



# Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General

## United States Secret Service After-Action Review of Inaugural Security

(Redacted)





Homeland  
Security

October 19, 2009

Preface

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Public Law 107-296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*. This is one of a series of audit, inspection, and special reports prepared as part of our oversight responsibilities to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness within the department.

This report addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the United States Secret Service after-action review of concerns raised in the *Washington Post* on January 30, 2009, on inaugural security. It is based on interviews with employees and officials of relevant agencies and institutions, interviews with members of the public, direct observations, and a review of applicable documents.

We trust this report will result in more effective, efficient, and economical operations. We express our appreciation to all who contributed to the preparation of this report.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard L. Skinner".

Richard L. Skinner  
Inspector General

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## Abbreviations

DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
JCCIC	Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PIC	Presidential Inaugural Committee
USSS	United States Secret Service

# OIG

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*Department of Homeland Security*  
*Office of Inspector General*

## **Executive Summary**

House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson requested that we review concerns of lax security cited in a January 30, 2009, *Washington Post* article. Specifically, Chairman Thompson requested that we:

- Review the United States Secret Service protective security plans for the inauguration;
- Investigate and identify any deficiencies in security operations, including communications and information sharing between security personnel, deviations from security plans, and any mitigating circumstances or justifications; and
- When appropriate, critique these operations and make recommendations to strengthen Secret Service practices.

Chairman Thompson also asked that we assess what Secret Service may do differently to protect the nation's first African-American President.

Our review focused on two issues: (1) the adequacy of security at the events described in the *Washington Post* article and (2) how well the Secret Service managed its after-action review of the concerns cited in the article. The article described ticket-sharing practices that the political hosts of inaugural events have discretion to allow, rather than deficiencies in physical screening measures that the Secret Service uses to provide security. The article also described other permitted activities, such as bringing a camera without live batteries through screening or posing for photographs near presidential vehicles. We evaluated the article's concerns that screened guests mingled with the public, but determined that Secret Service security measures were not readily identifiable to inaugural participants. We determined that the Secret Service after-action review was prompt and thorough, and designed to identify security planning and implementation weaknesses. We also concluded that the Secret Service risk assessments and security plans for the events described in the article were reasonable. Because the Secret Service after-action report identified and addressed areas for improvement, we recommend

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that Secret Service inform us of the implementation of these changes.

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## Background

When the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) designates a major event, such as the Olympic Games or a political party convention, a National Special Security Event, the United States Secret Service (USSS) is the lead federal agency responsible for the planning, coordination, and implementation of the operational security plan.<sup>1</sup> In addition, “the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is the lead agency for intelligence and counterterrorism, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the lead agency for coordinating an effective response to possible emergencies.”<sup>2</sup> For the January 2009 inaugural events, uniformed DHS and other federal law enforcement components provided personnel and equipment, including screening magnetometers. State and local police from the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland, and police from other regions, also provided security. In total, USSS obtained assistance from nearly 30,000 law enforcement officers from 58 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies for the events.

In addition, USSS partnered with the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies (JCCIC) and Presidential Inaugural Committee (PIC) to plan logistics and security for the inaugural events. About a year before every presidential inauguration, Congress creates a JCCIC to plan the official inaugural ceremonies at the Capitol, including the swearing-in of the President and Vice President of the United States. The JCCIC traditionally prints 240,000 inaugural tickets, which are color-coded with a designated seating area but do not assign seats. (See appendix D, figure 1.) Tickets are issued to limit the size of crowds at inaugural events. Most of the 240,000 tickets are distributed by members of Congress to constituents, but a block is reserved for the PIC to distribute to VIPs such as donors, dignitaries, foreign government officials, and friends and family of outgoing and incoming administration officials. USSS uses the seating plans and projected audience size to plan security, but does not obtain lists of individuals who have received tickets. Security at the inauguration is based on physical screening of the audience

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<sup>1</sup> See 18 U.S.C. § 3056(e)(1) (amended to clarify USSS authority for security operations at events and gatherings of national significance; authorizing the USSS to participate in the planning, coordination, and implementation of security operations at special events of national significance.)

<sup>2</sup> Statement for the Record, Mark Sullivan, Director, USSS. Before the Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, U. S. House of Representatives, March 25, 2009. Found at: [http://appropriations.house.gov/Witness\\_testimony/HS/Mark\\_Sullivan\\_03\\_25\\_09.pdf](http://appropriations.house.gov/Witness_testimony/HS/Mark_Sullivan_03_25_09.pdf)

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and protection of officials, recognizing that elected officials should lead the decision on who attends inaugural events.

The tickets for audience seats closest to the Capitol are coded as orange or yellow, while the purple and blue seating areas are slightly further from the Capitol, and the silver seating area farthest away. (See appendix D, figure 2.) Many dignitary VIPs were seated in reserved sections of the presidential platform during the inauguration. Dignitary VIPs included officials from former administrations, civil rights and labor leaders, and groups and individuals recognized for their achievements. Most donor VIPs were seated in the orange- and yellow-ticketed seating areas. Donor VIPs financed or collected contributions for the Obama campaign or for inaugural events.

