

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

At the conclusion of a t.v. interview with KPIX-TV, in a suite on the 6th floor of the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, President Ford boarded an elevator and rode to the ground floor of the Hotel on the Post Street side. The President greeted a small group of well-wishers in the lobby of the hotel.

The President stepped out on Post Street, where his car was parked at the curb. As he walked from the hotel door to the car, he waved briefly to a large crowd, on the other side of Post Street.

At that point there was a sound of a single gun shot.

Secret Service agents Ron Pontius and Jack Merchant and Assistant to the President Donald Rumsfeld pushed the President down toward the sidewalk shielding him behind his car from the crowd. The President, agents Pontius and Merchant, and Donald Rumsfeld entered the car and the motorcade departed immediately for the San Francisco International Airport.

For the first several blocks after departing from the hotel, the President was stretched out on the floor of his car between the seats with agents Pontius and Merchant and Mr. Rumsfeld shielding his body. After the car was out of the area, the President sat in the middle of the rear seat with agents Pontius and Merchant on either side and Mr. Rumsfeld in the jump seat.

Mrs. Ford arrived at the San Francisco International Airport by U.S. Air Force C-9 aircraft from Monterey a moment or two after the President and boarded Air Force 1.

She was told of the episode in the Presidential cabin. Mrs. Ford received the information calmly. The President can be described as serious following the episode and on the flight home to Washington.

The individual who fired the gun has been identified as Sarah Moore, age 47. The weapon has been identified as a 5 shot .38 revolver.

During the flight home to Washington, the President told his staff aboard Air Force 1 that he felt that the U.S. Secret Service and the State and Local law enforcement officials had performed their duties in an outstanding manner and he asked that his thanks be expressed to all involved.

The President indicated to his staff that a circumstance where the political leaders are forced into isolation from their constituents because of the threats of a few would be intolerable. The communication of ideas is fundamental in our system, and to allow it to be unduly restricted, warped, or inhibited would be to weaken, if not destroy it.

He believes it is vitally important for the leadership of our country to be free to communicate with the people they serve.

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