

The Attempted Assassination of Donald Trump. Ron Unz

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Global Research, July 18, 2024

[The Unz Review](#) 17 July 2024

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

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Over the last couple of days the news cycle has been overwhelmingly dominated by a sniper's attempted assassination of Donald Trump at a large campaign rally in western Pennsylvania, with the presidential candidate fortunate enough to escape with only a minor wound to his ear.

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The photo of the former president holding his arm high even while streaks of blood trickled down his face has become an iconic global image somewhat recalling the historic scene of six U.S. marines raising the American flag on Iwo Jima, and it fully solidified his front-runner status. Within a day or two, [billionaire hedge-fund manager Bill Ackman endorsed Trump as](#)

[did industrialist Elon Musk](#), the wealthiest man in the world, [with the latter promising to contribute a mammoth \\$45 million per month](#) to a pro-Trump political committee.

Meanwhile, the ongoing efforts of various influential Democrats to pressure President Joseph Biden into dropping out of the race on grounds of mental incapacity completely vanished from the news, swamped by the dramatic account of Trump's narrow escape from death. With the media no longer focusing on Biden's problems, the chances that the DNC might be able to replace him with a stronger candidate [may have been lost](#), further increasing Trump's odds of regaining the White House this November.

I've only casually followed the story of this attempted assassination without spending much time investigating the details of the incident or the considerable number of conflicting theories floating around on the Internet. But various people have asked me for my opinion, so I might as well provide it, though my views should not be accorded any more weight than they deserve, especially since I lack any military expertise.

According to the media accounts, a young 20-year-old gunman named Thomas Matthew Crooks was somehow able to enter the vicinity of the Trump rally armed with an AR-15 rifle. He set himself up on the rooftop of a nearby building and fired several shots, one of which wounded Trump in the ear while another killed a bystander in the crowd, after which he himself was shot dead by counter-sniper fire from security personnel.

Allowing an armed gunman such an opportunity to potentially kill a leading presidential candidate obviously involved extremely serious lapses in security by the Secret Service agents guarding Trump and this has naturally provoked widespread suspicions that some sort of plot had been responsible. There have also been claims circulating on social media that bystanders noticed the gunman and alerted authorities, but instead of ordering the sniper shot or at least securing the candidate and taking him to safety, the security personnel waited until the prospective assassin had fired his potentially fatal shots before taking any action.

At the very least this is obviously a huge black-eye for our Secret Service and the other police agencies that were on the scene, supposedly protecting Trump.

Given the extremely strong emotions that Trump arouses in both his supporters and his opponents, it's hardly surprising that this very strange and suspicious official story quickly inspired numerous conspiratorial narratives, which have widely circulated among both Trump-backers and Trump-haters.

For more than eight years, most American elites have expressed a seething hatred of Trump, doing everything they could to frustrate his presidency, ensure his defeat in 2020, and then prevent him from regaining the White House in 2024. Soon after a mob of outraged Trumpists stormed the DC Capitol on January 7, 2021, I published an article pointing to the overwhelming evidence that the American media and our Internet giants, assisted by numerous dishonest former intelligence officers, had combined to steal the 2020 election from Donald Trump: [American Pravda: Our Disputed Election](#).

Last year I discussed the extraordinary efforts of those same biased media outlets to hide the massive corruption scandal engulfing Joseph Biden and his family, doing so both prior to the 2020 vote and now leading up to the 2024 election.

- [American Pravda: The Limits of Media Corruption](#)

More recently as Trump's efforts to regain the presidency moved forward, his bitter Democratic enemies launched a series of outrageous political prosecutions hoping that felony convictions and possible imprisonment would destroy Trump's popularity with voters. But instead Trump's polling numbers continued to rise, and his Republican renomination became assured.

- [American Pravda: Donald Trump, Eugene Debs, and AMLO](#)

Having failed at every step to block Trump's rise, his political enemies were left with few available options. Their dilemma eventually led Tucker Carlson to publicly speculate that they would finally conclude that [orchestrating Trump's assassination was their best chance of preventing his triumphant return to the White House](#).

So now with Trump leading in the polls and the desperate Democrats fearful that Biden would be no match for him in November, a sniper was allowed surprisingly easy access to the candidate at a rally, and if the trajectory of the bullet he fired had been an inch or two different, Trump could easily have been killed. Under these circumstances, only the most oblivious would fail to be highly suspicious of what happened.

Did Trump's bitter enemies conspire to have him killed by an assassin's bullet, as had happened more than half-century ago to President John F. Kennedy and his younger brother Robert? While that is certainly possible, unless much stronger evidence emerges, I will remain extremely skeptical.

