forces of order--until the next swing of history's pendulum.[29]

Ford puzzled over the absence of political murder in the eighteenth century, observing that political leaders and public opinion generally condemned tyrannicide. But there is "no reason based on historical evidence to suppose an assassin acts out of the belief that his gesture will win general approval or, indeed, to think that approval as such matters very much to him one way or another. Attention, even if only in the form of notoriety, is what does interest him."[30] The eighteenth century had its share of crimes and riots, but:

> there was an interval during which most people did not observe at firsthand the most horrendous aspects of war, in particular the spectacle of humans slain by the hundreds, even thousands. Contrast in this regard the experience of later generations, if not always as participants, then as the audience for increasingly graphic journalism, still photography, motion pictures, radio, and television. Is it not reasonable to suppose that modern warfare, especially given these methods of extending its psychological effects, has done something quite fundamental to general ideas of death in relation to political life?[31]

Assassination became epidemic in the nineteenth century. Twenty-one rulers in Europe were the targets of assassins, some attacked more than one time. The nineteenth century saw a number of assassins who appeared to be mentally disordered:

> the unbalanced loner, embittered over some real or imagined injustice--remained much in evidence. Such a man was John Bellingham, the ruined merchant and fugitive from a Russian debtor's prison who shot Spencer Perceval in the lobby of the House of Commons. Such too, were Carl Sand in Germany and, at the end of the century, the Italian terrorist Luigi Luccheni, who in 1898 lay in wait on a Swiss boat dock for the French duke of Orleans, only to slay Empress Elizabeth of Austria-Hungry when his intended victim failed to appear.[32]

Overall, globally there were about 100 major assassination attempts from 1801-1900, of which between sixty-five and seventy were successful.

Ford cataloged almost 700 assassination attempts between 1901 and 1980, over seventy percent of which were successful:

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29 (Ford, 1985), pp. 180-181.
30 (Ford, 1985), p. 198.
31 (Ford, 1985), pp. 198-199.
32 (Ford, 1985), p. 209.

> Certain truths about political violence have been not so much discovered as demonstrated with unusual force in our own times. One is the relatively low rate of assassination while major wars are in progress, followed by a sharp rise in its frequency during a period marked by civil discord once hostilities have ended. Another significant correlation is that between the incidence of political murder and the formative stages of nation-building, characteristic of an age of disintegrating empires.[33]

While one reason for the explosion in assassination is the increase in numbers of governments, Ford also flagged changes in the technology of communication and the growth of cooperation among terrorist organizations as contributing to the increase. And he noted, "Another reminder of the past is the persistent role of madmen as assassins."[34]

Ford concluded his analysis with the observation that assassination is not "good politics," either ethically or pragmatically. "Its demonstrable tendency has nearly always been to besmirch the perpetrator's credentials, while undermining his chances of any lasting political success."[35] But while political murders have been bad politics, assassinations have repeatedly changed situations, which without such violence, might have developed very differently.

What distinguishes periods with low and high assassination rates?

> Contrary to a good deal of recent belief, high assassination rates have not generally accompanied extremes of repression and perceived social injustice, any more than they have tended to coincide with major wars...Conversely, assassination has burgeoned when such summits of autocracy have been passed, in times characterized by nervous concessions and partial reforms from above, of growing popular excitement, high expectations, and impatient demands for still more rapid change.[36]

Conspiracies, especially extended conspiracies, have been rare in the history of assassination, and even more rarely successful. Ford stressed the need for careful attention to the motives of individual attackers for those who wish to understand assassination behavior:

> The relation between political murder and certain personal impulses not self-evidently political at all must be sought and followed through often complex episodes. Without the reinforcing impulse of religious zeal--be it transcendental, as in the Old Testament cases and those of sixteenth-century Europe, not to mention Islam throughout most of history, or secularized, as in so many nineteenth- and twentieth-century examples--it

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[33] (Ford, 1985), p. 239.
[34] (Ford, 1985), p. 240.
[35] (Ford, 1985), p. 380.
[36] (Ford, 1985), pp. 382-383.

> is difficult to imagine numerous assassinations having been attempted at all.[37]

In Ford's analysis, individual assassins have been prone to exhibitionism, engaging in self-dramatizing activities, especially those that lead to self-destruction.

Assassination in the United States

Much has been written about the history of assassination in the United States. From 1835 to the present, seventeen individuals have carried out sixteen attacks against nine presidents, one president-elect; three candidates for president, and two national political leaders (Senator Huey Long and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)[38] Each assassination attempt has been the subject of considerable review, with books written about most attacks, and book chapters, reports, and articles about the others.[39]

Ford observed that throughout the one hundred and fifty years of the colonial period, there were no lethal assaults upon a prominent representative of the British crown, despite there being many violent acts and demonstrations during these years. He noted that a number of politically prominent figures died in duels. But despite "its survival in the sometimes almost ritualistic gunfights on the frontier, as well as in the blood feuds of the southern Appalachians and parts of Texas, dueling rapidly declined in popularity after about the middle of the nineteenth century, to be replaced by attempts at outright assassination."[40]

Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty compiled a list of all assassinations and assaults of public officials (including tax collectors) in the United States, up to 1969. There were eighty-one recorded assassinations or attempted assassinations. The office of the Presidency was the object of the greatest proportion of assassination attempts visited upon officeholders.

A number of commentators have observed that, unlike in other societies, almost all political assassinations in the United States have been committed by individuals acting alone, and not by groups. Crotty noted, "Assassination in the United States, especially at the higher and more visible levels, has been essentially anomic, that is, committed by private individuals for personal motives. At the most critical levels of governmental

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37 (Ford, 1985), p. 384.

38 The assailants were: Richard Lawrence, who attacked President Andrew Jackson in 1835; John Wilkes Booth, who shot President Abraham Lincoln in 1865; Charles Guiteau, who shot President James A. Garfield in 1881; Leon Czolgosz, who shot President William McKinley in 1901; John Schrank, who attacked Presidential Candidate Theodore Roosevelt in 1912; Guiseppi Zangara, who attacked President-elect Franklin Roosevelt in 1933; Carl Weiss, who shot Senator Huey Long in 1935; Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola, who attacked President Harry Truman in 1950; Lee Harvey Oswald, who shot President John F. Kennedy in 1963; James Earl Ray, who shot Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968; Sirhan Sirhan, who shot Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy in 1968; Arthur Bremer, who attacked Presidential Candidate George Wallace in 1972; Lynette Fromme, who attacked President Gerald Ford in 1975; Sara Jane Moore, who attacked President Gerald Ford in 1975; John W. Hinckley, Jr., who attacked President Ronald Reagan in 1981; and Francisco Duran, who attempted to shoot President Clinton in 1994.

39 This review will not attempt to cover the multitude and magnitude of these works.

40 (Ford, 1985), p. 348.

decision making, there has been little evidence of broad group support or involvement. There are few exceptions to the general rule."[41]

Freedman, writing in 1984, concurred:

> No murder of a president has been demonstrated to have sprung from a decision of an organized group whose goal was to change the policy or the structure of the United States government. No United States presidential assassin has ever been linked to such a group, either as a policy maker or as a recognized member, however humble and willing to carry out its directives or, even lacking specific instructions, acting through assassination to promote its immediate or long-range goals. Rather, these men and women have been as remote from the radical or reactionary organizations seeking to bring about change as they were from the government whose executive they murderously assaulted.[42]

Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty concluded that presidential assassinations were the work of mentally ill individuals:

> Truly 'political' assassinations, that is assassinations that are part of a rational scheme to transfer political power from one group to another or to achieve specific policy objectives, are rare in the United States. Assassinations did occur in the Reconstruction period in the South combined with terrorist activities employed in an effort to reimpose white supremacy after the Civil War. But most assassinations in the United States have been the products of individual passion or derangement.
>
> As an example, each of the persons who attempted, either successfully or unsuccessfully, to assassinate Presidents of the United States, with the possible exception of the so-called Puerto Rican nationalists who attacked President Truman, evidenced serious mental illness. None of them were chosen representatives of political movements, although most claimed allegiance to broader political groups and cited political reasons for their act. Each assassin seemed to be acting out some inner pathological need. Despite this, the public, in reaction to the assassinations, has sometimes attempted to tie the assassins to political movements or conspiracies.[43]

A number of authors have completed works that cover the panorama of American assassination. These writers include Robert Donovan[44], James McKinley[45], and James W. Clarke[46,47]. Each book by these men provides detailed descriptions of the assassination

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41 (Crotty, 1971), p. 3.
42 (Freedman, 1984), p. 199.
43 (Kirkham et al., 1969), pp. xvii-xviii.
44 (Donovan, 1952 (revised 1964))
45 (McKinley, 1977)
46 (Clarke, 1982)

efforts of most, if not all, of the attackers. The books differ in attention to sources (ranging from Donovan, who included no references, to Clarke, who documented his statements carefully using primary source material), and in the willingness of each author to label the attackers as mentally disordered. Donovan considered almost all the attackers to be mentally ill, while McKinley was more cautious about the use of mental illness labels, and Clarke was critical about what he saw as the over-reliance of many commentators on mental illness explanations for the behavior of the attackers.

Other authors have reviewed the effects of assassinations in the United States. In an often-cited article, in 1965 psychiatrist Lawrence Z. Freedman described responses to assassination:

> An epidemic of anorexia, insomnia and acute bodily discomfort swept this nation late in 1963. One-half of its victims could not eat or sleep. If the illness from which they were suffering had been diagnosed as influenza, infectious mononucleosis or an unnamed virus, the relevance of the syndrome to an audience of conscientious physicians would be obvious. You might wonder why this syndrome of epidemiologic proportion has not found its way into the medical literature. When I add to this symptom complex the finding that more than two-thirds of those affected also were nervous, tense and depressed, you may shift conceptually from physical pathology to psychopathology. When I tell you that this epidemic lasted about one week and began on the afternoon of November 22, 1963, you may be tempted to abandon the model of either pathology or psychopathology and, recalling that it followed immediately the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, see it instead as a widespread but normal reaction to a terrible political event.[48]

Several observers have noted the frequency with which charges of conspiracy follow assassinations. Bensman suggested that since American assassinations were seen as irrational acts with uncontrollable consequences, some commentators constructed theories "to 'make sense' of the seemingly unexplainable. Despite the lack of evidence, they have constructed theories of political conspiracy that make the assertion a 'logical' outcome of its irrational assumption."[49]

Kaiser remarked that conspiracy charges have only been proven once in the history of American presidential assassination: the assassination of President Lincoln by John Wilkes Booth was accompanied by the attack on Secretary of State William Seward by Lewis Payne, one of several convicted co-conspirators of Booth.

> Normally, the conspiracy charge usually generates more heat than light. In 1901, for instance, it was widely suspected that McKinley's assassin, a

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47 (Clarke, 1990)

48 (Freedman, 1965), p. 650.

49 (Bensman, 1971), p. 349.

> self-professed anarchist, had simply been a gunman operating under instructions from a broader network of like-minded groups and individuals. Previous attacks on foreign rulers and threats against the President's life tended to fortify this conviction. Nonetheless, extensive investigations at the time, by both New York State and Buffalo authorities, as well as Secret Service agents, discovered no such conspiracy.[50]

Freedman wrote of the "vast, receptive audience of millions who are willing and waiting to be convinced, and who want to be convinced that their leader was violently taken from them by a vast and powerful conspiracy rather than by a chance, brief assault committed by an unbalanced nonentity with a gun."[51] He suggested that citizens need the security of knowing that government can protect itself. The president, responsible for so much, must be capable of making decisions that prevent assassination.

> It cannot be that, in short, the great and all-powerful father from whom all protection and strength comes is as humble, weak, and vulnerable as one suspects or knows oneself to be...If we must suffer parricide, if our father is to be taken from us, he must be taken by a most powerful, if malignant, counterforce. We cannot lose him to a casual crank. To do so is to stand shivering and unprotected, not only bereft of our father but exposed within ourselves to our own vulnerability, mortality, and peril.[52]

Sociological Studies

Several authors have approached assassination in the United States from a sociological or social overview perspective. The starting point for these analyses is that individual factors alone cannot fully explain the prevalence, timeliness, and/or frequency of assassination attempts.

Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty suggested that assassination correlates highly with general political turmoil:

> Levels of political violence appear to crest during periods of accelerated social change...Also, specific cultural and social factors in the United States may support political violence, including assassinations. Recent years have seen a number of movements that justify violence as a legitimate tactic in seeking political ends. There has been frequent use of rhetoric vilifying institutions and individuals. Such rhetoric is frequently a precondition for physical assaults directed against politically prominent individuals...[53]

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[50] (Kaiser, 1981), p. 550.
[51] (Freedman, 1965), p. 204.
[52] (Freedman, 1965), p.2 05.
[53] (Kirkham et al., 1969), p. xviii.

Gans, writing after the murder of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, argued that there was a relationship between social inequality in US society and political violence.[54] Slomich and Kantor, writing originally in 1969, hypothesized that the emergence of charismatic public figures at crisis points in a constitutional democracy "tends to generate assassination attempts by marginal, anomic men from estranged strata of society."[55] These men come from dispossessed elements of the lower middle classes and

> have strong, unfulfilled sex drives; are afflicted with abnormally intense envy; and feel alienated from society and from themselves. They frequently develop schizophrenia of either the process or the reactive variety, usually the former. Although characteristically apathetic, they may exhibit sudden sporadic violence. Afflicted with hopelessness and strong self-destructive drives, these individuals come to attach paradoxical value to pain, frustration, and despair, and so become unable to adjust to signs of hope or promise. They therefore may strike out destructively against public figures who hold forth the possibility of a hopeful future for society.[56]

Wilkinson and Gaines[57] and Wilkinson[58,59] focused on the "status attributes" and "primary group relationships" of political assassins. They examined variables such as deaths in the family, extreme ordinality, marital status, and occupational instability in a search for patterns. Wilkinson tried to explain the fact that no presidential assassins or attackers have been members of minority groups:

> The question then is how does an American Caucasian react to failure in a dual stratification system wherein one aspect of his status is defined positively and the other negatively? American Blacks, because of a long historical pattern of exclusion from full participation in the culture, are in a position to project blame onto the total social structure for placing them in terms of ascription rather than merit. However, when an individual cannot blame the society for his failures and must thereby blame himself as a personal failure, a different perceptual arrangement is necessary and a different behavioral outcome is likely. This paper suggests that certain forms of extreme anti-system feelings may be the result.[60]

According to this theory, since whites are expected to do well in American society, those whites who do not succeed blame themselves, rather than the system, and are more at risk

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54 (Gans, 1976)
55 (Slomich & Kantor, 1976), p. 41.
56 (Slomich & Kantor, 1976), pp. 41-42.
57 (Wilkinson & Gaines, 1976)
58 (Wilkinson, 1970)
59 (Wilkinson, 1976)
60 (Wilkinson, 1976), p.36.

for attacks directed at social leaders than are blacks, who can blame the social system more readily for personal failures.

Psychological, Psychiatric, and Behavioral Studies

Literature written from psychological, and psychiatric perspectives about American assassins has emphasized the limitations, dysfunctions, and pathologies of the personalities of the political assassins and attackers studied. Theorists and commentators have often attempted to use *characteristics* of assassins to *explain* their attack behaviors.

Writers from psychological and psychiatric perspectives have used two different kinds of data: 1) secondary source data (usually from published reports) about persons who have carried out attacks or assassinations, and 2) primary source data from populations of persons who have engaged in behavior that has been considered a "proxy" or "surrogate" for actual assassination behavior. Written or verbal threats have been the most frequently used proxy behaviors.

