

DH
11/25

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Congress of the United States
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COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND
COOPERATION IN EUROPE
(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

November 25, 2014

The Honorable Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Jarvis:

Like many Americans, I am concerned that the White House is far too vulnerable to intrusion, as demonstrated most dramatically by the events of September 19th, when Omar Gonzalez scaled the fence and entered the White House. As the Secret Service considers security enhancements to the White House grounds, I have urged Director Joseph Clancy to take aesthetic concerns into consideration as well. Specifically, I suggested that a water barrier be installed along the fence facing Pennsylvania Avenue that could act as an obstacle to potential intruders but could also be made decorative as well as functional.

Enclosed is a letter I recently sent to Director Clancy that explains my suggestion more fully. As you work with the Secret Service to secure the White House grounds while maintaining its beauty I hope you will consider this proposal. I would be happy to discuss it further at your convenience if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

As always, I remain,

Most sincerely,

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

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November 20, 2014

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COOPERATION IN EUROPE
(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

Mr. Joseph P. Clancy
Acting Director
United States Secret Service
245 Murray Drive
Building 410
Washington, DC 20223

Dear Director Clancy:

It was a pleasure to meet you at yesterday's House Judiciary Committee hearing to discuss improving security at the White House. I appreciate your service and willingness to step into the role of Director during this period of turmoil for the Secret Service. I have great confidence in your ability to steady the agency and wish you well as you begin your tenure.

As we discussed yesterday, the White House is far too vulnerable to individuals determined to gain access, particularly if several people seek to scale the fence simultaneously. I appreciated your courtesy when I suggested that a pool or trough be installed to act as an obstacle to potential intruders. While much attention has been given in the media to my use of the word "moat"—which has given many people the wrong impression of my proposal—I hope you will consider the concept of installing a water barrier to hinder an intruder's ability to reach the building if he successfully climbs over the fence.

What I envision is a deep pool, perhaps 6 feet across and an appropriate depth that would slow down an intruder long enough for Secret Service personnel to apprehend him before he could reach the White House itself. This pool would only be installed behind the Pennsylvania Avenue fence line in the short distance between the driveways and could include a decorative fountain—maybe even adorned in red, white, and blue—that would enhance the beauty of an already beautiful landmark. I am concerned that other efforts to increase security will lead to more fences and walls that are both unattractive and would make the White House seem more like a fortress than the representation of democracy that it truly is. My proposal would bolster security while making it even more appealing to visitors.

Thank you for your testimony yesterday and for the seriousness with which I know you take your job of protecting the President and his family. I hope you will give consideration to my proposal and would be happy to discuss it further with you at your convenience. I wish you the best as you assume your duties as Acting Director and I look forward to working with you on these important matters.

As always, I remain,

Most sincerely,



Steve Cohen

Member of Congress