

A Gunman, named Ryan Routh: Trump's Second Would-be Assassin Linked to Ukrainian Far-right Recruiting?

By [Uriel Araujo](#)

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*Former U.S. President **Donald Trump** was once again the target of an [assassination attempt](#) on Sunday, September 15, at his golf club in Florida, west of Palm Beach, around 1.30 pm (local time).*

A Secret Service agent fired upon spotting an AK-47 rifle sticking through the bushes around the golf course, about 400 yards away (around 365 meters). The gunman, named **Ryan Wesley Routh**, 58, dropped the rifle, and was able to run away driving a SUV. He had a rifle scope, a GoPro camera, and two backpacks. Routh was eventually stopped by police officers in a neighboring county and then [arrested](#). It is still unclear whether Routh himself fired shots. Once again analysts and media pundits are asking just how on earth did the shooter [manage to get so close](#) to Trump – especially considering that he has a criminal record and was previously convicted (in 2022) for possessing a “[weapon of mass destruction](#)”. Moreover, the gunman connections are quite interesting, to put it mildly.

For one thing, Routh, the would-be assassin, was [interviewed](#) by the New York Times in 2023, and described his endeavors to recruit former Taliban soldiers from Afghanistan to fight in Ukraine. He also talked about having fought in the Eastern European country himself, having spent several months there in 2002. Moreover, he gave an [interview](#) back in 2022 to Newsweek Romania, and discussed his recruiting efforts for the International Legion Defense of Ukraine, a military unit of the Ukrainian Ground Forces which is composed of foreign volunteers.

As one would expect of such a unit in post-Maidan Ukraine, the Legion is plagued with far-right and neo-Nazi extremism. **The Karelian Group**, for instance (also known as Nord), a battalion which operates [within the framework of the Legion](#), has been accused of Nazism. Similarly, the [German Volunteer Corps](#), also linked to the International Legion Defense of Ukraine, is considered a right-wing extremist group by the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, having been denounced for its usage of the Wolfsangel insignia. The infamous Russian Volunteer Corps (RVC), yet another Legion-connected Nazi group, is attached to [Military Unit A3449](#) which comprises various units of the International Legion, all of them being subordinate to the Ukrainian Main Directorate of Intelligence (HUR), as writes Peter Julicher, historian and researcher.

Back to Trump's would-be murderer, who, as mentioned, in his recruiting operations, moved around former Taliban fighters and European far-right elements volunteering to fight for Ukraine: as Newsweek [reported](#), a 2023 Semafor [report](#) cites him as the head of the International Volunteer Center (IVC) in Ukraine, a private organization aimed at

“empowering volunteers”. He is therefore a radical pro-Ukraine [activist](#), who is also involved in military and paramilitary activities, and has also posted extreme content on social media, describing the conflict in Ukraine as the ultimate war between good and evil.

Routh, who owns a shed-building company in Hawaii, is also a long time [Democrat supporter](#), which makes sense considering his Ukrainian activism – as I [wrote](#), Democrats, including former president **Barack Obama**, as well as **Kamala Harris** and the incumbent administration she is part of, have consistently armed and funded the far-right in Ukraine, that is, the same structures within which Routh seems to move quite freely.

Interestingly, the aforementioned International Legion for the Defence of Ukraine and the infamous [Azov Brigade](#) (well-known for its consistent neo-Nazism, as the Guardian [described](#) as far back as seven years ago) have both [denied](#) that the Trump’s latest would-be shooter has any connection to them. Given all the above, one may of course take such statements with a grain of salt.



Edward Snowden, the famous former NSA intelligence contractor and whistleblower, has [posted](#) on X – formerly Twitter – that connections between the shooter and intelligence agencies is the most likely scenario, and even compared it to the Kennedy assassination, by mentioning **Lee Harvey Oswald**, the U.S. Marine veteran who murdered **John F. Kennedy**:

“We know little so far, but [with] alleged Trump shooter’s personal and public participation in military activity in Ukraine, it is hard to imagine this White House’s agencies can claim zero contact – ‘clean hands.’ Something of an Oswald vibe, here. Congress should get answers”

We know little so far, but w alleged Trump shooter's personal and public participation in military activity in Ukraine, it is hard to imagine this White House's agencies can claim zero contact—"clean hands." Something of an Oswald vibe, here. Congress should get answers. pic.twitter.com/IDD1TLsLVf

— Edward Snowden (@Snowden) [September 15, 2024](#)

That is of course a fair point, considering everything we know about the CIA role in Ukraine since Maidan, as reported by a [New York Times exposé](#).

Just nine weeks ago, one may remember Trump was the target of an assassination that remains unexplained to this day, and, as I wrote, placed the Secret Service itself [under suspicion](#).

Trump is by no means a [peacemaker](#) of any kind (as I've [argued](#)), but his stance on the Ukrainian war may be enough to trigger various factions of the American intelligence community - whether those are "rogue" ones or not. This scenario is even more likely if one considers the fact that it remains unclear who has been governing the United States for the last couple of years (as the incumbent President Joe Biden's cognitive health was [covered up](#)), with some experts talking about a "[triumvirate](#)", referring to Biden's close advisers Bruce Reed, Mike Donilon, and Steve Ricchetti.

To sum it up, a second assassination attempt against a presidential candidate (who is also a former President) took place within just nine weeks, the context being a political crisis in which it is even hard to determine who is actually in charge of the country, with a senile incumbent President and a weak Vice President (who is now the Democratic Party nominee). Meanwhile, the Secret Service itself is under investigation over the first murder attempt about two months ago, with its disgraced Director having resigned. No "conspiracy theory" would have imagined all of that. All of this is of course unprecedented in American history.

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Uriel Araujo, PhD, anthropology researcher with a focus on international and ethnic conflicts. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

Featured image: A screengrab of Ryan Wesley Routh, who is suspected of planning an apparent assassination of former president Donald Trump © AFPTV/AFP via Getty Images

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