Unfortunately, some authors have failed to recognize that the behaviors they studied (such as threats) are only surrogates (and perhaps grossly inaccurate surrogates) for the behavior of primary interest, namely, assassination behavior. Often in this literature, firmly stated generalizations about the "psychology" of *assassins* have been based on proxy variable studies. Also, there is little evidence that most proxies that have been studied actually approximate assassination behavior, and there is some evidence that the most frequently studied surrogate variable, threats, is *negatively* related to approaches made by mentally disordered persons toward public officials.[61]

The earliest psychological analysis of US assassins was written by MacDonald in 1911. MacDonald described characteristics of assassins:

> The most dangerous criminals are the assassins of rulers. They may be sane, insane or partially insane, or simply monstrous criminals. They may be degenerates with certain peculiar traits, as instability, and the continual changing of their occupation and habitation. They are usually vain, irritable, impulsive and mystical, and are easily influenced by surroundings. They are usually proud of their crime, protest with indignation if called insane, and usually show great courage on the scaffold, clinging to their ideas or delusions until the end. Their most common characteristic is a want of mental balance or equilibrium, which may take various forms, as exaltation and mysticism. If circumstances be not favorable to its development, it may remain dormant and inoffensive. But if it finds in the events of the day, as wars, revolutions, political dissensions or extreme theories of sects; in publications or books inflaming

61 (Dietz,Matthews,Martell,Steward,Hrouda, & Warren, 1991b)

> the mind; if, in short, it finds a soil favorable to its development, it is liable to appear and sometimes culminate in most terrible crimes.[62]

Rothstein studied clinical files and interviewed eleven psychiatric patients at the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri whose offenses involved threats to the president. He wrote an article entitled "Presidential Assassination Syndrome" in which he developed a "prototype case." In his view, the prototypical assassin starts out with severe rage at women and with identity confusion. He develops "a defensive masculine identification with strong homosexual overtones," and displaces his rage at women onto men. In adolescence, the prototypical assassin turns away from his family to a larger organization, usually the military. The military provides him with controls and masculine identification figures, and removes him from contact with women, who are "the real threat."

Rothstein wrote that "At a deeper level, the patient would probably expect to be taken care of, to gratify his dependent wishes. Thus, he would tend to displace his expectations for fulfillment of developmental needs which should have been met by his family, on to the military service, or more broadly, the US Government..."[63] In Rothstein's model, the patient's rage gets displaced on to the government, then focused on the president, "the embodiment of the US Government...In this light, it is the President as a mother figure basically, and as a father figure only superficially, who is threatened. Ambivalently, the response expected is both–either help or death. Even the death may represent ultimate oceanic reunion with the mother, being only superficially an expected masculine castrative retaliation."[64]

Sensitive to criticism that his study population included threateners, not assassins, Rothstein included an "Additional Comment" at the end of the paper:

> While it is true that none of the patients in this study had gone any further than to threaten the President, the importance of the threat to kill has been pointed out. Although the study of individuals with obvious pathology might be open to question with respect to general applicability of the findings, this is not an unusual technique in medical science. The presence in these patients' histories of many factors in common with Oswald lends support to the validity of this approach.[65]

In a study of cases of persons in Secret Service files who wrote threatening letters from 1963-1965, Weinstein explored the meaning of threats. He noted that a number of letter writers appeared to use words to the president as a substitute for relationships that they lacked in their daily lives. He observed that stressful conditions in the lives of subjects,

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62 (MacDonald, 1911), p. 505.
63 (Rothstein, 1964), p. 251.
64 (Rothstein, 1964), p. 252.
65 (Rothstein, 1964), p. 253.

including those induced by leaving mental institutions, appeared to be precipitants of a number of threatening letters.[66]

In a second study, Weinstein compared "dangerous" cases with other threat cases. Dangerous cases were those in which there was information that the subject had guns or explosives at the time he or she came to attention, cases in which there was evidence of a plan to approach the president, and cases in which the subject committed murder or serious injury to another person consequent to ideas concerning the president. Weinstein found that the dangerous group had a higher incidence of suicidal behavior than the other group, and that "many of the dangerous subjects did not express hatred toward the President."[67]

Freedman, writing in 1965, reflected that "Excessive ambition combined with self-defeating self-doubts are, of course, not uncommon and by themselves would lead only to the life of quiet desperation which is the fate of most of us."[68] American presidential assassins, in his view, experienced wider ranges and greater depths of ambition and self-loathing than others. These qualities of character were combined with lack of empathy, an ability to deny responsibility for failure, a capacity to "project onto the president the responsibility for his personal misery," and

> an increasing preoccupation with a fanciful dereistic political or governmental alternative to his unbearable surroundings. If the president is responsible for the failures of his society as well as of himself, then the potential assassin, in the name of all suffering humanity, or as Guiteau claimed in more religious time, in the name of God, is sometimes impelled even against his own 'will' to carry out a 'mission.'[69]

According to Freedman, the assassin does not live in a true community of men. The assassin lives only in his fantasies. Assassins who thought of themselves acting as a member of a political group, such as Czolgosz, only had fantasized, projected relationships to these groups.

Hastings, in 1965, published a four-part series of articles entitled, "The Psychiatry of Presidential Assassination."[70,71,72,73] Relying solely on secondary sources, and acknowledging his debt to Donovan[74], Hastings offered diagnoses of each presidential attacker whose life he reviewed. He concluded:

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66 (Weinstein, 1964)
67 (Weinstein, 1965 (?)), p. 50.
68 (Freedman, 1965), p. 656.
69 (Freedman, 1965), p. 656.
70 (Hastings, 1965a)
71 (Hastings, 1965b)
72 (Hastings, 1965c)
73 (Hastings, 1965d)
74 (Donovan, 1952 (revised 1964))

> Since the birth of this country, eight attempts have been made to assassinate Presidents. Four were successful. With one exception, none of the murders, actual or attempted, was the result of foreign or domestic intrigue. Rather, each was the product of one man's disordered mind...Except for the two Puerto Rican gunmen, then, who probably were not insane (after the battle only one was alive to be examined psychiatrically), the assassins, in my opinion, had schizophrenia, in most instances a paranoid type.[75]

Weinstein and Lyerly, in 1969, published a study of threats made by 137 male subjects from 1945–1965 and of information about a number of assassins and near-assassins. They concluded that while study subjects appeared to be mentally ill, their behaviors were not explained by the "symptomatology or psychodynamics of any particular mental illness."[76]

A key variable for these authors was the reference group of the subject:

> Threats against the President are not, in themselves, evidence of mental illness and only a small proportion of threats eventuate into serious assassination attempts. Yet, the historical record of Presidential assassinations and near-assassinations in the United States shows that most of them have been made by mentally disturbed persons and have been preceded by threats and gestures. The record indicates further that the likelihood that there has been a prior threat, the motive for the act, and the degree of mental disturbance depends on the relationship of the individual to his reference group and the validity, size, and stability of that group.[77]

Weinstein and Lyerly used the concept of the "pseudo-community" to explain the actions of threateners and assassins. Assassins appeared to be socially isolated persons for whom the assassination was a solution of a personal problem. "The act acquired a sense of validity through an identification with the president in terms of mutual and complementary roles in a pseudo-community."[78] Weinstein and Lyerly concluded that the individuals most dangerous to the safety of the president are:

> those socially isolated persons who adapt to stress by symbolizing their problems in a political idiom and who identify with the President in terms of violence and death. In the context of such an identification, the act becomes institutionalized and is perceived as a stroke of national policy or patriotic heroism.[79]

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[75] (Hastings, 1965d), p. 300.
[76] (Weinstein & Lyerly, 1969), p.7 .
[77] (Weinstein & Lyerly, 1969), p. 8.
[78] (Weinstein & Lyerly, 1969), p. 9.
[79] (Weinstein & Lyerly, 1969), p. 11.

Greening, writing in 1971, suggested that psychological analysis can only point part-way to explanations of crimes:

> Psychological analysis of motives, choice of victim, and impulse control can demonstrate how a past or future murder would perfectly express the murderer's personality. But what is more difficult to explain is why and when the psychological potential for an act is finally transformed into the act. There are many men with political beliefs, personality problems, murderous hostility toward national leaders, and loaded guns equivalent to Oswald's, Ray's, and Sirhan's. Which ones will act, and which ones will be content to elaborate their paranoid fantasies?[80]

Writing in 1973, the psychiatrist David Abrahamsen combined clinical information about eleven defendants charged with threatening the president or other government officials, with published data about Oswald, Ray, Sirhan, Bremer, Booth, Guiteau, and Czolgosz. Abrahamsen suggested that "all of the real or would-be assassins" grew up in poor families with much hostility and quarreling, "unassuming or neglectful" fathers, and "domineering" mothers. "Engrossed and obsessed" as boys with sexual yearnings for their mothers and resulting ideas that they had to protect their mothers, they grew up with "fantasies of omnipotence." "Their threats and attacks against officials of the United States government or important political figures were justified in their fantasies; it was a reflection of their feelings of omnipotence."[81] These men had "distorted identifications." Suffering with "serious derangement," they experienced "loneliness, intense hate, helplessness, dependency, omnipotence, fears, frustrations and murderous death wishes."[82]

Hassel, a former FBI agent, reviewed studies of assassins and remarked on the importance of the their shortness and slightness of build. He commented that "This is not to place the political assassin into a particular biological or body structure group, or to say that short, slightly built white males have a particular penchant for political murder, but when taken into consideration with the other factors which contribute to the assassin's behavior, being small, in a position to be looked down upon, seems to be an important characteristic."[83] Hassel also looked for a "common denominator" among the assassins, and found one factor that "appears to be glaringly obvious: none of them had a stable masculine figure with whom to identify during childhood."[84]

Clarke, writing in 1981, 1982, and 1990, contributed detailed and systematic descriptions of the objective and subjective realities of seventeen assassins and assailants.[85,86,87] He

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[80] (Greening, 1971), p. 230.
[81] (Abrahamsen, 1973), p. 19.
[82] (Abrahamsen, 1973), p. 19.
[83] (Hassel, 1974), p. 400.
[84] (Hassel, 1974), p. 400.
[85] (Clarke, 1981)
[86] (Clarke, 1982)

complained about studies with primarily psychological interpretations of assassins: "Most of the conclusions that have been put forth about each of these subjects fails to consider the political context of the assassination or attempt. Instead attention is focused on the subject's personality as it is thought to be revealed in various tests..."[88]

Clarke concluded that all his subjects, with the exception of James Earl Ray, acted initially on the basis of some "frustration." For some assassins, the frustration was "personal"; for others, "political." Each assassin picked a political target, but for some assassins the target was "real" and for others the target was "surrogate." "In other words, was the aggression against these political leaders direct, or displaced from some other real frustrating agent?"[89]

Clarke developed four categories: Type I assassins saw their actions as probable sacrifices of self for political ideals. Their primary purposes were political. Type II assassins were overwhelmed with needs for acceptance, recognition, and status. A Type II assassin was "neurotic", "an anxious, emotional, and ultimately depressed person who is primarily concerned with his or her personal problems and frustrations and only secondarily with causes or ideals."[90] Type III assassins are "psychopaths (or sociopaths) who believe that the condition of their lives is so intolerably meaningless and without purpose that destruction of society and themselves is desirable for its own sake."[91] These assassins lived empty lives and were consumed with perverse anger. Type IV assassins were irrational, "characterized by severe emotional and cognitive distortion that is expressed in hallucinations and delusions of persecution and/or grandeur."[92]

In 1980-1981, Heyman[93,94] reviewed the cases of twenty-two persons nominated for study by the Secret Service. Eleven subjects had killed, wounded, or otherwise assaulted presidents; five had either killed or wounded others of interest to the Service; and five had been investigated by the Service and considered potentially dangerous to Service protectees. Heyman categorized subjects as "crazies" and "behavior disorders". He assessed Torresola and Collazo as "exceptions," and considered several other subjects "marginal." Heyman noted the "common characteristics and background" of the subjects. These included 1) a framework of inadequacy and ineptness; 2) absence of compensating channels for achievement; and 3) adventitious fixation on the target.

Logan and colleagues conducted a retrospective study of 126 male presidential threateners referred for psychiatric evaluation to the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners, Springfield, Missouri, during 1981-1982. Subjects were classified into nine categories: a)

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87 (Clarke, 1990)
88 (Clarke, 1981), p. 86.
89 (Clarke, 1981), p. 90.
90 (Clarke, 1982), p. 15.
91 (Clarke, 1982), p. 15.
92 (Clarke, 1982), p. 16.
93 (Heyman, 1982)
94 (Heyman, 1984)

the chronic mental patient threatener; b) the acute mental patient threatener; c) the intoxicated threatener; d) the institutionalized threatener; e) the convict threatener; f) the frustrated threatener; g) the political threatener; h) the publicity-seeking threatener; and i) the atypical threatener. Additionally, each subject was assessed concerning his mental state at the time of the threat.[95]

Findings of the study suggested that most threateners were single Caucasian males in their thirties, who had completed high school or held an equivalency certificate, and were unemployed. Most had a history of arrest and no felony convictions. Half had previously been incarcerated. Almost all had prior psychiatric care, and half had a history of substance abuse. About half of the threateners were seen as psychotic when the threats were made.

Logan and colleagues asked whether there are connections between those who threaten and those who attempt or succeed in assassination. Two of the authors reviewed the sample of threateners, considered the interaction of situational and personality factors in each case, and labeled the subject dangerous or not dangerous to the president. Both raters classified fewer than 5% of the sample as dangerous to the president.

The authors concluded:

> in summary, presidential threateners in this study did not differ significantly from descriptions in an earlier study by Weinstein and Lyerly (1969). As a group, they have been inadequate in facing the demands of adult life and have required the frequent intervention of both the legal and mental health care systems. However, no specific "syndrome" was found. Only half made the threat as a result of psychosis produced by major mental illness or intoxication. In the remainder of cases, the threat was generated with the purpose of obtaining some secondary gain. Only a few threateners seemed to present a danger to the president. Dangerousness in these cases did not appear to be a function of psychosis alone but of other features in their history. In the authors' opinion, the six characteristics of dangerous threateners are potential to inflict harm, proximity, purpose, plan, propensity for violent crimes, and preoccupation with killing the president.[96]

Larsen, in 1986, recounted twenty-one assassinations and assassination attempts. He noted:

> There is a bias on the part of most of us in America to conclude that because our country has a free and open political system, an electoral process that limits presidential terms and a balance of power that eliminates the prospects of a tyrannical American President, there is no rational reason for ever killing one of our leaders. We are therefore easily

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95 (Logan,Reuterfors,Bohn, & Clark, 1984)

96 (Logan et al., 1984), pp. 166-167.

> convinced that the absence of any rational reason for assassination, leaves only the irrational, i.e., insane ones.[97]

After reviewing literature on presidential assassination and descriptive information about assassins and attempters, Larsen suggested that the American assassin "profile" suggested by Kirkham, *et al.*, and others was proven inaccurate by the record of recent assassination attempts. Questioning the utility of such a classification, Larsen pointed out that " there are many, many people living in this country who meet such a description but will never commit an assassination, or for that matter do any other violent act."[98]

Dietz and colleagues conducted a detailed study of letters sent by mentally disordered persons to celebrities and to Members of the US Congress and of approaches made by mentally disordered persons to celebrities and to Members of the US Congress.[99,100,101] The researchers selected 214 cases from collections of letters sent to twenty-two celebrities and compared 107 subjects who pursued encounters with the celebrities with 107 who did not. For Congressional letter writers, forty-three subjects who pursued encounters with Members of Congress were compared with forty-three who did not. Dietz, *et al.*, designed their study to be of assistance to those with responsibility for protection:

> every instance of a public figure attack by a lone stranger in the United States for which adequate information has been made publicly available has been the work of a mentally disordered person who issued one or more pre-attack signals in the form of inappropriate letters, visits, or statements that concerned some public figure...The challenge is to make use of these signals in a manner allowing for the early recognition of subjects at particularly high risk of making attacks...[102]

Among the results of these studies was the finding that thirty-six percent of subjects who wrote to celebrities mentioned some public figure other than the celebrity to whom they had written, including political leaders. Subjects writing to Congress often mentioned other government officials and also mentioned other famous people or entities, including celebrities. In the Congressional study, the researchers discovered a strong association between making threats and *not* approaching: "Subjects who sent threats to a member of Congress were significantly *less* likely to pursue a face-to-face encounter with him or her."[103]

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97 (Larsen, 1986)
98 (Larsen, 1986), p. 50.
99 (Dietz & Martell, 1989)
100 (Dietz,Matthews,Van Duyne,Martell,Parry,Stewart, et al., 1991a)
101 (Dietz et al., 1991b)
102 (Dietz & Martell, 1989), p. 1-7.
103 (Dietz et al., 1991b), p. 1466.