The PIC, appointed shortly after the election by the President-elect, has responsibility for all other official inaugural events. The PIC had about 400 staff to plan the Lincoln Memorial concert, three bipartisan dinners, concerts and dances, the inaugural parade, 10 official inaugural balls, various meals for VIPs, and events for friends and families of the President and Vice President-elect. The PIC also distributed tickets to VIPs at the Washington Convention Center. About 18,000 JCCIC and PIC volunteers, many of whom had worked on the Obama presidential campaign, provided support for the inaugural activities.

Accounts of the January 2009 inauguration events were generally positive, with two exceptions. The most publicized concerns cited during and after the events were from purple and silver ticket-holders who were unable to enter their designated areas. This resulted in JCCIC Chairman Senator Dianne Feinstein's request for a review of the planning and implementation of crowd management and communication. The USSS, Capitol Police, Washington Metropolitan Police, and United States Park Police conducted a joint investigation. Their report, the *Multi-Agency Response to Concerns Raised by the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies for the 56th Presidential Inauguration (Multi-Agency Response)* was completed on March 17, 2009.<sup>3</sup> The *Multi-Agency Response* identified crowd management and communication weaknesses and made 38 recommendations for improvement. Most of the recommendations addressed issues concerning ticket-holders who were unable to

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<sup>3</sup> The unclassified Executive Summary is available online (<http://inaugural.senate.gov/documents/doc-032309-multiagencyreport.pdf>).

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enter secured areas of the Capitol and along the parade route. Two identified opportunities to establish better real-time cell phone or Internet communication with the public. The *Multi-Agency Response* concluded that the USSS security plan was successful in providing protection.

Less publicized was an article in the *Washington Post* on January 30, 2009, citing six named and additional unnamed campaign donors and bundlers (donation collectors), most of whom said that security at the inauguration appeared lax.<sup>4</sup> These donor VIPs boarded buses for the inaugural at the Renaissance Hotel at Ninth and Eye Streets, NW. Dignitary VIPs also boarded buses at the Renaissance Hotel, but through a different screening process. (For the full text of the article, see appendix C, figure 1.)

The *Washington Post* article cited six concerns:

- The donor VIPs were not asked to show identification to retrieve tickets and VIP passes that allowed them and their guests to meet with President Obama.
- After a screening to sit in a ticketed area for the swearing-in ceremony, they mingled with public crowds and were never again checked for firearms or explosives.
- After security screening, they were told to find their way across a public street to board “secure” buses that would take them to the Capitol for the swearing-in ceremony.
- One individual was waved through security with a camera that had no batteries despite warnings that the camera would have to be operational.
- They watched other VIPs lean on the President-elect’s limousine, posing for pictures.
- One donor flashed a handful of passes to gain access to a room and brought in an extra guest to meet Vice President Biden at a breakfast for donor VIPs, referred to as the “Biden Breakfast”.

The *Washington Post* article noted that three of the donors named in the article were sending instant messages by cell phone using an Internet-based service, Twitter.com. (See appendix D, figure 4.) The text of these instant messages, or tweets, was available in real time to the general public by Internet or cell phone. Specifically, one bundler sent a message at 6:45 AM, “We were thoroughly x-rayed, then walked across a public street in the open. WTF?” A

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<sup>4</sup> Aaron Davis, “Security Around Obama Alarms Some VIP Donors,” *Washington Post*, January 30, 2009.



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donor concurred at 6:55 AM, forwarding the original message and adding “True. And yikes.” Another donor responded at 7:44 AM, “If I got this sooner, wd have slept & snuck in.”

On February 2, 2009, Chairman Bennie Thompson requested that we review concerns of lax security cited in the *Washington Post* article. (See appendix C, figure 2.) On February 3, 2009, we received a letter from the director of USSS offering full cooperation with our review. On February 4, 2009, the *Washington Post* printed a follow-up article noting the congressional request for a DHS OIG review. (See appendix C, figure 3.) On March 17, 2009, the *Multi-Agency Response* was completed. Although we will refer to issues addressed in the *Multi-Agency Response*, we will not make recommendations on improving communication on security, since they would be redundant to that report’s recommendations. The *Multi-Agency Response* recommends a government inaugural website through which the public could report suspicious activity, as well as monitoring public websites and social networking information during the inaugural to track potential problems.<sup>5</sup>

USSS protection involves four elements, each of which contributed to security during the 2009 inauguration. First, USSS continually monitors potential threats against protected officials, most of which are reported by protectees who receive the threats or members of the public who become aware of threats. USSS works with intelligence agencies and federal and local law enforcement to identify potentially dangerous activity, and monitors Internet chatter and other sources of information. Second, cooperation with other law enforcement agencies and field campaign offices multiplies sources of information and may identify plots based on local knowledge. Third, extensive advance planning identifies potential vulnerabilities and best security options in each location where a protected official is scheduled to appear. These three elements have proven effective at deterring and disrupting plots against protectees. For lone gunmen, who historically have targeted political candidates without signaling their intentions in advance, the USSS relies on the aforementioned elements of protection, as well as the fourth element of round-the-clock screening of the public and physical protection of designated officials by armed personnel on the day of the event. Although our

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<sup>5</sup> The unclassified Executive Summary is available online (<http://inaugural.senate.gov/documents/doc-032309-multiagencyreport.pdf>).

