

Secret Directed-Energy Tech Protecting the President?

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The [Secret Service](#) is tasked with protecting the President of the United States from assailants; and given that President-elect Obama has already been the [target of assassination plots](#) they may have their [work cut out after January](#). But they have more than earpiece radios and armored limos to help them; the Secret Service can call on the very latest technology. Documents from a recent court case indicate that they have advanced directed-energy devices which are highly classified.

You may remember [Donald Friedman](#), who claims that government agencies are misusing non-lethal directed-energy weapons. It's easy to dismiss him as a crank. But his obsessive digging has turned up valuable information. For instance, one of his Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests unearthed a 1998 U.S. Army program looking at a microwave [device to beam sound directly into the target's skull](#) which the rest of us had missed. (The same technology underlies the [Medusa non-lethal weapon](#).)

Now he's found something else. Friedman's current court case involves attempts to extract information about any directed-energy weapons such as lasers and microwaves used by the Secret Service. Do they really have anything of the kind? A "[Motion for an Enlargement of Time](#)" (in other words, a request for a few more weeks) by the Secret Service's attorney indicates that they have something, and it's pretty secret:

"Plaintiff's FOIA request is for document [sic] concerning directed energy technology that is very sensitive. Some of this documents [sic] pertain to research conducted by divisions within defendant agency that is used to carry out its mandate to protect very high government officials. In fact, in one case, the documents... could not be mailed but had to be hand carried interstate."

So what is this "sensitive" technology? We don't know for sure, naturally. But we can sure speculate...

Now, we've talked before about the Secret Service's interest in laser dazzlers as a means of [protecting the White House against suicide attacks by light aircraft](#), dating back to 1998. We don't know if dazzlers have ever been deployed, but that would certainly explain some of the secrecy.

Portable dazzlers would also be a good way of dealing with potential snipers without the risk of harming bystanders. Other agencies also have an interest in covert dazzlers. Ex MI6 agent David Tomlinson claims a [laser strobe was proposed for an assassination attempt on](#)

[Slobodan Milosevic](#) in 1992 by dazzling his chauffeur at a crucial point and causing him to crash. (Conspiracy theorists claim that a laser dazzler was used to assassinate Diana, Princess of Wales — but any bright flashes more likely came from photographer’s flashguns.)

A portable version of the truck-mounted [Active Denial System](#) — the Pentagon’s “pain ray” — might be used to similar effect. It could cause an assailant to flinch for a vital second, giving agents an opportunity to get the President out of the line of fire, without having to shoot into a crowd. Raytheon has been [working on a rifle-sized version](#) of the Active Denial System for some years, but nothing has been heard of it recently.

Another likely candidate is a directed-energy device to neutralize suspected improvised explosive devices, or IEDs — something that produces an intense, narrow beam of microwaves to fry the electronics. [Tomlinson also claimed](#) that MI6 has “sophisticated radio transmitters that would knock out the electronics of the limo at the press of a button, causing the airbags to inflate.”

Presidential protection is likely to include a [range of jammers](#) to stop remote bomb detonation, and possibly [remote-controlled aircraft attacks](#). With all this jamming, interference can occur and make radio communication impossible — if you leave any frequency clear, the bad guys might use it to send a detonation signal. So perhaps the Secret Service may have a microwave voice-transmission system as an emergency backup when radio communication is impossible. This would allow them to beam instructions to agents at a distance. At a pinch it could also be used to distract a would-be assassin — having a voice suddenly booming inside your head should put off most snipers (though they might have a few voices in there already).

We know that the Air Force has looked at microwave sound as a non-lethal weapon, and [long-range acoustic systems](#) like LRAD are already in use by the military and others. So a Secret Service microwave sound system is not totally, completely out of the question.

Donald Friedman may yet manage to get more information about secret directed-energy weapons. All we know so far is that they exist... Unless anyone out there can tell us more?

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