While sensitive to the limitations of a study of surrogate variables (an approach is necessary, but not sufficient, for an attack), Dietz, *et al.*, concluded:

> The extent to which many subjects focus their attention on multiple public figures, including both entertainers and political leaders, calls for new approaches in the protection of public figures. The importance of the discovery that those who harass and pursue one public figure often harass and pursue other public figures is underscored by the fact that this is also true of many of those who attack public figures.[104]

Social Policy Analyses and Comments

A number of scholars and observers have either written social policy analyses concerning assassination and public official–directed violence or made policy comments on these topics.

MacDonald, writing in 1911, suggested that since assassins wanted fame, social policies that prevented publicity about perpetrators of such violence would act as deterrents:

> One means of protection is for newspapers, magazines and authors of books to cease publishing the names of criminals. If this be not done voluntarily, let it be made a misdemeanor to do so. This would lessen the hope for glory, renown or notoriety, which is a great incentive to such crimes...If some name must go down in history, let it be the name of the victim, doing his duty, rather than the name of the criminal, degrading his family and country...If certain details of the regular or future movements of high public officials were not published, it would also be a wise precaution. Dangerous cranks or mattoids will not usually seek out such details, but if published will make a note of them. They generally will not look up the address of a supposed enemy in the directory, but if they see it in the newspapers they are liable to remember it.[105]

Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty offered the conclusion that since it is impossible and probably undesirable in a democratic political system to identify and isolate potential assassins on a broad scale, "prevention of assassinations must remain fundamentally a problem of physical protection..."[106]

Hassel saw the lone assassin as posing a "great challenge" to the law enforcement community, "The determined gunman, overwhelmed by his failures and seeking revenge for his insignificance by destroying what to his mind is the symbol of all that is oppressive to him, is a formidable threat. This is especially true if he is willing to sacrifice

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104 (Dietz et al., 1991b), p. 1466.

105 (MacDonald, 1911), p. 520.

106 (Kirkham et al., 1969), p. viii.

his own life to accomplish his goal."[107] Hassel suggested consideration of limitations on styles of political campaigning that subjected candidates to risk.

Spragens opined that "100 per cent protection for the President and presidential candidates appears almost impossible," and wondered whether "all protective efforts are doomed to futility." He commented that a difficulty in protection is "the inability of psychologists to determine with certainty just who fits the profile of a potential assassin."[108]

Clarke argued that inappropriate focus on mental illness as a factor in assassination has led security officials to ignore pre-attack information about would-be assailants who did not fit stereotypes of mentally ill assassins.[109]

Restak reviewed literature on assassins and singled out the importance of differentiating "the talker from the stalker."[110]

Cooper emphasized the importance of "hard information" about assassination plots, conspiracies, and individual intentions to attack a particular public figure, "In the absence of such hard information, all risk analysis comes down to playing with numbers, sensing of moods, testing of values, and assessment of personalities."[111] Cooper called for study of assassins who have survived their attacks and are in state custody:

> Given the vast amounts of learning expended upon the subject, it would be all too easy to persuade ourselves that we know much more about certain assassins as assassins than we really do. Of such delusions are profiles constructed...How well have we come to 'know' these assassins, who have, fortuitously, become available to us for the sort of leisurely study their circumstances would merit? The disappointing, but truthful answer is: not very well at all.[112]

Without such knowledge, in Cooper's view, "There is left, then, only the defense of the protective screen and the hope that its mesh may be fine enough, tough enough, and resilient enough to ward off the threat should it materialize."[113]

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107 (Hassel, 1974) , p. 403.
108 (Spragens, 1980), p. 337.
109 (Clarke, 1981), p. 86.
110 (Restak, 1981), p. 95.
111 (Cooper, 1984), p. 191.
112 (Cooper, 1984), p. 75.
113 (Cooper, 1984), p. 191.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT ASSASSINATION LITERATURE SAYS ABOUT FUNDAMENTAL STUDY QUESTIONS

ECSP Seven Questions

ESCP questions include:

1. **How do attackers develop the idea of assassinating a public official or public figure? How does a person move from the idea of assassination to the action of assassination?** What relationships exist, between ideas and action, in people who act violently toward public officials and public figures?
2. **What motivates people to act violently toward public officials and public figures?** What do people hope to accomplish by attacking a prominent person of public status?
3. **How do people who direct violence toward public officials and public figures select their target(s)?**
4. **What planning strategies are used by people who direct violence toward public officials and public figures?**
5. **What relationships exist—if any—between threatening to commit violent action and carrying out violent action?**
6. **What relationships exist—if any—between symptoms of mental illness and assassination behaviors?**
7. **Were there key life events and patterns in the histories of people who have directed violence toward public officials and public figures?**

The literature on assassination and public official– and public figure–directed violence provides few data and little guidance about these questions. With rare exceptions, researchers and commentators have not focused on questions of movement from idea to action (and action to idea), target selection, planning strategies, relationship between threats of violence and violent action, and specific symptoms of mental illness that may influence assassination and attack behavior. In the few areas where there has been discussion, most scholars have utilized secondary source materials about a few presidential assassins to make what seem to be overly broad generalizations.

Idea to Action

Literature on assassination and public official– and public figure–directed violence refers only obliquely to relationships between ideas and action in assassins/assailants. Lack of discussion about how assassins/assailants moved from consideration of the idea of attack to the attack itself appears to be a result of two factors: 1) infrequent attention to

questions generated by an operational perspective; and 2) the near-dearth of studies that examine public official– and public figure–directed violence with primary source data from assassins and assailants.

There are no studies that focus on how assassins and attackers develop the idea of assassination. Several authors have provided perspectives about the manner in which assassins/assailants move from ideas to action, and action to ideas.

Weinstein[114], and Weinstein and Lyerly[115], writing in the 1960's, described the relationship between words and actions in a sample of threateners and of Secret Service subjects considered dangerous to the president. They suggested that the variable of social relatedness was critical to whether persons with ideas of assassination translated those ideas into gestures and actions. Weinstein wrote, "Language has meaning by reason of the way its elements fit into patterns of social relatedness. In general, the more 'real' the social relationship, the less need there is to validate the experience by the use of physical gestures, such as those of violence..."[116]

Greening, in 1971, suggested that assassins build up to the act during the months, weeks, and days before the attack. Finally, there is an "immediate, precipitating, triggering stimulus situation. We will never know how many men have been on the verge of killing political figures but held back at the last moment because the final push did not occur. The Secret Service is reported to have names of 100,000 possible assassins programmed into its computer."[117]

Dietz and Martell, in 1989, noted a relationship between the roles taken by letter writers to celebrities and politicians and the likelihood of approach. Writers who took roles as enemies were less likely to approach than others; writers who took roles as special constituents were more likely to approach.[118]

Dietz and Martell named a number of ideas and behaviors that they believed – though said they could not prove scientifically – were important predictors of attacks on public figures. These included:

1) emulation of famous assassins;
2) construction of a hit list;
3) creation of a diary documenting stalking behavior;
4) a pattern of seemingly random and purposeless travel while focused on a famous person;
5) efforts to get a weapon for the purpose of attacking a famous person.[119]

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[114](Weinstein, 1964)
[115](Weinstein & Lyerly, 1969)
[116] (Weinstein, 1964), p. 57.
[117] (Greening, 1971), p. 246.
[118] (Dietz & Martell, 1989), p. 13–8.
[119] (Dietz & Martell, 1989), p. 15–26-27.

Little is known in detail about how assailants develop the idea of assassination, then move from the idea to action. The importance of understanding relationships between ideas and action in public official/figure assassins/assailants is underscored by a pithy observation by Dietz and Martell: "The acutely violent patient is like a bullet in mid-flight; the deluded or obsessed stalker is like a cocked .45. Both pose an imminent risk of striking a target, but in the case of the former the suspense will soon be over."[120]

Motives

The question of assassins' motives has been approached historically and across cultures, by scholars who have asked about the interests, purposes, and intentions assassins have had.

No study has focused systematically on the motives of U. S. public official/figure assassins/assailants, but a number of writers have commented and speculated on the motives of assassins, including U. S. presidential assassins.

Scholars of U. S. presidential assassinations have generally relied upon secondary source materials to assess motives of assassins. Few students of assassination have had access to primary source material from assassins and attackers. There are no studies of public official or public figure violence that are based primarily on interviews of assassins/assailants.

A number of observers have pointed out the difficulty of separating the individual motives of an assassin from the social processes of which the assassination attempt may be a part. Leiden[121] noted the similarity of motives behind anomic assassinations and assassinations engineered by elites. Cooper,[122] analyzing assassination from an operational perspective, suggested that the motive behind an assassination could lead to, or dictate, the means of attack. And Logan, *et al.*,[123] argued that the motives of presidential threateners may be different than those of presidential attackers.

Ford described the fundamental political motivation for assassination: seizing, retaining, or undermining power in the state.[124] Leiden suggested that, politically, for rulers in power, there were five motives for assassination:

1) desire for political revenge
2) symbolic benefits to be gained from death of victim
3) practical need for removal
4) need for unofficial executions

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120 (Dietz & Martell, 1989), p. 16–27.
121(Leiden, 1976)
122(Cooper, 1984)
123(Logan et al., 1984)
124 (Ford, 1985), p. 381.

5) need for a scapegoat[125]

Leiden also suggested that there was one motive that was "marginal": personal or family grievances. Other writers have also described idiosyncratic motivations of assassins, including criminal disposition, desire for recognition or fame, hatred of authority, mental illness, distorted altruism, irrational forces, a sense of identity with other groups and individuals, loyalties to causes, and internal struggles between efforts to cope and experiences of failure.

MacDonald pointed to the "criminal element." Writing about a man who shot a mayor in 1910, MacDonald asked:

> What is the reason that the fear of poverty coupled with vengeance should cause such a deed? Hundreds of people lose their positions and feel like taking vengeance upon someone, but they stop there. The difference between them and this assassin is the criminal element in him, which, when awakened, is sufficiently strong to pass into an overt act.[126]

Hastings quoted from a 1964 interview with Dr. Renatus Hartogs, the psychiatrist who evaluated Lee Harvey Oswald when he was thirteen. Dr. Hartogs listed self-vindication, fame, hate, and retaliation as motives for assassination:

> Such a criminal is usually a person with paranoid ideas of grandiosity who can get satisfactory self-vindication only by shocking the entire world and not just a few people. He had to show the world he was not unknown, that he was someone with whom the world had to reckon. When he was 13 he reacted negatively, by withdrawing. It took him a whole lifetime to develop his courage, and then all the accumulated hate and resentment came out. A person like Oswald resents a lifetime of being pushed to the sidelines. He culminates his career of injustice-collecting by committing a supreme, catastrophic act of violence and power.[127]

Writing in the journal *Police*, Freedman commented on the fame and recognition sought by American assassins:

> Alone and secretive before the assassination, every assassin but Oswald has sought his fulfillment in the praise of other men and of posterity...Acclamation and martyrdom from this community of their fantasy were also part of the expectation. Of these assassins it may be said, as we have seen with other murderers, that they could not live until they had killed.[128]

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125 (Leiden, 1976), p. 135.
126 (MacDonald, 1911), p. 518.
127 (Hastings, 1965d), p. 297.
128 (Freedman, 1966), p. 29.

Describing a patient whose "grandiose fantasies and general demeanor were reminiscent of the young John Wilkes Booth," Sargent identified the "chief motive" for the assassination of a U. S. president as "a pathological craving for a particular kind of notoriety..."[129] For Sargent's patient, Bob,

> To kill a President, then, was clearly a dramatic means to guarantee the prominence for which he hungered, to be known as strong and dangerous, to rescue his life from insignificance, impotence, and obscurity, to counteract his inner feeling of passivity, weakness, and submissiveness. That this would require the death of a victim was only incidental.[130]

Taylor and Weisz listed "a desperate attempt to achieve importance," along with "reverse a downward course" and "obtain retribution for imagined wrongs," as motivations for assassination.[131] Cooper pointed to the assassin's wish to become "larger than life."[132] Ford suggested that assassins care little about approval, but want attention, "even only in the form of notoriety..."[133]

Hastings disagreed that desire for fame was the chief motivation for assassination of a president. "All" U. S. assassins and would-be assassins had "a malicious hatred of authority together with a compelling need to strike back to obtain their idea of justice."[134] Hastings argued that public revenge against assassination was too swift and certain "to permit a sane person to seriously consider the act" and viewed mental illness as the "key ingredient" in presidential assassination.[135]

Dietz, *et al.*, presented data that, while not about assassins, raised questions about the role of hate in public official and public figure approachers. Hate-mail writers were significantly less likely to approach celebrities and politicians than were subjects who were not hate mail writers.[136]

Weinstein and Lyerly saw persons most dangerous to the president as those who were socially isolated and who identified with the president "in terms of violence and death." These persons might see assassination as altruistic, as "patriotic heroism."[137]

Greening accepted the possibility of "political values" as conscious motives for assassination. He wondered, however, "whether someone who holds those values and expresses them by assassination is sane and rational, or driven both to those values and to killing by irrational, unconscious, pathological forces."[138]

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129 (Sargent, 1975), p. 300.
130 (Sargent, 1975), p. 304.
131 (Taylor & Weisz, 1970), p. 300.
132 (Cooper, 1984), p. 7.
133 (Ford, 1985), p. 198.
134 (Hastings, 1965d), p. 295.
135 (Hastings, 1965d), p. 296.
136 (Dietz & Martell, 1989), pp. 8–20, 13–14.
137 (Weinstein & Lyerly, 1969), p. 11.
138 (Greening, 1971), p. 233.

Writing in 1971, Nieburg argued that assassins operated with a wide range of motives, including those that might be contradictory. Assassins have believed that they had loyalties and were acting out of regard for political principles. He noted that Czolgosz and Zangara called themselves anarchists. Nieburg suggested that the assassins either believed that revolutionary conditions existed at the time of their actions or could exist because of their actions. He concluded:

> It is in terms of these perceptions that anomic behavior can be understood as identical to elitist behavior, but occurring in a social vacuum. The stereotype of the wild-eyed anomic individual resembles that of the leader of highly embattled social groups except for the devastating fact that there are no followers, organization, or group reinforcement. He is a leader acting as though surrounded by admiring legions. This is a kind of reference-group behavior.[139]

Hassel acknowledged that U. S. presidential assassins may have felt their reasons were political, but "the assassin's motives resulted from a misperception of reality; his view of the world was severely out of focus."[140]

Kaiser[141] argued that political motivations of assassins might be equal to or greater than their personal/compensatory motivations. Clarke[142,143,144] rejected what he termed a "pathological theory of assassination" and attempted to reconstruct both the objective realities of the times of seventeen assassins and assailants and their subjective realities.

Cooper[145] suggested that assassins' needs for fame and attention could compromise the operational viability of an assassination attempt. An assassin with a powerful motive for exposure and association with the deed might choose means and methods of attack that put himself at high risk. Such an approach might be less efficacious than other means/weapons that could be chosen.

Logan, *et al.*, reviewed 126 male presidential threateners referred to the Federal Medical Center at Springfield, Missouri, for psychiatric examination and concluded that half made the threat as a result of psychosis and half "with the purpose of obtaining some secondary gain."[146] Motives of many in the latter group appeared to include receiving institutional care.

Tanay commented that Professor Abraham Kaplan of the University of Haifa

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139 (Nieburg, 1971), p. 446.
140 (Hassel, 1974), p. 403.
141(Kaiser, 1981)
142 (Clarke, 1981)
143 (Clarke, 1982)
144 (Clarke, 1990)
145 (Cooper, 1984), p. 120.
146 (Logan et al., 1984), pp. 166-167.

differentiates between reasons for an action, which are the purposes it is meant to serve as the actors see them, and causes, which are the distinctive conditions that bring it about. He offers as an example the assassination of President McKinley:

"Leon Czolgosz, gave the reasons of an anarchist equalitarian. 'It is not right,' he declared, 'that the President should have everything and we should have nothing.' The reason for the assassination might lie with the President, buts its causes must be sought in the psychopathology of the assassin."[147]

Few commentators who have written about motives of assassins have distinguished between the "reasons" and "causes" of assassination. Most writers define motives as what they believed the assassin "really" wanted, rather than what the assassin said or thought he or she was trying to accomplish.