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report discusses each element, the primary focus will be on physical screening on the day of the inaugural events.

## **Results of Review**

### **USSS Is Proficient in Evaluating and Improving Its Process**

The USSS investigation of the security concerns cited in the January 30, 2009, *Washington Post* article was timely and thorough. We concluded from our participation in USSS-led interviews, and our review of planning documents and of work papers from USSS-led interviews, that USSS maintains a culture of self-examination. USSS interviews with its own special agents and Uniformed Division, and with partner law enforcement agencies, are designed to identify both actual and potential security weaknesses. During these interviews, law enforcement officers offered frank appraisals of the strengths and weaknesses of security plans and implementation. USSS interviews with PIC staff and with the donor VIPs mentioned in the *Washington Post* article also demonstrated the USSS commitment and ability to identify and address areas for improvement.

#### **USSS Methodology Is Appropriate**

USSS took the concerns cited in the *Washington Post* article seriously. By Monday, February 2, 2009, USSS had assigned its Office of Professional Responsibility to conduct an after-action review. USSS selected senior agents who were not involved in the inaugural security planning to conduct the review. On February 3, 2009, USSS Director Sullivan wrote to inform us of their internal review, and when we met with USSS officials on February 4, 2009, those officials offered cooperation with our parallel review.

USSS devoted considerable resources to interviewing eyewitnesses to the events described in the *Washington Post* article as quickly as possible, even though USSS was simultaneously conducting the *Multi-Agency Response* review. Within the first week, USSS officials interviewed most of its eyewitness special agents and Uniformed Division personnel, and many U.S. Capitol Police and Washington Metropolitan Police officers. USSS officials made their interview notes and draft notes from these interviews available to us. To learn more about the allegations cited in the article, the USSS public affairs office asked the *Washington Post*

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to comment on the article; however, the *Washington Post* declined the request. In the succeeding week, USSS officials identified, contacted, and interviewed PIC staff who were present at the events. A USSS special agent, accompanied by an OIG inspector, traveled to four cities on the West Coast to interview four of the people named in the *Washington Post* article. The USSS special agent, accompanied by an OIG inspector, interviewed a fifth person in Washington. Although the rapid USSS response meant that we were not present for many of the initial law enforcement interviews, this approach ensured that recollections were recorded while they were still fresh.

### **Conduct of Law Enforcement Interviews Was Sufficient**

Based on our review of USSS planning documents and interview summary notes, we concluded that USSS expects constructive criticism, initiative to address security weaknesses as they are identified, and after-action performance critiques. The USSS personnel stated that they observed no security breaches at any of the inaugural events, and no attempted breaches at the Renaissance Hotel staging site. However, several special agents stationed at the Renaissance Hotel said that the logistical arrangements for staging VIPs on the morning of the inauguration could have been better. Some concerns were addressed immediately, for instance by using police caution tape to improve flow and by using hand-held magnetometers to screen dignitary VIPs immediately before they boarded buses. The final placement of stationary magnetometers followed the original plan. However, the plan also allowed for an alternative arrangement, and special agents discussed other arrangements during setup, indicating that special agents are expected to evaluate plans and discuss supervisory decisions.

Ultimately, USSS' internal after-action review concluded that in the event of a future similar staging requirement, it would be preferable to have the stationary magnetometers on the same side of the street as the buses. This conclusion indicates that security arrangements for the donor VIPs at the Renaissance Hotel could have been better. However, it also demonstrates that USSS has an internal capacity to examine its operations and make recommendations to strengthen its practices.

The interviews we observed with the U.S. Capitol Police and Washington Metropolitan Police officers who escorted the VIPs were designed to elicit accurate recollections of what happened at the Renaissance Hotel. USSS negotiated in advance with the U.S.

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Capitol Police chief and Capitol Police inspector general to ensure that interviewed witnesses would understand that USSS was evaluating its own performance. USSS also explained to Metropolitan Police officers that they were participating as witnesses. USSS asked sufficient questions about the general conditions on Inauguration Day to establish that these officers were recalling events and commenting candidly. For example, officers independently recounted similar memories of the entourages they escorted before and after the VIPs, the order in which the officers arrived at the parking lot, and that most could see Ninth Street, NW, but not the magnetometers. In addition, several officers brought a work log to the interview and referred to it for details. USSS also relied on the U.S. Capitol Police to close gaps in the timeline of events, as USSS agents and PIC staff all had slightly different recollections, and none had reason to keep a log.