Assassinating a former president who is leading in the current polls is a very serious undertaking, and Trump's lucky survival has drastically strengthened the support he enjoys both from the voters and from the billionaire donor class while his security will also surely be massively increased. I think it quite unlikely that any future sniper will have as easy a time gaining access to him at a rally or anywhere else. As Emerson said, "When you strike at a king, you must kill him."

So if Trump's enemies had decided to have him killed, I doubt they would have selected [an untrained 20-year-old nursing home worker](#) as their assassin, a choice that resulted in the failure that occurred. Surely a far more professional sniper would have been employed, a sniper who never would have missed his target. Arranging for the Secret Service agents and the local police to stand down and provide an opening entailed enormous political risks, and what good would that do if the gunman selected couldn't shoot straight? If any powerful organization or individual had been behind the assassination plot, Trump would be dead and Americans would be arguing about a successful rather than a botched assassination.

The dozens of security personnel who left Trump vulnerable are now being denounced as grossly negligent in the media, and if any of them had been given suspicious orders responsible for that debacle, they will surely soon come forward and defend themselves by explaining what had happened and implicating those responsible. If none of them do so, then the likelihood of any anti-Trump plot begins to dissipate, and the explanation of sheer incompetence becomes the most plausible theory.

One claim I've seen is that the gunman was wearing [some sort of military-themed shirt](#) and casually carrying his rifle in plain sight, leading most onlookers to assume that he was a

member of one of the various different organizations tasked with ensuring Trump's safety. This seems like exactly the sort of stupid bureaucratic mistake that can easily occur when multiple government agencies are involved in a common project.

Meanwhile, some anti-Trump circles have naturally promoted their own contrary conspiracy theories. They have suggested that the attack was a daring false-flag operation organized by Trump or his close allies, intended to only slightly wound the candidate and thereby greatly bolster his political campaign, just as has now happened.

However, I think this scenario is even less plausible than the other one. Once again, we must realize that the shooter selected for this dangerously lethal operation was an untrained 20-year-old firing from a distance of 400 feet, a sniper who hit Trump's ear rather than his head. Thus, any such plan to boost Trump could very easily have ended up killing him instead, and it's difficult to believe that any rational Trump supporter would have taken such a gigantic risk.

Perhaps some of these conspiracy advocates believe that the wound itself was somehow faked, and that all the Secret Service agents who saw the injury at close range and hustled Trump away were conspirators in the plot. But lacking any evidence, these sorts of theories grow ever more complex and unlikely.

My own reconstruction of what happened is different and much simpler.



When I first heard that Trump had survived an attempted assassination, my surprise was not that it had occurred but that there hadn't already been a dozen or more previous attacks. I doubt that any political figure in modern American history has ever been so massively demonized by our mainstream media as Donald J. Trump during the last eight or nine years. He's been vilified as a fascist, a Hitler, a traitor, a Russian stooge, a rapist, a racist, a swindler. Trump was endlessly portrayed as a fiend absolutely determined to destroy American freedom and democracy, someone who represented our country's deadliest human enemy.

Our media creates our reality and for most of the last decade, hundreds of millions of Americans have been completely blanketed by these unrelenting waves of ferocious anti-Trump propaganda, so surely many thousands of them would have been unbalanced enough to consider saving our country by taking the law into their own hands and patriotically risking their own lives to eliminate that deadly human menace. The media had spent all these years painting a very bright target on Trump's back, and I've been astonished that until a couple of days ago no American had yet taken aim at it.

Consider an analogous case from a few years ago. For many years, anti-immigration activists loudly proclaimed that our country was being “invaded” by hordes of hostile Mexican immigrants. Therefore, I was hardly too surprised that in 2019 a very patriotic but somewhat dim-witted 21-year-old named Patrick Wood Crusius took that heated political rhetoric a little too literally and decided to shoot as many of those foreign invaders as he could, [killing a couple of dozen Hispanics](#) at a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas. I strongly suspect that the young gunman who tried to kill Trump acted out of roughly similar motives.

Finally, I was generally pleased to see that Trump named [Sen. J.D. Vance](#) as [his running mate](#). Although I’m not exactly thrilled with many of Vance’s positions, notably his extremely aggressive rhetoric regarding Iran and the Middle East, he seemed like the least bad choice among the several names under consideration, and we have to settle for what we can get.

Back in January 2013, Prof. Amy Chua and others had invited me to the Yale Law School to give a talk on [my Meritocracy analysis of elite university admissions](#), and Vance, then using his previous name of Hamel, had been the young law school student who met me when I arrived and guided me around. Now, less than a dozen years later, he’s certainly come up a great deal in the world, being on the verge of becoming one of the youngest vice presidents in our national history, someone just a heartbeat away from sitting in the Oval Office. It’s very nice to know that he’s fully aware of some of the highly-controversial matters of great importance to our national future.

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