



One Hundred Fourteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

August 10, 2016

The Honorable Joseph Clancy
Director
United States Secret Service
245 Murray Drive
Building 410
Washington, DC 20223

Dear Director Clancy:

The United States Secret Service (USSS) is responsible for protecting presidential nominees during each election cycle. This includes the prevention of any instances of danger towards the nominees. Along with a nominee's physical protection, the USSS has primary jurisdiction to analyze and investigate threats made against any nominee. Whether monitoring social media or public forums, the USSS must stay abreast and alert on all information indicating a potential threat to anyone under agency protection.

Yesterday, during a campaign rally which was attended by approximately 10,000 people in Wilmington, North Carolina, Republican presidential nominee Donald J. Trump, while talking about Democratic presidential nominee Secretary Hillary Clinton, stated that if Clinton "wants to abolish, essentially abolish the Second Amendment...nothing you can do, folks...*although the Second Amendment people, maybe there is, I don't know* [emphasis added]."¹ The Second Amendment gives individuals the right to keep and bear arms. This statement by Trump implies that those who disagree with Clinton's policies can use a gun to harm her, which is threatening and inciting violence. A personal threat to cause harm, along with the encouragement of others to cause harm, is a serious offense. In fact, United States Code 18 U.S.C. § 879 states that anyone who knowingly and willingly threatens to inflict bodily harm upon a major candidate for the office of President shall be subject to a fine and/or imprisonment.²

¹ Trump, Donald. Speech at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, NC. 9 Aug. 2016.

² 18 U.S.C. § 879. Threats against former Presidents and certain other persons. <<http://codes.lp.findlaw.com/uscode/18/I/41/879#sthash.01ISIEPn.dpuf>>.

Thus far, the USSS has acknowledged that “it is aware of the comments” via its social media account.³ The USSS has not made an official public statement and has not indicated whether it will investigate Trump’s conduct. This matter warrants much more than a tweet. The comments made by Trump should not be dismissed as a joke or considered careless. Statements such as those made by Trump have the potential to inspire other possible bad actors to plan and attempt to carry out violence. Incendiary rhetoric such as the statements made by Trump should be given the same attention as other threats made against the USSS protectees. All threats, especially a threat made in a public forum with international media presence, should be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated. Therefore, I expect you to investigate this particular threat made by Trump and any other subsequent threats made toward either presidential nominee.

The tone and incendiary rhetoric by the Republican presidential nominee this election cycle has created a volatile environment, which could potentially lead to attempted violence toward either of the presidential nominees. The USSS, in its protective mission, must be adaptive and continue to take all threats to the candidates seriously.

Thank you for your attention to the important matter. If you have any questions, please contact Hope Goins, Chief Counsel for Oversight, at (202) 226-2616.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Ranking Member

³ United States Secret Service Twitter Statement. 9 Aug. 2016.