USSS conducted 63 interviews with USSS special agents and Uniformed Division personnel about what they saw at the Lincoln Memorial on January 18, 2009, and at the Capitol on January 20, 2009. We did not observe these interviews and the interview summary notes for the Lincoln Memorial interviews were less detailed than for the Renaissance Hotel. However, the interview notes included sufficient independent recollections that we consider credible enough to support their conclusion that there were no security breaches at these sites. For example, many of the personnel recounted that some of their law enforcement counterparts stood down soon after the President-elect left the stage at the Lincoln Memorial concert. Personnel in the Security Room and in the field agreed that this issue had been reported and USSS personnel were told to remain at their posts. Interview notes included anecdotes of individuals who had attempted unsuccessfully to gain access, from which we concluded that each officer was asked to recall any unusual events. One of the personnel posted at a checkpoint a considerable distance from the Lincoln Memorial stage questioned whether security was adequate, while noting that he did not know how far from the stage the people he screened would be seated. Two mentioned miscommunication on a posting that was quickly resolved. None of those interviewed remembered donor VIPs near the presidential limousine, but those posted near the limousines remembered entertainers who had been photographed there. We believe these responses indicate that USSS interviewers asked enough questions to identify any security breaches, and that the personnel were expected to express their concerns.

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## **USSS Managed PIC Staff and Donor VIP Interviews Well**

The interviews that USSS conducted with PIC staff who planned the Renaissance Hotel staging were designed to assess accurately USSS security at inaugural events. USSS officials prefaced interviews by explaining that their interest was in understanding what happened and identifying any security breaches so that they would not recur. USSS officials provided PIC staff with copies of the January 30, 2009, *Washington Post* article and the February 4, 2009, congressional letter, as well as site maps. The interviews with the PIC staff were less structured than the interviews conducted with the law enforcement officers, but each was asked the same questions about logistics, timing, and security. USSS was not defensive about its plans and implementation, and did not challenge a PIC staff member who described donor VIP staging as less than ideal. We conducted separate telephone interviews with additional PIC staff, and determined that their recollections were similar to those interviewed by USSS officials. The interviews demonstrated that USSS officials took concerns about security seriously and conducted interviews designed to elicit information about breaches or lapses in security.

The interviews that a USSS special agent conducted with the five donor VIPs were also designed to obtain an accurate assessment of what the donor VIPs had observed. As with the PIC staff, the USSS official told the donor VIPs that the USSS goal was to determine what happened and to identify and address any breaches in security. The rapport the USSS interviewer established led two donor VIPs to volunteer that they themselves had participated in ticket-sharing. The two had believed ticket-sharing to be a security breach rather than a PIC crowd management issue. The interviews produced a few additional details that had not been mentioned in the *Washington Post* article, such as that one donor VIP did not think the search of his belongings was sufficiently thorough. The USSS official did not attempt to influence how the donor VIPs remembered or interpreted events, beyond informing them well into the interview that USSS does not rely on ticket checks as a security measure. When two of the donor VIPs indicated that they were conflicted about expressing security concerns in public, the USSS interviewer focused on their shared goal of identifying and preventing potential security breaches. The *Washington Post* provided assistance by forwarding to the unnamed sources in the *Post* article a letter that the Office of Inspector General wrote to request that these sources allow us to interview them, but no additional witnesses came forward. We concluded that USSS

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methodology for following up on public concerns about security was effective in obtaining necessary information.

## **Overall Inaugural Security Was Reasonable**

Several PIC staff told us that they attributed the inauguration's successful security to the 18 months of prior experience the Obama campaign and USSS had working together. Although the reason for the long relationship was, as articulated by Senator Dick Durbin, the "sad reality of this day and age that Mr. Obama's African-American heritage is the cause for a very violent and hated reaction from some people," the cumulative shared experience was beneficial.<sup>6</sup> USSS personnel and the campaign team, many of whom became PIC staff, had worked together at progressively larger and more complex events. USSS officials had experience with the nature of threats to candidate Obama's security, as well as the unusually large, but generally peaceable, crowds he attracted. USSS officials brought experience and flexibility to their advance planning, and coordinated on security issues with its law enforcement partners and the PIC. There were no known security breaches at inaugural events.

### **USSS Is Actively Engaged in Threat Assessment**

From early in the campaign season through inauguration, the media reported, and USSS officials confirmed, that the volume of documented threats against President Obama was the largest in American history. The increase in the volume of reported threats may have been due in part to greater public concern that such threats might be carried out. Media reports document that political leaders, law enforcement officers, intelligence agencies, campaign and inaugural staff, mental health workers, educational institutions, and neighbors reported concerns to USSS. The media also reported, and USSS officials confirmed, that a significant percentage of the threats focused on President Obama's position as the first African American to be nominated by a major party and the first African American to be elected President. In addition, USSS officials told us that they investigated threats that are typically made against every presidential candidate, whether motivated by opposition to the candidate's political positions or by mental instability. USSS officials noted that their investigations did not indicate that those making threats against President Obama

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<sup>6</sup> Eric Krol, "Secret Service To Guard Obama: Racial Threats, High Profile Prompt Extra Protection," *Chicago Daily Herald*, May 4, 2007

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were more capable of carrying them out than those who had targeted other candidates.