Confusion between "reasons" and "causes" is evident in debates over whether (or how much) U. S. presidential assassins had "political" motives. The statements of many, if not most assassins, contain political terms. Even assassins who appeared to be mentally ill used "political" language. For example, Hastings quoted from an interview with Charles Guiteau after he assassinated President Garfield:

On...Wednesday [May 18, 1881]...I felt depressed and perplexed on account of the political situation, and I retired much earlier than usual. I felt wearied in mind and body,...and I was thinking over the political situation, and the idea flashed through my brain that if the President was out of the way everything would go better. At first this was a mere impression. It startled me, but the next morning it came to me with renewed force...[148]

But Hastings dismissed the possibility of Guiteau having "political" – or other – motivations, (as he did for all assassins, with the exception of Collazo and Torresola). He saw mental illness as the sole cause of Guiteau's actions. Hastings concluded that "Mental illness, with its hallucinations, delusions, and faulty perception of reality, is the key ingredient in Presidential assassination in America."[149]

Target Selection

No study has focused systematically on how public official and public figure assailants and assassins select their targets. A number of writers, though, have suggested that selection of targets is an important question for research.

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147 (Tanay, 1987), p. 199, quoting from Kaplan, A. "The Psychodynamics of Terrorism" in *Terrorism, An International Journal*, 1:3-4, 1978, pp. 237-242.

148 (Hastings, 1965b), p. 12.

149 (Hastings, 1965d), p. 296.

Freedman[150], writing in 1965, suggested that assassins frequently have "alternate targets." Crotty[151] (1971) queried why individuals choose public personages as targets. Dietz, *et al.*,[152] in their study of letter writers and approachers, called attention to findings that subjects who harass one public figure are at risk of harassing other public figures.

One attempted assassin has written about target selection. Arthur Bremer, in his diary, detailed how he followed President Nixon in 1972, with the goal of shooting him. Frustrated by his inability to get close enough to Nixon to shoot, Bremer turned his attention to another target, Presidential Candidate George Wallace.[153]

Freedman, writing about presidential assassins, remarked that they were acting "against a symbol, not a man...Alienated from his peers, the assassin kills not a man but a dehumanized figure."[154] He suggested that the quality of dissociating the person from his position might relate to assassins frequently having alternative targets, noting that Oswald fired at General Walker and may have considered shooting former Vice-President Nixon. The only things targets shared with each other were "authority and celebrity."[155]

Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty, writing in 1969, reviewed all instances of assassination and attacks of public officials in the United States. They concluded that elected officials appeared to be at greater risk of attack than were appointed officials, despite appointed officials usually holding more power. A case by case analysis of acts of political violence found "no indicators that isolate specific individuals as targets of assassins...Particularly in the case of the higher elected offices, assassination seems to be a function of how a particular officeholder is perceived by an assailant who is by and large outside the main social and political stream of the society, and who is responding to cues that others are not likely to recognize."[156]

Slomich and Kantor, writing in 1976, pointed to three key factors in assassination: victims were "charismatic public figures"; attacks occurred at "crisis points"; and assailants were "marginal, anomic men from estranged strata of society."[157] Their analysis has considerable limitations. It appears to stretch history to see Presidents Garfield and Truman (both victims of attacks) as charismatic figures, to describe 1901 and 1981 (years in which Presidents McKinley and Reagan were shot) as "crisis points", or to characterize Sara Jane Moore or John W. Hinckley, Jr. as "anomic men from estranged strata of society."

Crotty observed that some theorize that assassinations of American presidents are actions resulting from the "pathological drives" of the killer. He noted that explanations

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150(Freedman, 1965)
151(Crotty, 1971)
152(Dietz & Martell, 1989)
153 (Bremer, 1973)
154 (Freedman, 1965), p. 656.
155 (Freedman, 1965), p. 656.
156 (Kirkham et al., 1969), p. 44.
157 (Slomich & Kantor, 1976), p. 41.

that focus on the mental instability of the killers are of little value for understanding the persistence of American assassination or its implications. Crotty posed, but did not answer, the question, "Why should an individual choose a public personage as his target if he is irrationally responding to internal needs?"[158]

Lindsey asked why the president becomes the object of attack. He suggested that individuals who experience failure blame their failures on others. Over time, individualized blame may be transferred to society or government. Since the president stands as the symbol of authority, the "visible parental figure," the president is held responsible. Lindsey also blamed television for having a role in assassination. Television spotlights the president "so as to almost invite attack."[159]

Dietz, *et al.*, discovered that subjects who pursue one public figure are at risk for pursuing another public figure. They noted:

> The extent to which many subjects focus their attention on multiple public figures, including both entertainers and political leaders, calls for new approaches in the protection of public figures. The importance of the discovery that those who harass and pursue one public figure often harass and pursue other public figures is underscored by the fact that this is also true of many of those who attack public figures.[160]

Review of literature on assassination points to the need to examine questions concerning the "directions of interest" of public official/figure assailants:

- What factors guide choice of a target? How much of a role does prominence of the target play in target selection? How important is the perceived power of a target?
- Do assassins and assailants (like Zangara, Oswald, Bremer, and Hinckley) generally have multiple directions of interest? What overlaps are there between "political" targets and "celebrity" targets? At what ages and at what stages in their lives do subjects "select" targets?
- What leads to an attack on a particular target? How important is the perceived availability of a target? What factors lead subjects to "de-select" targets they have planned to attack?

Planning

While there is occasional mention of the planning activities of assassins in the literature, there is no study of the process or extent of planning of persons who have attacked public officials or public figures.

MacDonald noted in 1911 that "assassins of rulers do not usually proceed in a sudden and blind way, like the insane, but their assaults are generally logically conceived and

158 (Crotty, 1971), p. 10.
159 (Lindsey, 1975), p. 50.
160 (Dietz et al., 1991b), p. 1466.

premeditated."[161] Freedman observed that the assassin "is capable of sprints of sometimes frantic and manic activity which frequently require planning and coordinating competence."[162]

Weinstein[163] and Logan, *et al.*,[164] used planning as a component of their definitions of persons "dangerous" to the president. Greening suggested that an assassin requires skill and intelligence to plan and implement an attack "unless he is desperate or dumb enough to rely on chance and fortuitous opportunity."[165]

It has been noted that some assassins and attackers have shifted attention from one target to another. But there are no studies of the effects of ways in which protective security arrangements inhibit (or spur) attacks. Does the presence of security affect the planning of attacks? How do assassins and attackers view the presence or absence of security around a target, the size of security forces, the structure of security? What leads some assassins and attackers to develop escape plans, while others do not?

Overall, there is little in the literature on assassination that speaks specifically to planning processes or mechanisms of U. S. assassins and assailants.

Threats and Violent Action

Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty observed in 1969 that the link between threats and "any intention to actually injure a President is not known."[166] In the early 1980's, at the beginning of their study, Dietz and Martell conducted a thorough review of literature on harassing and threatening communications directed to public figures. They concluded:

> we have searched in vain for comparable research concerning obscene telephone calls, bomb threats, death threats, product tampering threats, arson threats, terrorist threats, or any other kind of naturally occurring harassment or threats. What does exist is research on simulated threats, theory on simulated threats, and a bit of data on a few kinds of threatening communications...there is not much to be said on the state of prior research.[167]

Only two studies have gathered data on relationships between threats and behaviors that might be related to attacks. Neither of these studies examined the behavior of assassins or attackers.

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161 (MacDonald, 1911), p. 506.
162 (Freedman, 1965), p. 656.
163(Weinstein, 1965 (?))
164(Logan et al., 1984)
165 (Greening, 1971), p. 243.
166 (Kirkham et al., 1969), p. 67.
167 (Dietz & Martell, 1989), p. 2-1.

Logan, *et al.*,[168] studied presidential threateners and assessed them for evidence that they might attempt violent behavior directed at the president. The researchers rated only five percent of their sample as "dangerous" to the president.

Dietz, *et al.*,[169,170] studied the relationship between persons who wrote threatening letters to celebrities and politicians and those who approached celebrities and politicians. As noted earlier, Dietz, *et al.*, found that there was *no* relationship between threatening correspondence to celebrities and approach behavior, and there was a *negative* relationship between threatening correspondence to politicians and approach behavior. Dietz and Martell concluded:

> Those who rely on the presence or absence of threats in making judgments about what to do are making a serious mistake. Unfortunately, this error is codified in the criminal law, which recognizes various types of verbal threats as unlawful but does not accord equal recognition to harassment without threats, even though the latter often poses an equal or greater danger of harm to persons or property.[171]

Assassination literature is divided on whether actual U. S. assassins made their intentions known (through direct threats or other communications) before attacking. Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty concluded that "No presidential assassin, with the possible exception of Guiteau, has publicized his intentions in advance."[172] Greening concurred: "While some men have murderous feelings toward the President, which they express by writing letters threatening to kill him, no assassin has ever used this symbolic outlet."[173] However, Freedman suggested that several assassins had made threats beforehand to friends "but had not been taken seriously."[174] Weinstein and Lyerly opined that "most" presidential assassinations and near-assassinations "have been preceded by threats and gestures."[175]

Restak, writing in 1981, argued for attention to behaviors related to presidential attack, such as stalking, rather than to written or verbal threats: "It's not usually the person who writes the president a threatening letter we must fear but rather the individuals such as Bremer or Hinckley who stalk their prey from one part of the country to another."[176]

In his article, "Defenses against dangerous people when arrest and commitment fail," Dietz reviewed information from his group's study about persons who made threats against celebrities and/or politicians and were known to have later killed someone. He concluded:

168(Logan et al., 1984)
169(Dietz et al., 1991a)
170(Dietz et al., 1991b)
171 (Dietz & Martell, 1989), p. 8–23.
172 (Kirkham et al., 1969), p. 67.
173 (Greening, 1971), p. 241.
174 (Freedman, 1965), p. 655.
175 (Weinstein & Lyerly, 1969), p. 8.
176 (Restak, 1981), p. 95.

> each of the few threateners in our prospective sample who eventually murdered killed members of their own families...most of the known instances of murders by those who have threatened public figures were murders of persons other than the person threatened. Thus, warnings to victims named in threats are often directed to someone other than the person at highest risk.[177]

Symptoms of Mental Illness

While a number of authors have labeled presidential assassins and assailants as mentally ill, no scholar has conducted a detailed study of *symptoms* experienced by presidential attackers who may have been mentally ill and/or examined what relationship, if any, exists between symptoms of mental illness and attack behaviors.

Studies in the literature on public official– and public figure–directed violence that have described symptoms of mentally ill persons have used secondary source data about presidential assassins and assailants, or primary source data from populations of persons who have not attacked public officials/figures (such as visitors to the White House, letter writers, and persons who delusionally believed that they were related to public officials).

Hoffman began his 1943 article, "Psychotic visitors to government offices in the national capital," with this comment:

> In its issue for April 21, 1835, the Washington, D. C. newspaper, The Intelligencer, observed, 'It is a notorious fact that this city, being the seat of government, is liable to be visited by more than its proportion of insane persons....' This observation is as valid today as when it was made more than a hundred years ago.[178]

Hoffman reviewed case records of fifty-three patients at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital who came to Washington to see the president or other government officials. (Twenty-eight came to see the president, and one came to see the vice-president.) He noted that the subjects in his study had "bizarre and fantastic delusional ideas." Few patients expressed their ideas aggressively: "It is the rule that these patients are, with certain notable exceptions, quiet, pleasant, congenial, cooperative and well-behaved."[179] Hoffman mentioned the "complete lack of insight" of these patients and concluded that, due to lack of insight and their delusional ideas, "these individuals must be considered and treated as potentially the most dangerous patients we have to care for."[180]

Sebastiani and Foy reviewed clinical files on forty "White House Cases" admitted to Saint Elizabeth's Hospital in 1960–1961 and interviewed ten patients consecutively admitted

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177 (Dietz, 1990), p. 210.
178 (Hoffman, 1943), p. 571.
179 (Hoffman, 1943), p. 573.
180 (Hoffman, 1943), p. 573.

in 1963 after appearing at the White House[181]. All appeared to be delusional; none, in the researchers' judgment, was dangerous to the president.

Shore and colleagues conducted a series of studies in which they reviewed records of "White House Cases" admitted to Saint Elizabeth's Hospital in the 1970's.[182,183,184] Shore, *et al.*, examined arrest records of their subjects. They found that White House Case subjects with histories of prior arrests had a significantly higher rate of violent crime arrests after their hospitalizations than a matched control sample. The authors noted that none of the persons in their study attempted to assassinate a major government official. They pointed to symptoms of command hallucinations and persecutory delusions as worthy of further study.

Hastings studied reports of American assassins and suggested that paranoid delusions and command hallucinations were symptoms that could lead a "tortured soul" to attempt to kill the president[185]. He argued that a person experiencing the symptom that God was commanding him or her to take the life of the president could attempt assassination (although no presidential assailant—with the possible exception of Guiteau—is recorded as experiencing this symptom).

Taylor and Weisz listed delusions of persecution and grandeur as symptoms of disordered thinking "identified in the lives of most of the assassins."[186] Hassel argued that "Leaving precise clinical definitions aside, it is clear that all the assassins acted under some delusion strong enough to lead to murder."[187]

From analysis of correspondence, Dietz and Martell concluded that sixty-four percent of celebrity subjects and eighty percent of Congressional subjects experienced paranoid delusions.[188] The authors observed that "it is not which disorders subjects have that determines their approaches to public figures. Rather, it is the interaction between mental disorder and other individual and situational factors that determines which subjects pursue a face-to-face encounter."[189]

Silva, *et al.*, studied patients with misidentification syndrome. They suggested:

> Misidentification delusions could reflect hostility which has reached overwhelming proportions. Belief in the presence of an impostor could be used to justify an attack on the political figure. To our knowledge, this is the first series of cases involving misidentification syndromes which

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181 (Sebastiani & Foy, 1965)
182 (Shore,Filson,Davis,Olivos,DeLisi, & Wyatt, 1985)
183 (Shore,Filson,Johnson,Rae,Muchrer,Kelley, et al., 1989)
184 (Shore,Filson, & Rae, 1990)
185(Hastings, 1965a)
186 (Taylor & Weisz, 1970), p. 298.
187 (Hassel, 1974), p. 401.
188 (Dietz & Martell, 1989), p. 15–2.
189 (Dietz & Martell, 1989), p. 15–9.

considers prominent political figures as the misidentified object. Further study is necessary to evaluate whether the presence of such delusions does in fact significantly increase the likelihood of attempts to harm the misidentified political figures, given that they clearly do for misidentified family members.[190]

Key Developmental Life Experiences and Patterns

A number of writers in the literature on assassination refer to disorders, symptoms, and feelings that they believe assassins and assailants experienced. However, there are no reports that systematically examine major life experiences and events that affect and influence persons who commit public official– and/or public figure–directed violence. Authors who have written about presidential assassins and assailants have used words like isolated, rageful, and injustice-collector to describe their subjects. These terms imply that assassins/assailants experienced certain kinds of painful and bitter life events. There are few data in these studies that describe or define these experiences or suggest how they relate to other factors involved with public official/figure–directed violence.

Summary

Overall, with few exceptions (such as Dietz and Martell), scholars and researchers of American assassination have paid little attention to operational variables. Questions about the manner in which assailants move from ideas to actions, processes of target selection, planning, and relations between threats and violence are not well studied nor understood. Little is known systematically about assailant's motives or about relationships between symptoms of mental illness and assassination attacks.

Those responsible for protection of public officials and public figures, and those responsible for investigating and assessing the risks of violence directed toward public officials and public figures, will find little guidance in the literature on assassination.

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190 (Silva,Leong,Weinstock, & Ferrari, 1991), p. 1176.

CHAPTER 3: A CRITIQUE OF THREE MAJOR BELIEFS ABOUT ASSASSINATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Review of the English language literature on assassins suggests that there are three major beliefs about American assassins that need re-examination. These ideas are:

1) There is a profile of "the assassin;"

2) Assassination is a product of mental illness or derangement; and

3) Explicit threateners are the persons most likely to carry out attacks.

