

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 14, 1977

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

January 14, 1977

TEXT OF A LETTER FROM THE
 PRESIDENT TO THE SPEAKER OF THE
 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
 AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting for consideration by the Congress an urgent Joint Resolution which would authorize the Secret Service to furnish protection to a person who as a Federal Government official or as a member of such official's immediate family had been receiving protection for a period immediately preceding January 20, 1977, if the President determined that such person may thereafter be in significant danger. This protection could not continue beyond July 20, 1977, unless otherwise permitted by law.

The lives of the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and other Federal officials have been threatened because of their service to the United States and the American people. The number of threats against prominent Federal officials normally declines after they leave office. The emergence in recent years of numerous and mobile foreign terrorist groups has created an added degree of risk, especially for the Vice President and the Secretary of State; they are natural targets for individuals and groups prone to violence. Threats against Secretary Kissinger's life are current and continuing.

We cannot in good conscience subject any departing Vice President, Secretary of State, or any other Federal official to possible harm because of his or her service to the United States. Because this danger results directly from the high visibility of their positions, I believe that the Federal Government has an obligation to provide them and their immediate families, if necessary, with protection as long as there is significant danger to their lives.

Existing statutory authority is not adequate for this purpose. Consequently, unless the Congress acts immediately, protective services necessary to ensure the continued safety of the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and other Federal officials cannot be provided after they leave office on January 20.

The emergency resolution that I am proposing is a temporary measure. It would allow the next President to extend protection, if the situation warrants, to one or more of the persons having protection now who would otherwise abruptly lose that protection next Thursday. The persons now having protection, in addition to me and my immediate family (of whom Betty and I, but not our children, will have continued protection under existing law) are the Vice President and the Secretaries of State and Treasury and their immediate

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families, but it is likely that only a few of those persons will require extended protection after next Thursday and for merely limited periods as the next President may determine. In any event no such protection could go beyond July 20, 1977 unless the Congress should act later to permit protection over a longer period in particular instances.

The adoption of this proposed resolution is endorsed by the Secret Service, and I request that the Congress act swiftly on this proposal.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD

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