The USSS policy of investigating every identified potential threat did detect and disrupt a number of groups conspiring to commit acts of violence against the President-elect. The media documented more than 10 cases that resulted in criminal prosecution, as many additional cases in which individuals were sanctioned for inappropriate conduct, and several more cases in which individuals were committed for psychiatric evaluation and treatment. USSS was also alert to the possibility of a security risk within the U.S. Capitol Police and brought it to the attention of the Secretary. The U.S. Capitol Police suspended two officers for inappropriate behavior to prevent them from working during the inauguration.<sup>7</sup>

### **Planning for Security Mixed Experience With Flexibility**

Planning for an inauguration starts well before either party holds its nominating convention. It builds on experience from previous inaugurations, a practice that both helped and hindered the success of the 2009 inauguration. Both the *Multi-Agency Response* report and PIC staff noted that USSS officials, some law enforcement agencies, and political partners tried to adjust traditional inaugural practices to the unprecedented challenges they would face with the anticipated size of the crowd and the historic inauguration of the first African-American President. For each inauguration, the PIC is established only after the election, generally comprising staff who had worked on the President-elect's campaign, a fact that inevitably limits planning options for both the PIC and USSS. JCCIC based its original plans on a 1-day inauguration celebration, while the Obama inauguration provided 4 days of events, including a logistically complex train tour from Philadelphia to Washington, a concert at the Lincoln Memorial, smaller concerts, public service activities, and dining events attended by the President- or Vice President-elect or their spouses.

Nonetheless, USSS security plans provided an overall strategy, lead responsibilities, hours of operation, the purpose and authorized access for various checkpoints, communication, and backup, relief, and crisis response options. Some of the crowd

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<sup>7</sup> Spencer Hsu, Mary Beth Sheridan, and Carrie Johnson, "No Chances Taken at Inauguration: Suspension of 2 Capitol Police Officers Illustrates Extraordinary Security Precautions," *Washington Post*, March 6, 2009.

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control issues described in the *Multi-Agency Response* were a result of exceptionally stringent security planning. Privately owned vehicles were prohibited in certain areas, bridges were closed, and aircraft were diverted. These restrictions allowed the USSS personnel and their law enforcement partners to limit and control car and pedestrian traffic in the downtown area, but required complex bus staging operations to move authorized guests through the city. Despite the unprecedented crowd sizes, there was “not one major security incident, arrest, or injury reported.”<sup>8</sup>

### **USSS Coordinated With Partners Despite Fluid Situation**

Both PIC planners and USSS agents responsible for advance planning described inaugural planning as fluid and requiring continuous coordination, either directly or through coordinating committees and subcommittees. The JCCIC or PIC provided USSS personnel information on the size and significance of each event, and the USSS personnel and law enforcement partners formulated security requirements. In practice, USSS personnel adapted, where possible, to the PIC goals of facilitating participant logistics. PIC staff and the USSS supervisory special agent responsible for the staging area at the Renaissance Hotel confirmed that they began coordinating security and logistical plans about a month before the inauguration. However, decisions on which buses were staged there changed several times before the week of the inauguration, and logistics for managing the dignitary VIPs were revised on the morning of the inauguration. This flexibility required USSS law enforcement partners to adapt as well. Although some USSS special agents and Uniformed Division personnel expressed frustration at the fluidity of the plans, and some PIC staff articulated concerns that plans on the grounds of the Capitol were insufficiently flexible, everyone involved in the implementation of events described in the *Washington Post* article told us their overall communication capability and level of coordination were good.

### **Execution Involved No Unaddressed Security Breaches**

The concerns cited in the *Washington Post* article about lax security centered on five inaugural events. Overall, we concluded that most of the concerns arose because participants were not

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<sup>8</sup> Executive Summary of Findings: Multi-Agency Response to Concerns Raised by the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies for the 56th Presidential Inauguration, March 20, 2009, <http://inaugural.senate.gov/documents/doc-032309-multiagencyreport.pdf>.



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aware of distinctions between crowd control measures (such as tickets) and security (such as magnetometer screening), or were not familiar with USSS security guidelines. We conducted extensive interviews and revisited the Renaissance Hotel staging site on several occasions before forming any conclusions on concerns that donor VIPs could have mingled with the general public. We eventually determined that there was adequate security during the VIP staging, but that much of it would not have been visible to the donor VIPs who expressed concerns. In addition, we determined that security was commensurate with the potential threat. While the donor VIPs were guided across a public street before boarding the buses to the inaugural ceremony, their seats at the inaugural ceremony were a considerable distance from the inaugural platform, and the individuals on the platform were protected by bullet-resistant glass. In contrast, USSS agents used a hand-held magnetometer to screen each dignitary VIP who sat on the inaugural platform immediately before they boarded the buses, and the PIC verified identities and invitations even for dignitaries whom they knew personally.