These three beliefs are prevalent in the literature and widespread in the popular culture. They are largely unsupported by data that has been gathered and analyzed about persons who have carried out attacks on public officials in the United States. They do not withstand critical thinking about assassination behaviors.

Belief # 1: There is a profile of the assassin.

Many writers about American assassination have tried to paint profiles of assassins. The 1969 statement by the staff of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (the Eisenhower Commission) has become a classic:

> Although we cannot unravel the significance of the similarities between the assassins, we could make this statement: we could predict after President Kennedy's assassination that the next assassin would probably be short and slight of build, foreign born, and from a broken family--most probably with the father either absent or unresponsive to the child. He would be a loner, unmarried, with no steady female friends, and have a history of good work terminated from one to three years before the assassination attempt by a seeming listlessness and irascibility. He would identify with a political or religious movement, with the assassination triggered by a specific issue which relates to the principles of the cause of movement. Although identifying with the cause, the assassin would not in fact be part of or able to contribute to the movement. Not every presidential assassin has had every one of the foregoing traits, but some combination of the above has characterized them all.[191]

Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty added an important caveat to their profile, which has been ignored by other assassin profile developers: "we do not know why the characteristics discussed above appear in assassins, nor do we know why in a few instances those

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191 (Kirkham et al., 1969), pp. 65-66.

characteristics may lead to assassination, while in the overwhelming number of cases there is no such result."[192]

Weisz and Taylor, also writing in 1969, described the "typical" presidential assassin:

> the typical presidential assassin is a Caucasian male between 24 and 40 years old, of slight build, who may have been born overseas but has become a citizen. He attacks with a handgun. The earliest assassins signaled their intention with a clear threat. In the past fifty years many such threateners have been intercepted before they could follow through on their plan, and recent assassins have tended not to make clearly identifiable threats. The assassin lives a life marked by alienation and loneliness. At some period of months to years before he makes his assassination attempt he is likely to give up working and to develop delusions of grandeur and/or persecution. The final act may be delayed by comparatively minor obstacles.[193]

Rothstein (1964) developed his "prototype case" of the "Presidential Assassination Syndrome." Traits in the prototype included "maternal deprivation in infancy, oral rage against the mother, weak fathers, defective masculine identification, no stable heterosexual relationship, a turning from the unsatisfactory family to a larger organization, often the military, for satisfaction, and displacement of unconscious rage against the mother."[194] Sargent, in 1975, added "lust for fame" to this profile.[195]

Lindsey, in 1975, described the profile of an attacker as a man or woman who is small, unprepossessing, undistinguished, with no marked talent, who has missed one or both parents in childhood and been deprived of parental affection. As a child, the assassin moves frequently and grows alienated and withdrawn, with few friends. By adolescence, the assassin is apathetic, with suppressed hostility, resentment, and anger. In adulthood, there is a lack of accomplishment. The assassin has unsuccessful interpersonal relationships, which are blamed on others. Failures in work and relationships lead to frustration, resentment, and anger, which result in the "explosion" of assassination.[196]

Bell (1979) commented that there is "general agreement" on a profile, but "the accepted profile fits far too many people." He observed:

> The Secret Service has a list of fifty thousand persons who may be a danger to the President and there are surely more than that in America who have backgrounds little different from that of Oswald or Ray or Sirhan. While it is possible to make up a profile of the potential psychotic aircraft hijacker (who wants, in any case, to be caught) and filter him out at the

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192 (Kirkham et al., 1969), p. 67.
193 (Weisz & Taylor, 1969), p.668.
194 (Sargent, 1975), p. 307.
195 (Sargent, 1975)
196 (Lindsey, 1975), p. 50.

> check-in booth, potential assassins do not appear at a check-in booth but out of a crowd, in a reception line, next to the limousine. And until then, they were usually not very different from others with chaotic, unsatisfactory lives--even Squeaky Fromme's weird cult was not unique, only more brutal, more pointless, more senseless than most.[197]

Kaiser, in 1981, acknowledged the major problem with the Eisenhower Commission's 1969 profile:

> A problem with such projections is that they may apply to any number of individuals, not just potential assassins. The Secret Service has noted before that there is no consistent profile of a potential assassin and that its sponsorship of sixteen studies of relevant behavioral or attitudinal characteristics has failed to produce any meaningful consensus.[198]

Kaiser also observed that the characteristics listed by Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty in 1969 have proven unreliable. The two assailants of President Ford were female, and John W. Hinckley, Jr. was not a product of a broken home. Additionally, he noted that the attribute of being foreign-born or having parents foreign-born appeared to be more relevant at other times in United States history when such a grouping was a larger percentage of the US population than it did in 1981.

Cooper, in 1984, urged caution in generalizing about assassins: "Given the vast amounts of learning expended upon the subject, it would be all too easy to persuade ourselves that we know much more about certain assassins as assassins than we really do. Of such delusions are profiles constructed."[199]

Larsen also pointed out that the accuracy of the Eisenhower Commission profile had been eclipsed by attacks in the 1970's and 1980's. He suggested that to accommodate variations among past assassins, a profile would be increasingly broad, and therefore, would not distinguish well among potential assassins and others. Commenting on such a profile, Larsen concluded, "there are many, many people living in this country who meet such a description but will never commit an assassination, or for that matter do any other violent act."[200]

Despite these observations, there are many persons in the public, in law enforcement, and in behavioral science communities who continue to believe that there is a "profile" of the "typical" assassin or that effort should be devoted to developing such a profile.

The Exceptional Case Study Project takes another approach to the question of "profiles." Assassins and attackers come from both genders and from various ages, ethnic origins, sizes, backgrounds, etc. Some may be maladjusted; others lonely, still others full of rage.

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197 (Bell, 1979), pp. 74-75.
198 (Kaiser, 1981), p. 548.
199 (Cooper, 1984), p. 75.
200 (Larsen, 1986), p. 50.

But regardless of their demographic or psychological characteristics, most assassins engage in pre-attack behaviors. Certain behaviors may be prerequisites to assassination. As Dietz and Martell noted, attacks must be preceded by approaches. Approaches of public officials and public figures must involve some planning, which must be preceded by target selection. Examination of the thinking and actions of assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers suggests that would-be assailants may develop patterns of behavior before their attacks.

Belief # 2: Assassination is a product of mental illness or derangement.

A second belief about US assassins concerns mental illness. Many writers about assassination in the United States have asserted or assumed that most, if not all, American assassins have been mentally ill. Focus on mental illness, while perhaps comforting to those who seek simplistic explanations for attack behaviors directed at national leaders, has deterred careful analysis of the behaviors, thoughts, and motives of assassins.

The logic of arguments that most, if not all, American assassins have been mentally ill flows from two starting points. One point is that, by definition, assassination in the United States (particularly of the president) is an irrational act. The primary goals of assassins in non-democratic societies – changing leadership elites and/or bringing down the government – cannot be achieved by assassination in a constitutional democracy with separate and equal branches of government. Since in the United States, the act of assassination will not achieve these political goals, it is seen an irrational act. By definition, then, persons who attempt assassination must be irrational, mentally ill, or deranged.

The second starting point for those who argue that American assassins have been mentally ill are reports of the ideas and behaviors of a few US assassins. Richard Lawrence, who attacked President Jackson in 1835, was reported to believe that he was King Richard III of England and that he was entitled to a large sum of money from the US government. Charles Guiteau reportedly believed that a pamphlet he wrote in support of James Garfield was a major factor in Garfield's election to the Presidency in 1880. John Schrank said that he shot Presidential candidate Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 because he wanted to prevent development of a monarchy in the United States. Schrank believed that since, if Roosevelt was elected president, he would be the first president to serve for three terms, his election would lead to tyranny.

In much thinking and writing about U. S. assassination, there is a premature labeling of attackers as mentally ill. In some cases, once any of an attacker's ideas have been identified as irrational, further inquiry about the attacker's thinking, motives, and goals halts. A possible symptom of mental illness then serves to explain the assassin's behavior. Labeling of an attacker as mentally ill renders some investigators satisfied that they have solved the "mystery" of assassination.

But, for example, how does Lawrence's belief that he was entitled to money from the federal government explain his attack on President Jackson? How did the ideas held by

Lawrence (and the feelings related to those ideas) lead him to attempt to fire two pistols at the president? Were there not other ways that Lawrence could have communicated his concerns? Might there have been other persons in his time who held similar crazy ideas to Lawrence's, and did not try to kill the president?

Questions of mental illness may be relevant in criminal proceedings following an assassination attempt. Larsen observed that the psychiatric approach to assassination is "further encouraged by defense attorneys, who, inevitably lack any other defense in a well recorded crime and therefore turn to the defense of last resort, insanity."[201] But how relevant is mental illness to efforts to prevent assassinations?

Interestingly, of the fifteen men and women who have attacked or assassinated U. S. presidents or presidential candidates, only one, Sara Jane Moore, had a history of psychiatric hospitalization before his or her attack[202]. But three attackers were confined to psychiatric hospitals after their attacks (Lawrence, Shrank, and Hinckley), and questions of mental illness surrounded the trials of others (Guiteau, Czolgosz, Zangara Bremer, Fromme, Duran[203]). Questions of mental illness have also been raised in other cases in which the assassin or attacker died before coming to trial (Booth, Oswald).

Writers who have asserted that most American assassins were mentally ill include Donovan,[204] Rothstein,[205,206,207,208] Hastings,[209,210,211,212] Freedman,[213,214,215,216] Kirkham, Levy, and Crotty,[217] Weisz and Taylor,[218] Weinstein and Lyerly,[219] Taylor,[220] Greening,[221] Hassel,[222] and Sargent.[223]

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201 (Larsen, 1986), p. 43.

202 Moore's psychiatric hospitalizations were for brief periods and generally appeared to be triggered by suicidal gestures.

203 Since Guiteau, Czolgosz, and Zangara were executed shortly after their trials (which occurred immediately after their assassinations and attacks), information about their long-term mental conditions are less available than for Bremer and Fromme, who were imprisoned after their convictions.

204 (Donovan, 1952 (revised 1964))

205 (Rothstein, 1964)

206 (Rothstein, 1966)

207 (Rothstein, 1973)

208 (Rothstein, 1975)

209 (Hastings, 1965a)

210 (Hastings, 1965b)

211 (Hastings, 1965c)

212 (Hastings, 1965d)

213 (Freedman, 1965)

214 (Freedman, 1966)

215 (Freedman, 1971)

216 (Freedman, 1984)

217 (Kirkham et al., 1969)

218 (Weisz & Taylor, 1969)

219 (Weinstein & Lyerly, 1969)

220 (Taylor & Weisz, 1970)

221 (Greening, 1971)

Clarke[224,225,226] has been the most vigorous challenger of the conventional wisdom that American assassins have been mentally ill. Cooper[227] and Larsen[228] have also questioned the "assassins are mentally ill" analysis.

A number of thinkers have raised what might be called the "so what" question. Weinstein and Lyerly suggested that an assassin's "behavior cannot be explained in terms of the symptomatology or psychodynamics of any particular mental illness."[229] Sargent noted that mental illness "does not constitute a motive for assassination."[230] Clarke questioned whether stereotypes about the mental illness of assassins affected FBI and Secret Service Agents and led persons like Lee Oswald, Lynette Fromme, and Sara Jane Moore – all of whom Clarke reports had come to the attention of either the FBI or the Secret Service before their attacks – to be "ignored or dismissed from protective surveillance."[231]

Effects to determine whether (or how much) assassins and assailants suffered from mental illness have served as smoke screens to cloud careful analysis of the behaviors, patterns, and motives of persons who have attacked public leaders. Writers emphasizing the mental illness of assassins have been comforted by mental illness pseudo-explanations of assassination behavior. Questions of target selection, motives, planning, movement from idea to action, and other areas that are relevant, if not essential, to preventive, protective, and operational perspectives and activities have been left largely unexamined.

The great, great majority of persons with mental illness, like other citizens in the U. S., have not considered, let alone focused on, let alone planned, let alone prepared for, let alone carried out attacks on public officials and public figures. Inordinate attention to generic "mental illness or not" questions diverts inquiry from areas that are more important, and are likely to be more productive. The belief that assassins are mentally ill, with its dual implications of "that's all we need to know" and "if they are mentally ill, there is nothing we can do" provides a false, and potentially dangerous, sense of security, especially for those charged with protection and investigation.

Belief # 3: Explicit threateners are the persons most likely to carry out attacks.

Writing in 1989, Dietz and Martell warned about the "pervasive myth that threats are of concern, but not other 'nut mail,' 'kook calls,' odd visitors, or nonthreatening statements by mentally disordered persons focused on public figures."[232]

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222 (Hassel, 1974)
223 (Sargent, 1975)
224 (Clarke, 1981)
225 (Clarke, 1982)
226 (Clarke, 1990)
227 (Cooper, 1984)
228 (Larsen, 1986)
229 (Weinstein & Lyerly, 1969), p. 7.
230 (Sargent, 1975), p. 307.
231 (Clarke, 1982), p. 9.
232 (Dietz & Martell, 1989), p. 16–5.

As noted earlier, much literature on assassination, often unthinkingly, links threateners and attackers, as if the two categories are one. The assumption of many writers is that those who make threats pose threats. While some threateners may pose threats, often those who pose threats do not make threats.

The problem of linking threateners and attackers is seen perhaps most graphically in Rothstein's 1964, oft-cited study[233] of eleven psychiatric patients at the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri. Rothstein studied men whose offenses involved threats to the president. Rothstein entitled his report, "Presidential Assassination Syndrome," although *no assassins or attackers* were included among the eleven men in the study sample.

In contrast, more recently, Logan and colleagues reviewed clinical records of 126 male presidential threateners also sent to the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners, Springfield, Missouri. Six characteristics were used to define the dangerous group: "potential to inflict harm, proximity, purpose, plan, propensity for violent crimes, and preoccupation with killing the president."[234] Fewer than five percent of this sample of threateners were assessed as "dangerous."

Studying a group of letter-writers, Dietz and colleagues found that there was no relationship between threatening and approaching for mentally disordered subjects who were focused on celebrities. There was a negative relationship between threatening and approaching for subjects who were focused on Members of Congress. Dietz and Martell concluded:

> We have disproved the myth that threats and threateners are the only communications or people of concern. The most common assumption in all quarters--laymen, mental health professionals, law enforcement professionals, and lawmakers--is that threats foretell more dangerous behavior, but that other odd communications do not. This is a groundless assumption and the source of more misguided policy and decision making than any other error in this field.[235]

The suggestion of Dietz and Martell's analysis is *not* that threats be ignored or be investigated without vigor, but that "Those who require the presence of a threat before calling the authorities, before opening an investigative file, or before taking measures to prevent dangerous encounters are seriously in error."[236]

Social policies, formulated in state and federal statutes, in case law, and in investigative and administrative procedures all too often focus on explicit threats, to the potential exclusion of other behaviors that, in reality, may warrant more attention and concern.

233(Rothstein, 1964)

234 (Logan et al., 1984), p. 167.

235 (Dietz & Martell, 1989), p. 16–6-7.

236 (Dietz et al., 1991b), p. 1467.

CONCLUSION

Social scientists, mental health professionals, historians, and other thoughtful observers have examined the phenomenon of assassination and public official– and public figure–directed violence in the United States. The problem of assassination has been explored from analytic, historical, sociological, psychological, psychiatric, behavioral, and social policy perspectives. Individual assassins have been characterized; rational and irrational motives for attacks scrutinized; surrogate populations categorized; social forces analyzed. Much has been contributed, yet still relatively little is known.

A cursory reading of the most cited literature on American assassination might lead one to conclude that there is a profile of "the assassin," that mental illness is the key variable in assassination behavior, and that persons who threaten are at greater risk of attacking than are other individuals. These "conclusions" are incorrect and/or, at best, premature.

In 1981, the Secret Service and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences convened a conference of behavioral scientists and clinicians to consider how the Secret Service might fruitfully approach the prevention of assassination. At that conference, a number of areas and questions were identified for future study and analysis. These included: 1) selection of assassination victims/targets, 2) the relationship between threats and actions, and 3) key factors in the lives and backgrounds of assassins and attackers.[237]

Review of the literature concerning these three questions and four others examined in the Exceptional Case Study Project (movement from idea to action, motives, planning activities, and relationships between symptoms of mental illness and assassination efforts) suggests that there are significant gaps in current knowledge.

Rarely, if at all, have the ideas, feelings, characteristics, behaviors, and/or activities of persons who plan and carry out attacks on public officials/figures been recorded systematically, let alone assessed from an operational perspective. There are no data bases in the literature that permit orderly comparison of persons who have exhibited behaviors that may be related to assassination.

Since, in the aggregate, so little is known about violence directed at public officials and public figures, there is opportunity for law enforcement experts, social scientists, and clinicians to make significant progress in understanding these perplexing, and deeply troubling, behaviors.

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237 (Takeuchi,Solomon, & Menninger, 1981)

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Preventing Assassination: A Selective Bibliography

Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project

A project supported by the National Institute of Justice

May 1997

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Preventing Assassination

Secret Service
Exceptional Case Study Project

A project supported by the National Institute of Justice

May 1997

Robert A. Fein, Ph.D.

Assistant Special Agent In Charge Bryan Vossekuil

This project was supported under award number 92-IJ-CX-0013 by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U. S. Department of Justice and by the U. S. Secret Service, Department of Treasury.

May 1997

We have been guided and assisted by many able people as we worked on this project. We owe special thanks to the following persons and organizations:

Associate Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun

National Institute of Justice: Dr. Richard Rau, Lois Mock, Dr. Neil Weiner, Mary Graham

Federal Bureau of Prisons: Director Kathleen Hawk, Dr. Ken Moritsugu, Dr. Daniel Cowell, Dr. Ruth Westrick-Connolly, Dr. Sally Johnson, staff at the Federal Medical Centers in Rochester, Minnesota and Butner, North Carolina, Cary Mack, Casey Skvorc

Policy Research Associates, Inc.: Dr. Henry Steadman, Pamela Clark Robbins, Eric Silver, Jason Beckstead, and staff

National Criminal Justice Association: Gwen Holden, Lisa Doyle Moran, and staff

Gavin de Becker, Inc.: Gavin de Becker and staff

National Governors Security Association: Lt. Tom Taylor

Los Angeles District Attorney's Office: Rhonda Saunders, Patti Jo Fairbanks, Susan J Gruber, Ken Barshop, Robert Cohen, Sterling Norris

Los Angeles Superior Court: Judge Michael Knight

U. S. Secret Service: former Director John R. Simpson; Director Eljay Bowron; Assistant Directors H. Terrence Samway, Michael Smelser, David Lee, and Stephen Sergek; Special Agents in Charge Jane Vezeris and Dale Wilson; Deputy Special Agent in Charge James Lucey; Special Agents Marty Allen, Steve Amico, Al Baker, John Berglund, Mike Garduno, Paul Gebicke, and George Sexton; Research Section Chief Dr. Margaret Coggins; Researchers Angela Macdonald and Joseph Gerston; Senior Intelligence Research Specialist Lynn Zimney; Archivist Michael Sampson; Supervisory Visual Specialist Ed Ross; Visual Information Specialists: Jeff Clemente, Bob Fulk, MacKenzie Kearney, and Patrick Nolan

Dr. Randy Borum, Dr. Frederick Calhoun, Dr. Robert Cancro, Dr. James Cavanaugh, Dr. Shervert Frazier, Dr. Michael Gelles, Rob Kasdon, Dr. Carl Malmquist, Dr. Edward Mulvey, Dr. Mary Rowe, Ann Vossekuil, Patrick Wolfe

We are also deeply grateful to the men and women who were subjects of this study and who consented to be interviewed.

Robert A. Fein, Ph.D.

Bryan Vossekuil

Reports from the Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project:

Preventing Assassination: Summary of Findings

Preventing Assassination: Final Activities Report

Preventing Assassination: A Monograph

Preventing Assassination: A Literature Review

Preventing Assassination: A Selective Bibliography

Preventing Assassination: Summary of Findings

Secret Service
Exceptional Case Study Project

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Robert A. Fein, Ph.D.

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INTRODUCTION

The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project has studied the thinking and behavior of all 83 people known to have attacked, or approached to attack, a prominent person of public status in the United States since 1949. The primary goal of the Exceptional Case Study Project has been to gather information and develop knowledge that might aid law enforcement organizations to fulfill protective responsibilities for public officials and public figures.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Assassination is the end result of an understandable, and discernible, process of thinking and behavior

Assassinations and attacks on public officials and public figures, almost without exception, are not sudden, impulsive acts. Assassination is the end result of an understandable, and discernible, process of thinking and behavior.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers do not fit any single – or several – descriptive, demographic, or psychological "profiles"

There are no accurate – or useful – descriptive, demographic, or psychological "profiles" of American assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers. ECSP subjects were both male and female, and ranged across ages, educational backgrounds, employment histories, marital status, and other demographic and background characteristics.

Findings about the histories and personal characteristics of attackers and near-lethal approachers include:

- Their ages ranged from 16 to 73.
- Almost half had attended some college or graduate education.
- Attackers and near-attackers often had histories of mobility and transience.
- About two-thirds of all attackers and near-lethal approachers were described as social isolates.
- Few had histories of arrests for violent crimes or for crimes that involved weapons.
- Few had ever been incarcerated in state or federal prisons before their public figure-directed attack or near-lethal approach.
- Most attackers and would-be attackers had histories of weapons use, but no formal weapons training.
- Many had histories of harassing other persons.

- Most are known to have had histories of explosive, angry behavior, but only half of the subjects are known to have had histories of violent behavior.
- Many had indicated to someone their willingness to exert violence against government officials.
- Attackers and near-lethal approachers often had interests in militant/radical ideas and groups, though few had been members of such groups.
- Many had histories of serious depression or despair.
- Many are known to have attempted to kill themselves, or known to have considered killing themselves, at some point before their attack or near-lethal approach.
- Almost all had histories of grievances and resentments.
- Many subjects had contact with mental health professionals or care systems at some point in their lives before their attack or near-lethal approach.

  (But relatively few were in contact with mental health professionals or organizations in the year before their attack or near-attack. And few subjects indicated to mental health staff that they were considering attacking a public official or public figure.)
- Many subjects had histories of delusional ideas.
- Few had histories of command hallucinations.
- Relatively few had histories of substance abuse, including alcohol.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often demonstrated "attack-related" behaviors.

Persons who have attacked, or come close to attacking, prominent persons of public status often exhibit "attack-related" behaviors.

Attack of a public official or public figure is a particular kind of violence, involving different preparations and circumstances than those for other kinds of violence, such as, for example, an armed robbery of a convenience store or an assault on a domestic partner. A potential assassin must determine where the target is likely to be. He or she must decide on a weapon. The attacker must travel to the site where the target lives, works, or is visiting. To mount an attack, often the assailant must confront security personnel and measures. These are all relatively complex tasks which require considerable thought and planning.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often developed interests in assassination.

More than 40% of the subjects are known to have had an interest in assassination before they attacked or approached their targets. Interest in assassination ranged from detailed knowledge about previous American assassins and the literature written about them, to familiarity with the protective functions of the law enforcement agencies.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often considered more than one target for attack.

One-third of the subjects are known to have considered more than one target before their attack or near-lethal approach.

There was little overlap in target selection between subjects whose primary target was a public official and subjects whose primary target was a public figure, such as a celebrity. For example, of the fourteen attackers and near-lethal approachers whose targets were celebrities, only two considered a public official as a target.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often communicated their intentions.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers generally let others know – or kept journals or gathered materials that might let others know – about their intentions to harm a target. They rarely, however, communicated direct threats to do harm to their targets or to law enforcement authorities.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often traveled to find their targets.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers used a range of planning strategies, ranging from naive to relatively sophisticated.

In planning and mounting attacks and near-lethal approaches, ECSP subjects usually behaved quite rationally.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often went to places that targets were scheduled to visit temporarily, rather than trying to attack at targets' homes or offices.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers dressed to look normal.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers arrived early at event sites where they hoped to mount attacks.

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often expected to be killed or to die after mounting attacks.

Attackers and would-be attackers frequently demonstrated interests in radical or militant groups, though few joined such groups.

More than a fourth of attackers and would-be attackers who acted alone are known to have had interests in radical or militant groups. But fewer than a tenth were members of these groups at the time of their attack or near-lethal approach.

Some attackers and near-lethal approachers might be characterized as "fringe of fringe" persons. At some point in the years before an attack or near-attack, a potential assassin might become interested in the ideology and activities of a group(s) that espoused violent action. He or she might collect information about the group and perhaps attend a meeting or two. But the potential assassin generally would not join the group and become a steady member. Rather, he or she would stay on the fringe. Such a person might use the ideas or rationale of the group to justify his or her violent thinking and later plans for violence.

SEVEN FUNDAMENTAL STUDY QUESTIONS

How does a person move from the idea of assassination to the action of assassination?

It seems obvious, and it is true: assassinations are rarely attempted by persons who see themselves as doing well in life. Almost all American assassins, attackers, and would-be attackers were persons who had – or believed themselves to have had – difficulty coping with problems in their lives. However, while assassination is rare behavior, the kinds of problems experienced by ECSP subjects were, with few exceptions, neither rare nor extreme.

Some persons deliberated about assassination for years before moving into action. Others latched on to the idea of assassination or attack as a way to solve their problems and moved within a period of weeks or months into action.

While it is difficult to identify with precision specific precipitants, or triggers, that led subjects to move from ideas of assassination to action, almost half of the subjects are known to have experienced a major loss or life change in the year before their attack or near-lethal approach. These losses or changes included marital problems and breakups, death of a family member, failure at school, work, or in social relationships, personal illness or illness of a family member, or a personal setback that precipitated feelings of despair or desperation.

What motivates persons to act violently toward public officials and public figures?

Attackers and near-lethal approachers of public officials rarely had "political" motives.

An attacker or would-be attacker with motives that clearly are not "political" is likely to be seen as "crazy." It has often been assumed that mentally ill assailants or potential assailants either have motives that are so irrational that they cannot be understood or have no motives other than their illness. This perspective is incorrect.

Assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers had a range of motives, with a subject often having more than one motive. Motives for attacks and near-lethal approaches included:

- to achieve notoriety/fame;
- to avenge a perceived wrong;
- to end personal pain; to be killed by law enforcement;
- to bring national attention to a perceived problem;
- to save the country or the world;
- to achieve a special relationship with the target;
- to make money;
- to bring about political change.

How do persons who direct violence toward public officials and public figures select their target(s)?

Attackers' and near-lethal approachers' selection of targets was influenced by several factors:

- the potential attacker's place on his/her path to assassination;
- the potential attacker's motives;
- found or perceived opportunities to attack.

Almost half of the subjects are known to have considered attacking a target other than the one that they finally selected. Most subjects picked either public official or public figure targets and did not consider both kinds of targets.

There is a clear relationship between motive and target selection. The relationship is most obvious for subjects whose principal motive was revenge. Subjects whose motive was revenge selected those whom they believed wronged them as targets.

Subjects whose motives were : 1) to achieve notoriety/fame, 2) to bring national attention to a perceived problem, 3) to save the country or the world, or 4) to bring about political change, usually picked targets because of their perception of target's importance.

Subjects whose major motive was to be killed or removed from society often chose a target whom they saw as well protected.

For a number of subjects, choice of a target involved several motives. Examples of subjects who chose targets because of multiple motives included those who both wished to be killed by law enforcement and to achieve notoriety.

For example, a person who wishes to die in the spotlight of national attention might attempt to attack any high ranking public official who is protected and who receives media coverage. For such a potential assassin, personal feelings about a target, or opinions about a target's politics or policies, may not enter into the decision about which target to select for attack. What matters is that the target is surrounded by armed protectors and that the assassination attempt will receive media attention.

A subject who does not wish – or is not prepared – to risk death, might not consider attacking a public official or public figure known to be well protected. Such an attacker might rule out a situation where his/her escape options would be limited. On the other hand, an assailant who wishes to be killed in the attempt might not consider his/her escape options.

A subject primarily interested in revenge for a perceived or actual wrong might have a specific target(s) who is seen as responsible for the injustice. Such a subject would not be interested in attacking another public official or figure who does not appear to bear responsibility for the subject's grievances and pain.

Several subjects chose their targets because the targets happened to be near the attacker or near-lethal approacher at a time when the subject was ready to attack.

And a number of persons became targets of assassins and attackers because they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

What planning strategies are used by persons who direct violence toward public officials and public figures?

Attackers and near-attackers evinced a range of sophistication and attention in their planning. Some subjects planned their attacks with great care; others gave only slight or superficial attention to planning. Still others tried to plan but were thwarted by the security provided for their targets.

Despite sometimes thoughtful planning efforts, no attacker or near-assailant approached the task of assassination with the sophistication and technical expertise that has been presented in popular images of assassins. Few subjects manufactured their own weapons. Few subjects developed complex or elaborate schemes or ruses to outwit a target or his or her protectors.

On the other hand, almost all attackers selected their targets with some degree of planning and consideration.

Generally, planning strategies of attackers and near-lethal approachers were thoughtful and reasonable. For example, many attackers and would-be attackers of public official targets chose locations where the target intended to be for a temporary period, such as a rally or speech site. Choice of a temporary location was often predicated on a subject's belief that it would be impossible to mount a successful attack at the target's home or office.

Given a choice, attackers and near-lethal approachers opted to mount attacks in places they were more, rather than less, familiar with.

Assailants and would-be assailants generally dressed to fit in when they were preparing to mount an attack, especially if they were planning to appear at a public site.

Fewer than a quarter of the subjects are known to have developed escape plans.

Having a wish to be killed, or a willingness to die, affected planning for attackers and near-lethal approachers. Almost one-third of the subjects are known to have wished to die or expected to die or be killed in their attack or near-lethal approach.

What relationships exist between threatening to commit violent action and carrying out violent action?

Much literature on assassination, often unthinkingly, links threateners and attackers, as if the two categories are one. The assumption of many writers is that those who make threats pose threats. While some threateners *may* pose threats, sometimes those who pose threats do not make threats.

No assassin or attacker communicated a direct threat about their target to the target or to a law enforcement agency before their attack or near lethal-approach. Fewer than a tenth of all subjects communicated a direct threat to the target or a law enforcement agency. These subjects were all approachers.

While few subjects delivered explicit threats to their targets or to law enforcement officials, attackers and near-lethal approachers were not completely secretive about their aims and intentions.

Almost two-thirds of the subjects are known to have made some threat about their targets in the days, weeks, and months before their attack or near-lethal approach. Attackers and would-be attackers usually expressed their intentions, either by letting someone know or by writing notes, letters, or journals that described their thinking and states of mind.

The idea that the persons who pose the greatest risks to public officials and public figures are those who make explicit threats is a myth. People make threats for a variety of reasons: to intimidate, to coerce, to express anger, to bring attention to themselves, to get help, to force a change in their circumstances, to warn before they act, to be stopped. But those who are most likely to attack are unlikely to threaten their targets directly beforehand.

What relationships exist between symptoms of mental illness and assassination behaviors?

The argument that almost all assailants and near-assailants of public officials in the United States are mentally ill – and that mental illness, therefore, is a major factor in understanding and preventing assassination – is incorrect. It is also misleading, in that it

may obscure the fact that effective attempts at assassination require careful thinking and planning and, often, highly organized behaviors.

Fewer than half of American assassins, attackers, or near-lethal approachers since 1949 who chose public officials or figures as their primary targets exhibited symptoms of mental illness at the time of their attacks or near-lethal approaches.

To be sure, sixty-one percent of the assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers had been evaluated or treated by a mental health professional at some point before their attack or near-lethal approach. These contacts ranged from several meetings with a counselor during adolescence to years of care for chronic mental disability. Thirty-eight percent of the subjects had been hospitalized at least once for psychiatric reasons. These hospitalizations ranged from brief admissions for suicidal threats or gestures to longer stays for treatment of psychotic disorders.

But fewer than one-fourth of all subjects had contact with mental health professionals in the year before their attack or near-lethal approach. Fewer than ten percent of attackers had such contacts. And no subject is known to have told a treating mental health professional about his or her ideas or plans to attack a prominent person of public status.