#### Washington Convention Center

The first concern cited in the *Washington Post* article was that “[t]hree contributors who raised \$300,000 or more for the inauguration said they were never asked to show identification to retrieve dozens of tickets, including VIP passes that allowed them and their guests to meet privately with Obama.” Although donors would have observed USSS Uniformed Division personnel, U.S. Capitol Police, and Washington Metropolitan Police checking tickets throughout the inauguration, tickets were not intended to provide security but to control crowd size. Inaugural tickets were numbered, but did not have the name of the holder printed on them, bar codes, or other features that would enable a ticket-checker to link a ticket to a specific individual. PIC staff who had worked on previous inaugurations said that participants do swap tickets and do try to bring their friends into events, and they were not concerned by this activity. We do not consider the ticket distribution process a security weakness.

#### Lincoln Memorial Concert

The next two concerns cited pertained to the security screening for a meet-and-greet event that President-elect Obama had with donors and bundlers in the VIP tent at the Lincoln Memorial concert. The *Washington Post* reported that “[o]ne [donor] said he was waved

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through with a camera that had no batteries despite warnings that it would have to be operational. The two [donors] said they later walked unattended by the President-elect's motorcade and watched other donors lean on the limousine, posing for pictures." Neither activity was a security breach. USSS and the JCCIC published lists of prohibited items in advance of the inaugural events, and cameras, operational or not, were not proscribed. Several USSS special agents and other security officials recalled entertainers who performed at the concert leaning against the presidential limousine, but said they would not have intervened unless an individual had attempted to tamper with the vehicle. USSS officials said, and the donors we interviewed confirmed, that everyone screened into the VIP area of the concert had gone through a magnetometer, and that their bags had been opened. The decision to hold meet-and-greet events was made the morning of the concert, so VIPs would not have known in advance about the occasion. In addition, donor VIPs recounted that law enforcement officers or others in the VIP party had kept them out of prohibited areas, and the President-elect himself assisted USSS by asking participants to move back after they had the opportunity to meet him. The activities cited in the *Washington Post* article from the Lincoln Memorial concert were not security lapses.

#### Breakfast With Vice President-Elect Biden

The fourth security concern cited in the *Washington Post* article was that "[b]y the next morning, when Biden spoke to donors at a Northwest [Washington, DC] hotel, one said it had become clear that ticket checks had become 'a joke.' He said he flashed a handful of coveted gray passes to gain access to the VIP room with Biden but brought in an extra guest." From our interviews with PIC staff, USSS officials, and donor VIPs, we concluded that attendees had all been screened through a magnetometer. Access to the VIP area within the secure perimeter was a crowd-control function managed by the PIC, not a security function managed by USSS personnel. PIC staff said that they checked general admission tickets on entry, and that they would not necessarily have intervened when someone they recognized brought a guest who had a general admission ticket but did not have a gray pass into the VIP area within the secure perimeter. Because USSS relies on physical screening and monitoring, not invitations, to provide security, there were no security lapses at the Biden Breakfast.

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## Renaissance Hotel Staging VIPs to the Inaugural

The most complex concern mentioned by donor VIPs was the staging process for the inauguration, for which donor VIPs were screened but walked across a public street after screening to board buses. Based on extensive interviews and a review of the staging site with USSS special agents responsible for security, we concluded that USSS provided adequate security, but that some of it would not have been visible to the donor VIPs. In addition, we noted that security was more stringent for dignitary VIPs who were seated on the inaugural platform than for donor VIPs, who did not have direct contact with the President-elect or Vice President-elect on Inauguration Day.

The *Washington Post* article summarized a number of concerns about security at the Renaissance Hotel offsite staging area. Specifically, the *Post* reported:

*Several donors said they were particularly troubled by an episode before dawn Tuesday: More than 100 corporate executives, Hollywood personalities and others had been told to gather for a security screening outside the Renaissance Hotel at 999 Ninth St., NW. Once cleared, they were told, they would board “secure” buses that would ferry them to seats close to the president’s podium at the Capitol, and then to bleachers adjoining his viewing stand in front of the White House.*

*But after passing through a magnetometer outside the hotel, members of the group said they were directed to a public sidewalk and told to find their way across Ninth Street to buses waiting in a convention center parking lot. Along the way, they said they mingled with throngs of spectators streaming toward the Mall. The VIPs were not screened again or asked for identification, they said.*

The article also noted that three donors sent tweets articulating their concerns, and that, “[t]o anyone surfing the Internet, accounts of the lax security surrounding the ‘secure’ buses were being broadcast in near-real time.” Chairman Thompson raised concerns that, had the reports by donor VIPs been accurate, the widespread availability of this information could be “making matters worse.” We interpreted this statement as concern that someone might react

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to a report of lax security by attempting to mingle with the donor VIPs to board a bus or to pass a weapon to someone in the donor VIP group.

USSS initiated many elements of the security plan before the dignitary and donor VIPs began to arrive at the Renaissance Hotel around 5:45 AM on Inauguration Day. Those measures would not have been readily apparent to guests. A reported 56 buses were parked in the public lot across from the Renaissance Hotel. (See appendix D, figure 3.) Dignitary VIPs and donor VIPs were allocated 5 and 21 buses respectively, while the other buses were used to transport Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, embassy officials, and friends and family of the incoming and outgoing President and Vice President. The night before the inauguration, the buses were parked, and after midnight were searched by Department of Defense explosives ordnance canines and secured. Many bus drivers had been screened and assigned buses before the donor VIPs arrived on site.

USSS special agents on site, and most PIC staff and volunteers, were [REDACTED], which made them more difficult to identify. USSS special agents and Uniformed Division personnel arrived after 3:00 AM to set up stationary magnetometers and organize security. The security contingent included [REDACTED] uniformed personnel, [REDACTED] special agents [REDACTED], and a supervisory special agent [REDACTED] and who remained on site throughout the event. More than 30 PIC staff and volunteers, most of whom had worked together on other major events in the Obama campaign, began arriving at 4:30 AM. They set up their operations, including stationing staff on the sidewalk to direct arriving donor VIPs and setting up refreshments. Unlike many PIC volunteers who wore tasseled red hats at other events, most PIC volunteers at the Renaissance Hotel were not wearing distinctive clothing, and the donor VIPs may not have identified all those standing on the sidewalk as PIC volunteers.

About 750 donor VIPs formed a line in an outdoor courtyard of the Renaissance Hotel, and when they had been screened through a magnetometer, walked along Ninth Street, crossed the street, passed a table of refreshments, and boarded buses sequentially. (See appendix D, figure 3.) Donor VIPs were not carrying large bags. The PIC provided lunches after the swearing-in ceremony, which further assisted USSS personnel by limiting unusual or bulky packages brought onto the buses by the donor VIPs. USSS special agents, donor VIPs, and PIC staff recalled that both

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pedestrian and vehicle traffic was thin for most of the staging, consistent with the early hour and the ban on privately owned vehicles. USSS special agents observed VIPs from their passage through the magnetometers to the point at which they boarded the buses. Because participants were wearing winter clothing and were asked to open their coats and bags for searches, the stream of donor VIPs leaving the screening area to cross the street at any given time was slow and relatively easy to monitor. USSS personnel on site said that they would have observed any member of the public joining the donor VIPs or handing anything to them, and that this had not happened. USSS personnel, PIC staff, and the donor VIPs we interviewed agreed that once donor VIPs boarded their buses, they did not get off to smoke or make telephone calls in the parking lot, limiting the possibility that an outsider could board a bus in place of one of the donor VIPs or pass an object to one of them after the USSS special agents observed the initial boarding process. None of the donor VIPs we interviewed were aware that USSS special agents were stationed at intervals on the street and in the parking lot to maintain a “line of sight” surveillance of the donor VIPs. We asked USSS, U.S. Capitol Police, Washington Metropolitan Police, and PIC staff who had worked on other major events, whether there was anything unusual about line-of-sight security arrangements and were told that the procedure was used routinely. We determined that while the circumstances described by the four donor VIPs were largely accurate, these individuals were not aware of key security measures, such as the presence of USSS special agents monitoring donor VIPs from when they left the magnetometers to when they boarded buses.

Although the PIC staff was not providing security, their presence added a layer of scrutiny. Among those interviewed by a USSS special agent, the four donor VIPs who had been at the Renaissance Hotel were not aware of the number of PIC staff who were lining the Ninth Street sidewalk to observe and direct them, though most remembered hearing instructions on their way to the buses. At least one PIC staffer boarded each donor VIP bus, and stayed with the group until it was inside the secure perimeter at the Capitol. PIC staff recalled making constant spot-checks to verify that each donor VIP had an inaugural ticket as well as a map that served as a bus pass. PIC staff distributed the maps/bus passes while the donor VIPs were in the magnetometer line. Consistent with the potential threat involved, dignitary VIPs were more closely scrutinized than donor VIPs. PIC staff told us that they required dignitary VIPs to present an identification document, and

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checked them against an invitation list both before and after they boarded the buses. At the Capitol, JCCIC representatives met the dignitary VIP bus and escorted the guests to their assigned seats on the platform.