Some subjects did suffer from major mental illnesses. Others had episodes or patterns of disruptive, self-destructive, or upsetting behavior that had triggered contact with mental health professionals. However, all could think clearly enough to mount an attack or make a near-lethal approach to a prominent person of public status.

Thirty-eight percent of the subjects appeared to hold delusional ideas at the time of their attack or near-lethal approach. But only a small number of subjects were prompted by voices ordering them to kill, or mounted attacks for reasons that, when examined carefully, appear obviously irrational. Even these subjects were capable of thinking and planning.

Motives of delusional subjects included: to achieve notoriety/fame; to avenge a perceived wrong; to end personal pain or to be killed by law enforcement; to bring national attention to a perceived problem; to save the country or the world; and to achieve a special relationship with the target. Subjects whose primary targets were celebrities (and whose motives often were to develop a special relationship with the target) were more likely to be mentally ill than subjects whose targets were public officials.

No subjects whose motives were to effect political change or to get money were delusional at the times of their attacks or approaches.

In no case was mental illness, per se, a motive for assassination behavior. Attacks on persons of prominent public status are actions chosen by persons who see assassination as a way to achieve their goals or solve problems. Even for those subjects who were acutely mentally ill and not firmly in touch with reality, assassination, in almost every case, was a rational means for achieving some ends.

Were there key life events and patterns in the histories of persons who have directed violence toward public officials and public figures?

It would be easy to conclude that attackers and would-be attackers are troubled persons, with histories of pain, interpersonal difficulties, losses, and failures. No subject who acted alone was living an exemplary life, as defined by success in both work and family spheres. Many, if not most, subjects had great difficulty building and maintaining consistent relationships in their lives, let alone mutual and intimate relationships. Few, if any subjects, had histories of continuing job performance and achievement.

But it would be inaccurate to dismiss these attackers and near-attackers as inadequate, unaccomplished losers or simply look among "losers" to find those who may pose a threat of assassination. Almost half of these assailants and near-assailants had attended some college. Several had completed successful tours of military service. One subject had earned a bronze star for valor in combat. One subject had attended law school. Another had attended medical school. Two had served as college professors. One was a retired police officer. Another had retired from the postal service. Another had served as a firefighter and as an elected official. Several others had worked as engineers.

What does seem clear is that, for almost all subjects, attacks or near-lethal approaches occurred after a period of downward spiral in their lives. Almost half of attackers and near-lethal approachers are known to have experienced an accident/illness, loss of relationship, or failure/loss of status that influenced their behavior in the twelve months before their violent or potentially violent actions.

For many subjects, one or several severe situational stresses appeared to trigger the process of thinking and action that led to assassination behavior.

IMPLICATIONS

Findings from the Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project have direct and specific implications for law enforcement and security professionals with responsibilities for the protection of public officials and public figures or for investigation of threats to the safety of these persons. Many of these implications are explored in "Protective Intelligence and Threat Assessment Investigations: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement Officials," an ECSP document written for state and local law enforcement and security professionals.

Perhaps the major overall implication of the study is that *many, if not most, attacks, on public officials and public figures are potentially preventable*. Persons intending to mount attacks against persons of public status follow paths to their attacks. They often engage in "attack-related" behaviors, discernible activities that precede an attack. They may demonstrate interest in previous assassins and assassination attempts. They are likely to communicate their intentions to others or to keep a journal or diary about their thinking and activities.

Attackers and near-attackers rarely communicate direct threats to their targets or to law enforcement officials. This finding does not suggest that investigators should ignore threats that are sent or spoken to or about public officials or public figures. Many persons have been prevented, or deterred, from taking action because of a prompt response to their threatening communications. The finding that attackers do not communicate direct threats to their targets does suggest, however, that attention should be directed toward identifying, investigating, and assessing persons whose behavior indicates that they might pose threats of violence, whether or not they communicate direct threats to their targets or to authorities.

Reliance on ideas that "mental illness causes assassination," or "assassins are mentally ill," may block and cloud analysis that can lead to clearer understanding, and perhaps prevention, of assassination attempts. Mounting an attack on a person of public status requires preparation and planning. It is far more productive – and ultimately, more accurate – to examine the chain of thinking that leads a person to see assassination as an acceptable, or necessary action, and to attend to behaviors that may precede an attack, than to simply label assassins and assassination as "irrational" or "crazy."

Disciplined investigators who approach their work with thoroughness, healthy skepticism, and common sense, can develop information and evidence which strongly suggests that a given subject of concern does or does not pose a risk of violence against a given target(s). Armed with information and analysis about these risks, protectors can then take action to prevent attacks.

CONCLUSIONS

Assassinations of public officials and public figures

An assassination attempt is the end result of a process of thinking and behavior. Many attackers and near-lethal approachers move through life on a path that leads them to consider assassination of one or another prominent person of public status as an acceptable way to improve their situations or resolve their problems. These persons are often relatively bright and/or well educated. They may appear to be socially isolated, but they often look, dress, and act in ways that do not readily distinguish them from others.

Assassins, attackers and near-lethal approachers may have histories of harassing others. Some feel threatened by close contact with other people. Many hold on to grievances and resentments, especially toward public officials and leaders. Often they have histories of acting impulsively, angrily, or explosively. Significantly, while more than half have a history of a juvenile or adult arrest, only one-fourth have a history of an arrest for a crime involving a weapon and only one-sixth have a history of an arrest for a violent crime. Three-fourths of attackers and near-lethal approachers have no history of incarceration. Those who have been in jail have usually been there for pre-trial detention, not while serving a sentence.

Almost a third of attackers and would-be attackers are known to have developed interests in radical or militant groups in the years and months before their attacks or approaches. They may have made efforts to contact or even join a radical or militant group. But few become active members of any such group or organization.

Many attackers and near-lethal approachers are evaluated by mental health professionals at some point before they step out on the path toward assassination. Some have histories of inpatient psychiatric hospitalization. Few, however, remain in mental health treatment for a significant time. And, significantly, unlike most persons with mental illness, attackers and near-lethal approachers who are seriously mentally ill maintain the capacity to plan and carry out organized activities.

Many assailants and near- assailants of public officials and public figures have considered killing themselves. They may have talked of suicide, threatened to kill themselves, or made a suicide gesture or attempt.

At some point – often after a life crisis – attackers and near-lethal approachers begin to see the idea of assassination as acceptable and desirable. They may gather information about previous assassins, take special interest in one or more potential public official targets, and/or begin to view assassination as a way to achieve their objectives, such as becoming famous or notorious, being removed from society, or getting killed. Some write about their ideas and activities, in a journal or diary. Others tell friends, family, or colleagues – but usually not the target – about their thoughts and intentions.

The fact that few attackers and near-attackers communicated explicit threats to their targets or to law enforcement authorities underscores the importance of careful attention to attack-related behaviors as indicators of potential attacks.

Persons who continue along the path to attack often carefully consider how to carry out an attack. They may travel to visit an office, home, or temporary visiting place of a target. Their travels may take them far from home. Many with an interest in the president visit the White House on their journey toward attack. Attackers and near-lethal approachers may practice with a weapon they have chosen for assassination. They may try to learn about security arrangements, and see the presence (or absence) of security as a deterrent (or as an opportunity).

Attackers and near-lethal approachers often consider more than one target, ultimately choosing a target for attack after concluding than an opportunity for attack exists and that an attack on the chosen target is likely to fulfill their goals. But many of these persons have mixed feelings about actually attacking. Some, who feel propelled to move along the path to assassination, search for reasons why they should not attack, and are stopped from mounting attacks by the belief that they will not be successful.

Some prospective assassins think about – and plan for – escaping after their attack. Others approach their assassination attempts with the expectation they will be killed, or, for the purpose of being killed.

Few attackers or near-lethal approachers possessed the cunning or the bravado of assassins in popular movies or novels. The reality of American assassination is much more mundane, more banal, than assassinations depicted on the screen. Neither monsters nor martyrs, recent American assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers engaged in pre-incident patterns of thinking and behavior. Understanding these patterns of ideation and action may permit those with protective responsibilities to prevent future attacks.

Preventing Assassination: Final Activities Report

Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project

A project supported by the National Institute of Justice

May 1997

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THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT

The Problem of Assassination

Assassination of political leaders is a rare, but significant, problem in the United States. Since 1835, there have been eleven attacks on US presidents (four of them resulting in the death of the president), three attacks on presidential candidates, several assassinations of national political leaders, and more than a dozen instances in which planned attacks on presidents and other political leaders were intercepted before the attacker came within lethal range of his or her target.

Attacks on national leaders cause immeasurable harm to the political fabric of the nation and to the basic ideal of a free and open society. Mention of the political murders of President John F. Kennedy, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator (and Presidential Candidate) Robert Kennedy causes deep pain for most citizens. More recent attacks on Governor (and Presidential Candidate) George Wallace, President Gerald Ford, and President Ronald Reagan have engendered great public attention and concern.

Political murder is not a new phenomenon.[1] Compared to other countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the United States has experienced relatively few assassinations. But in a democracy, in a society committed to due process of law and to orderly transitions of power, the slaying of a political leader shreds the fundamental fabric of the social order. And in a society committed to open political discourse and the free flow of information, attacks on political leaders cast chilling shadows on the ideal of government "of the people, by the people, and for the people".

The United States Secret Service

The United States Secret Service is the (Department of the Treasury) law enforcement agency designated to protect the president, the president's family, the vice president and family, former presidents, visiting heads of states, candidates for president during a campaign year, nominees for president and their spouses, and certain other national leaders.

To aid in fulfillment of its protective responsibilities, the Secret Service has sponsored conferences of experts to investigate the phenomenon of assassination. The Secret Service has also conducted research related to assassination.

In 1981, the Secret Service, together with the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine, convened a meeting on "Behavioral Science and the Secret Service: toward the prevention of assassination." A second follow-up conference was held in 1984. And in 1990, a joint Secret Service/Institute of Medicine conference explored "stalking"

[1] (Ford, 1985)

behaviors. Each of these meetings generated suggestions for research and led to a number of research efforts.

Participants at the 1990 conference on "stalking" strongly encouraged the Secret Service to conduct an in-depth research examination of the most serious cases known to the Service. Feasibility of conducting such a research project was then explored. In 1991, then Secret Service Director John Simpson approached the directors of the National Institute of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Prisons for their ideas and assistance. In December, 1991, the three directors and members of their staffs met at the U.S. Supreme Court with Justice Harry Blackmun to initiate this project. The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project began in 1992.

The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project (ECSP)

The primary goal of the Exceptional Case Study Project was to gather information and develop knowledge that might aid law enforcement organizations to fulfill protective responsibilities for public officials and public figures.

There are two related components to protection. Protection encompasses a range of functions and services aimed at deterring or stopping an assault on a protectee. For example, uniformed and plainclothes security officers may maintain positions around a protected person. These protectors are prepared to stop an assailant and to shield the protectee from harm. This protection is obvious and observable.

The other aspect of protection is discreet and less visible. "Protective Intelligence" seeks to prevent lethal access to a protectee. Protection is most effective if persons and groups with the intention and capacity to mount an attack on a protectee are identified and stopped before they come near a protectee.

Protective intelligence, or protective investigation, programs and systems, therefore, are designed to:

- solicit and gather information about persons who appear to have unusual or inappropriate interest in a protectee;
- investigate any such persons who have come to attention;
- evaluate the information gathered;
- assess whether a person or group poses a risk of violence to a protectee;
- manage the risk and thereby prevent an attack.

The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project was developed to generate knowledge useful to both physical protection and protective intelligence functions.

Objectives

The Secret Service ECSP has had five objectives:

1) to enhance analysis and refinement by the Secret Service of its physical protective and protective intelligence operations;

2) to build a quantitative and qualitative operational database of the thinking, behaviors and backgrounds of assassins and near-assassins;

3) to generate and consider hypotheses about the causes and antecedents of behavior of persons who attempt to harm protectees of the Secret Service, other public officials, and other public figures;

4) to create teaching and training materials for Secret Service employees and others in the law enforcement, social science, and mental health communities who are concerned with the prevention of assassination and prevention of other kinds of targeted violent crimes;

5) to develop an interdisciplinary (law enforcement/behavioral sciences) approach that utilizes qualitative and quantitative research strategies, methods, and analyses.

From the outset, the Exceptional Case Study Project was conceptualized as a research study that would produce information and ideas to assist law enforcement organizations that have protective responsibilities. Law enforcement and security professionals are increasingly assuming protective and protective responsibilities for public officials and public figures.

The study was designed to be operational. The ECSP has focused on gathering and analyzing information that law enforcement officials can or could gather during the course of investigations. This focus is consistent with the goal of the study to be of practical use to officials with protective responsibilities.

The most serious cases known would be scrutinized. Information about thinking and behavior would be gathered, tabulated, and analyzed. Assailants would be interviewed, with the focus being on their perspectives and activities regarding assassination.

The decision to examine assailants who select targets by virtue of their public status was made on three grounds: conceptual, data-based, and pragmatic.

Assassination of a prominent person of public status is a discreet form of targeted violence, in which a potential assailant identifies, then attempts to harm a particular target (or targets). Experience and information suggest that many public official assailants and threateners focus their interests on the office (and its current holder), rather than on a particular person. In addition, many of the persons who are evaluated as presenting the

greatest risk of directing violence toward a public official or figure have had interests in more than one public official or public figure.

Previous assassination studies either examined the demographic and psychological characteristics of a relatively few assassins or studied persons who made threats but never came close to mounting an attack. The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project has been a departure from this mode. Unlike studies about threateners, the subject group of the ECSP is **persons who have acted in lethal or near-lethal ways**. Unlike most studies of assassins, the ECSP focuses on the **thoughts and behaviors** of study subjects before their attacks and near-attacks, not on demographic characteristics or clinical status.

Law enforcement responsibilities generally involve apprehending a suspect, gathering evidence to be used in prosecution, then pursuing and closing the case. Law enforcement organizations and officers rarely re-interview offenders months or years after the crime. Systematic information about the perspective of the offender is, therefore, rarely integrated into law enforcement practices.

It was hoped that thorough examination of the ideas, behaviors, and activities of persons who have attempted assassination (or come close to attacking) would provide an additional – and heretofore unavailable – perspective on physical protection: namely, how the assailant viewed the attack. For example, how do those who attempt assassination plan their attacks? How do they assess security? What are the expectations of attackers and near-lethal approachers about what will happen to them after their attacks? How do they dress for the attacks? What weapons do they choose and why do they choose these weapons?

Knowledge from a study of attackers and near-assailants may also be useful in the identification, assessment, and management of persons who pose a risk of violence to public officials and public figures. What kinds of communications do assailants have (and with whom) before mounting attacks? What kinds of social systems and organizations have contact with these persons before their attacks? Do any of these organizations or systems routinely have information about a potential attacker which could or should reasonably lead to concern?

How do attackers and near-attackers select their targets? How do they learn where to find their targets? Are there patterns of pre-incident behaviors that indicate an individual or group is considering an attack?

With answers to questions like these, law enforcement professionals might conduct more comprehensive, and more effective, protective intelligence and threat assessment investigations.

FUNDAMENTAL STUDY QUESTIONS

There appear to be a number of commonly held assumptions or beliefs in much of the literature on United States political assassination, and in threat assessment practice and lore. These assumptions include:

⇒ **There are a set of demographic and psychological factors that define a useful "profile" of assassins and attackers.**

⇒ **Attacks on public officials and public figures are acts committed by madmen.**

⇒ **Attacks are preceded by threats communicated by the assailant to the target.**

One of the central purposes of the Exceptional Case Study Project has been to examine the validity of these assumptions. Do the experiences and behaviors of actual assassins, attackers, and would-be attackers affirm these common beliefs?

After review of information about persons known to have attacked public officials, and consultation with law enforcement, behavioral science, and mental health professionals, seven fundamental research questions were developed:

1. **How do attackers develop the idea of assassinating a public official or public figure? How does a person move from the idea of assassination to the action of assassination?** What relationships exist, between ideas and action, in people who act violently toward public officials and public figures?
2. **What motivates people to act violently toward public officials and public figures?** What do persons hope to accomplish by attacking a prominent person of public status?
3. **How do people who direct violence toward public officials and public figures select their target(s)?**
4. **What planning strategies are used by people who direct violence toward public officials and public figures?**
5. **What relationships exist between threatening to commit violent action and carrying out violent action?**
6. **What relationships exist between symptoms of mental illness and assassination behaviors?**
7. **Were there key life events and patterns in the histories of people who have directed violence toward public officials and public figures?**

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of all English-language literature on assassination was undertaken and completed. More than 150 books, articles, and reports about assassination behavior were read, summarized, and then analyzed in a literature review. A selected bibliography on violence directed against public officials and public figures was compiled.

FINDING THE POPULATION

The population to be studied in the ECSP was defined as: all people known to have attacked, or approached to attack, a prominent person of public status in the United States since 1949.[2] This definition was chosen for these reasons:

- The study was designed to provide useful information for law enforcement organizations with responsibilities for protection of public officials and public figures. Therefore the ECSP included people who attacked prominent persons of public status, whether they were public officials or public figures.
- Cases were known in which subjects had been apprehended near or approaching public officials and public figures, with weapons, with the apparent intention of attacking.
- Attacks and assassinations of prominent persons of public status are rare[3]. It was decided to include people who had approached prominent persons of public status with lethal means (weapons) with the apparent intent to attack. Including people who approached with weapons increased the total number of subjects while maintaining the study's focus on behavior that could result in lethal attack;

While subjects who made an approach with weapons and also made threats were included in the study, people who made threats without making approaches with weapons did not qualify for inclusion. Similarly, people who traveled to visit or approached prominent persons of public status, and did not have weapons with them, were not included.

"Prominent persons of public status" were defined as:

- persons protected by the Secret Service (the president, the vice president, their families, candidates for president, visiting heads of states);
- other major federal officials and office holders (cabinet secretaries, members of Congress, federal judges);
- important state and local public officials (governors, mayors of large cities);

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[2] 1949 was chosen as a start date because in June of that year Ruth Ann Steinhagen, a "fanatical fan" shot star Philadelphia Phillies baseball player Eddie Waitkus after stalking him for over a year.

[3] Since 1949 there have been thirty-four known assassinations or attacks in the U.S. in which the target was a prominent person of public status.

- celebrities, such as sports figures, and movie, television, radio, and entertainment notables;
- presidents and chief executives of major corporations.

The "Principal Incident" was defined as the most violent of the following types of acts:

1) assassination of a prominent person of public status;
2) attack on a prominent person of public status;
3) approach to a prominent person of public status with a lethal weapon.

The time frame, 1949 to the present, was chosen because the first major public figure and public official attacks after World War II occurred in 1949 and 1950. In 1949 Ruth Ann Steinhagen stalked and shot Philadelphia Phillies first baseman Eddie Waitkus. In 1950 Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola attempted to assassinate President Truman at Blair House.

Once the population of the study was defined, efforts were made to search for cases that met study inclusion criteria. These efforts included:

- review of books, articles, studies, and media accounts about assassinations, attacks, and near-lethal approaches;
- review of Secret Service files;
- consultation with experts knowledgeable about public official and public figure protection;
- requests to selected federal and state law enforcement agencies for cases that might meet study inclusion criteria.

Secret Service Review

Secret Service files and databases were reviewed to identify cases for study inclusion. Secret Service research projects and archival resources from the 1950's to the present were scrutinized for cases that might meet study criteria. Experienced Special Agents, including some who had worked in the Service's Intelligence Division in the 1970's and 1980's, were queried. Former Special Agents in Charge of the Intelligence Division were asked about cases they had investigated that met study inclusion criteria. Several retired former Special Agents were asked to recall cases that might meet study criteria.

Consultation with experts

Experts on public official and public figure protection were contacted and asked if they knew of cases appropriate for the study. This process led to identification of a number of cases that involved celebrity targets, corporate leaders, and public officials who were not Secret Service protectees.

Requests to other law enforcement agencies

A number of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies were asked if they knew of cases that met study inclusion criteria. Contact was also made with the National Governor's Security Association to inquire about cases known to state police executive protection details that might meet study criteria.

The process of reviewing literature, querying databases, examining files, soliciting cases from protection and security experts, and contacting law enforcement organizations resulted in identifying 83 subjects who had assassinated, attacked, or approached with weapons prominent persons of public status in the United States since 1949.

DATA COLLECTION

The study plan involved two kinds of data collection and review. First, all available archival information about each subject were gathered and coded. This record review would enable aggregate analysis of information about all subjects in the study. Second, subject interviews would be conducted. Interviews would permit in-depth exploration of the subject's ideas, motives, behaviors, and activities in the days and weeks before the attack or near-lethal approach.

Record Review

Development of Coding Instrument

The study investigators met several times with senior staff from a social science research organization who were serving as technical consultants to the study and with several other study consultants. They first discussed what information should (and could) be gathered by record review. Three categories of information were determined to be of primary importance:

- information about the "Principal Incident" (PI) that brought the subject into the study. Information about the Principal Incident included a description of the event, the subject's apparent motives, the subject's behaviors immediately before the event, injuries or deaths caused by the PI, legal consequences to the subject, and results of mental health evaluations or contact precipitated by the event.
- demographic and descriptive data about the subject at the time of the Principal Incident. In addition to variables like age, gender, level of education, and employment status, information was gathered and coded about each subject's criminal history, history of contact with mental health professionals and institutions, history of involvement with fraternal, religious, political, professional, and other organizations, history of weapons use, travel history, interest in assassination, violence history, and history of harassment of others.
- information about "attack-related" behaviors other than those exhibited in the Principal Incident. These behaviors included:

* sustained interest and consideration of harm of any public official or public figure (including the target of the PI);
* communications to or about any public official or public figure (including direct or indirect threats);
* visits to homes, offices, or temporary sites of public officials or public figures;
* approaches to contact public officials or public figures;
* following/stalking behaviors; and
* previous attacks on public officials or public figures.

Once key study variables were identified and defined, a codebook was written that permitted orderly capture of archival information about each subject. The codebook contained more than 700 variables. It was piloted, tested, and revised until deemed acceptable for use.

Acquisition of Information

Multiple efforts were made to gather information. For each subject, a Nexis search was conducted to gather newspaper and other media information. Fifty-five of the 83 subjects had been subjects of Secret Service inquiry or investigation. For these subjects, considerable information was available. For other subjects, information was obtained from law enforcement, private security, prosecutors, courts, probation, correctional institutions, and public records. For example, one-fourth of the subjects had been in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Correctional files were reviewed for each of these subjects. In addition, one investigator studied all available books and scholarly articles written about ECSP subjects. In a number of cases, trial transcripts were obtained.

Training of Coders

Five individuals were involved in coding: one of the principal investigators, a Secret Service intelligence research specialist, two Secret Service research staff members, and a research consultant. Each coder was trained in the use of the codebook and coded four to six trial cases until assessed as competent to proceed.

Coding

Each case was coded separately. One of the principal investigators coded all 83 cases. Three other study staff members each coded between 25-29 cases, and one staff member coded one case. Coding time varied from one to ten hours, depending on the amount of information available.

After a case was coded by two coders, it was reconciled. The coders met to discuss each question. For variables which had been coded differently, the coders discussed the question until they agreed on a response. In the rare circumstances in which the coders

could not agree, a third coder was asked to resolve the difference. Reconciliation time varied from one to three hours a case.

Data entry

All codebooks (originals and reconciled) for the 83 subjects were keypunched by staff from the social science research organization and entered into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data base.

Interview

The research design of the study involved two principal components: archival reviews, as detailed above, and interviews. The interview was seen as the primary vehicle to get detailed information about the subject's motives, target selection, movement from idea to action, expectations, planning process, previous interest in, and activity concerning assassination.

It was assumed that between 10-15 interviews would be conducted throughout the course of the study. Interviews were planned to last between four to six hours, with provision made for continuation to a second day if necessary. Two persons would be primary interviewers: an experienced Secret Service agent and a senior mental health professional. One of the study co-investigators would observe the interviews, to make sure that all key study questions were explored. If possible, interviews were to be video-taped.

Development of Protocol

A subject interview protocol was developed to guide questioning. Sections in the protocol covered topics such as:

- idea to action
- target selection
- communication
- pre-incident behaviors
- planning
- symptoms of mental illness and violence
- key developmental experiences

The interview explored the subject's thinking and behavior regarding the target of the Principal Incident. Questioning then moved to other public official and public figure targets that the subject had been interested in or had considered attacking.

Development of Interview Teams

Interview teams were composed of one Secret Service agent and one mental health professional. Agents brought the skills and skepticism of criminal and protective intelligence investigators. Mental health professionals brought expertise interviewing persons with serious emotional and mental health problems who had acted violently.

Two experienced Secret Service agents became study interviewers. One was the agent who served as co-principal investigator of the study. He had worked on protective intelligence matters for many years. The other agent interviewer had also worked on protective intelligence investigations for much of his career. Four mental health professionals were also interviewers. Each had years of experience working with mentally ill persons who had acted violently. Two of the mental health professionals had worked in Federal Bureau of Prisons Medical Centers; one of the mental health professionals was a national expert on violence and had worked with the Secret Service for over 10 years; the fourth mental health professional was the other study co-principal investigator. He had worked with mentally ill violent individuals for fifteen years and had been a consultant to the Secret Service for a decade.

Each interviewer contributed to the development of the interview protocol and participated in a pilot interview.

Informed Consent

An informed consent form was developed for study interviews. The form was designed to:

- explain that the purpose of the interview was to develop research and training materials that might aid in preventing attacks on public officials and public figures;
- indicate that the study was being conducted by law enforcement agencies;
- state that the researchers would make efforts to keep specific information provided by the subject confidential, other than use for research or teaching purposes;
- caution subjects that the researchers were not interested in information about possible crimes for which the subject had not been prosecuted;
- indicate that subjects could refuse to answer any question and stop the interview at any time;
- note that participation in the interview, or refusing participation, would not affect the subject's court, correctional, or parole status;
- request that subject consent to the interview, consent to having the interview video-taped, and consent to having information from the interview be used in research publications and in teaching and training materials.

Each subject was offered options as to whether the interview would be taped and whether the subject's name could be used in conjunction with teaching and training materials.

Slightly different forms were developed for subjects in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, subjects in state custody, and subjects not in custody.

Approach to Subjects

Efforts were made to contact all persons who had attacked Secret Service protectees and who were still alive. A number of subjects who had attacked or assassinated celebrities were also located and contacted.

Once located, a Secret Service agent (sometimes accompanied by one of the study co-principal investigators) would visit the subject, explain the purpose of the interview, and request the subject's participation. On a number of occasions, the first study contact with the subject was made by the Psychiatric Director of the Federal Medical Center in which the subject was being treated.

Subjects were only contacted after it was determined that their legal case was concluded, including all appeals.

Once a subject agreed to participate, an interview was scheduled, the interview team and video technician (if the subject had agreed to have the interview video-taped) traveled to the site of the interview, and the interview was conducted. In every case, efforts were made to accommodate the wishes of the subject. (For example, in one case, with the permission of correctional authorities, the subject was transported offsite by Secret Service agents, so that the subject did not have to deal with questions by other prison inmates about the interview.) On several occasions, interview teams returned several weeks or months after the first interview to interview the subject again.

Of the 83 subjects, eighteen were known to have died. Several subjects were removed from the interview list because they appeared to be too mentally disordered to participate effectively in an interview. Six subjects had active legal cases or appeals. Several more were judged so likely to refuse an interview that they were not contacted. A number of subjects, especially those whose Principal Incidents occurred in the 1950's or 1960's, could not be located.

Ultimately, twenty-eight interviews were completed with 21 subjects. Only one subject who was contacted flatly refused to participate. Four subjects were interviewed, but did not consent to having the interviews taped. Fifteen subjects participated in video-taped interviews. Three of these subjects were interviewed on two occasions, and one on three occasions. One other subject participated in two audio-taped interviews. One subject declined to be interviewed in person, but responded to a twenty-five page questionnaire developed from the study interview guide.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project is the first study of its kind ever conducted about assassination. The ECSP has collected information about all persons known to have engaged in assassination-type behaviors directed at prominent persons of public status in the United States since 1949. Thus, ECSP analysis and findings describe the known universe of these persons in the United States, not a sample of the population of known attackers and near-lethal approachers. While the study has been carried out with academic rigor, and with ongoing social science technical review, the study has limitations.

The ECSP has relied on both archival and interview data. Information about some variables, such as age or place of the Principal Incident, is known for all attackers and near-attackers. However, information about some subjects was limited, especially for those who were not subjects of Secret Service investigations and whose attacks or near-attacks occurred some time ago.

For example, archival information often included investigative reports about study subjects. Most investigations were initiated after an incident that resulted in a criminal charge being leveled against the subject. In such a case, investigators gathered evidence about the subject and the incident for possible use in court proceedings. In some cases, since a subject was a defendant in a criminal proceeding, investigators did not interview, or had only limited interviews with, a subject after an incident. Investigative reports, therefore, did not always contain information about all areas of interest for the ECSP.

Questions about a subject's history of interest in assassination may not have been asked in an investigation initiated after an attack or near-lethal approach. Nor were questions about a subject's history of suicidal thinking and behavior, or other areas of interest for the ECSP, always explored. These gaps became clear during subject interviews. Several subjects reported behaviors to the interviewers (such as collecting information about assassination or previous attempts to kill themselves) that did not appear in any of their records.

Consequently, aggregate data from analysis of coded information from the archival review tend, if anything, to underestimate the prevalence of the subject behaviors that were studied.

Interviews were conducted with 21 subjects. These interviews often permitted exploration of the details and depths of subject's motives, thinking, and planning. Since only one fourth of the subjects were willing/able to be interviewed, information about non-interviewed subjects' thinking and behaviors was less comprehensive than that for other subjects.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was both quantitative and qualitative. Descriptive statistics were developed for study variables, including frequencies and means. Cases were analyzed by incident and by subject. For incidents in which there were multiple subjects (group attacks), one subject was chosen to be the "incident subject." There were, therefore, 83 subjects, 74 incidents, and 73 incident subjects. (One subject was involved in two separate attacks.) Analyses of variance were conducted to compare groups of subjects, by choice of target and by attack or near-lethal approach.

Video-tapes and other interview materials were studied. Subjects' responses to questions concerning their development of ideas about assassination, motives, selection of targets, planning processes, patterns of communication, and personal problems and crises were examined by the study's investigators and by Special Agents with protective intelligence responsibilities.

IMPLEMENTATION OF FINDINGS

From its inception, the Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project was thought of as an "engine of change." Study staff, together with senior Secret Service officials, decided that information, analyses, and training materials about the prevention of assassination would be developed and disseminated throughout the life of the project. Rather than wait several years for the conclusion of the study, when all data had been collected and analyzed, ECSP staff would share what they were learning with Secret Service personnel and other interested persons and organizations on an ongoing basis through the life of the project.

Secret Service Activities

Information and analyses from record review and interviews of ECSP subjects were used to refine aspects of protective and protective intelligence programs.

Information developed from the ECSP was communicated throughout the Secret Service in numerous forums and reports.

Law Enforcement-related Activities

Additionally, the ECSP co-directors contributed to law enforcement efforts outside the Service to develop the field of threat assessment and to assist in the investigation and prevention of "targeted violence" crimes, such as stalking and certain kinds of workplace violence. These activities included:

- serving as members of the Resource Group of the National Criminal Justice Association's project to develop a model state anti-stalking code.

- writing a paper entitled **Threat Assessment: An Approach to Prevent Targeted Violence**, which was published by the National Institute of Justice in 1995.
- developing a guide for state and local law enforcement professionals with protection or protective intelligence responsibilities for public officials and figures.
- making over 20 presentations to groups of federal, state, and local law enforcement officials (with audiences ranging up to 600 persons). Groups addressed include the National Governors Security Association, the Los Angeles Police Department's Annual Threat Management Conference, and the Department of Defense's World-Wide Anti-Terrorism Conference.
- contributing to the forthcoming (1997) publication from the federal Office of Personnel Management on preventing violence in the workplace.

Other Professional and Liaison Activities

In addition to the activities outlined above, over 40 presentations about the ECSP, threat assessment, and prevention of targeted violence have been made to other government, security, academic, mental health, and corporate organizations and groups.

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