Unpredicted adjustments to the VIP staging made it more difficult to breach security. For example, only about half the bus drivers arrived at their designated time, so the PIC staff reassigned the early arrivals to the lead buses. The relatively late decision to stage Congressional Medal of Honor recipients at the Renaissance Hotel meant that some U.S. Capitol Police were on site earlier than originally scheduled. U.S. Capitol Police reported that their canine unit was in the parking lot early during the staging to sweep a group of buses that Department of Defense canines swept earlier before escorting those buses to the State Department to pick up another group of guests. PIC staff had informed donor VIPs that they would be screened and on the buses shortly after 6:00 AM, but with more than 750 donors, two stationary magnetometer machines, and the need to open winter coats for security checks, the screening was slower than expected. U.S. Capitol and Washington Metropolitan Police motorcade escorts told us that they arrived for the scheduled 7:30 AM departure, and that while they were waiting, they also observed later donor VIPs and all the dignitary VIPs cross the street and board buses. These police escorts were not tasked with monitoring the boarding process, but they created a visible police presence and would have reported any unusual activity to USSS personnel. Because of screening delays, dignitary VIPs were screened using hand-held magnetometers separately from donor VIPs. The VIP entourages began to leave the parking lot at 7:57 AM. Each of these procedural and scheduling changes would have disrupted any attempt to join the donor VIPs without going through security screening, or to pass anything to an accomplice among those cleared to board the buses.

### Capitol Hill Inauguration

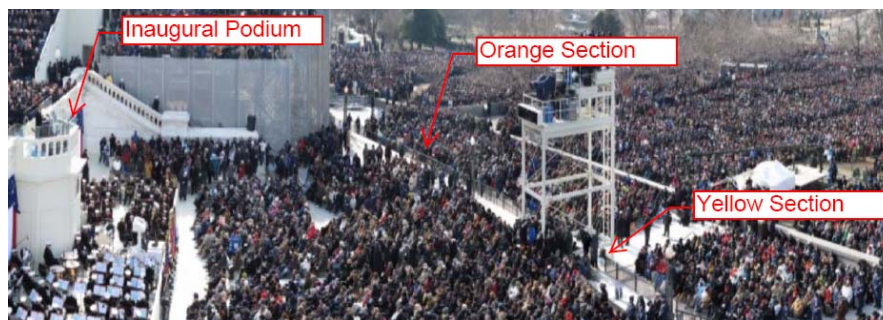
The sixth security concern cited in the *Washington Post* article was that “after a screening to sit in a ticketed area near President-elect Obama for his swearing-in, they mingled with public crowds but were never again checked for firearms or explosives.” Because the VIP entourages took a



Inaugural Podium /  
Inaugural Address

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circuitous route to drop-off points, donor VIPs would not have been aware that the public crowds they observed had already been screened at the secure perimeter about two blocks southeast of the donor VIP drop-off location. (See appendix D, figure 5.) The JCCIC staff stationed at the Capitol checked tickets for those who arrived on foot at stations inside the secure perimeter, while the PIC staff who arrived with the donor VIPs escorted them past these stations to their seats. This arrangement may have given donor VIPs the impression that they were mingling with the public, but they were in fact mingling with other screened inaugural guests who held tickets for the same seating section, referred to as the orange section. Two of the donor VIPs we interviewed had tickets for a comparable seating section north of the orange section, referred to as the yellow section, and recalled that military or law enforcement officers at the Capitol allowed them to cross through the orange section into the yellow section. This arrangement did not represent a security breach; the *Multi-Agency Response* recommended more flexibility in moving guests to comparable seats when sections filled unevenly. In addition, although the donor VIPs had seats near the front of the general audience, they were a considerable distance from the ceremony platform and separated from the inaugural podium by bullet-resistant glass.



Given the limitations on what guests were permitted to bring with them, the unlikelihood of assembling a weapon unnoticed, and the bullet-resistant glass around the platform, the donor VIP entourage would not have had an opportunity to breach security surrounding the incoming President and Vice President. Dignitary VIPs who were seated on the inaugural platform had received more rigorous screening, and were escorted directly from their buses to their assigned seats.

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## **USSS Met Standards Sought by Congressional Inquiry**

### **USSS Protective Security Plans Were Reasonable**

The USSS protective security plans for the events described in the *Washington Post* article anticipated potential security threats. The plans established layers of security, assigned logistical and operational responsibilities to specified agencies, and identified site postings and duties for each location, including timelines and explanations of how the events would develop. The plans addressed resource allocations and assignment of law enforcement duties in correlation to the security requirements for each venue. USSS personnel revised the plans to meet emerging requirements or changing conditions. The flexibility of the USSS planning process allowed its special agents and Uniformed Division personnel to recommend and make changes to the plans for their venues even into the execution phase. This combination of using past experiences and responding to changing circumstances is a key component of the USSS planning process for National Special Security Events.

### **USSS Managed Security Operations as Required**

For the events described in the *Washington Post* article, we identified no deficiencies in security operations. The fluid planning process presented a challenge, but communication and information sharing among security personnel and between security personnel and PIC staff was good for the events we reviewed. We consider small changes in procedures, such as screening dignitary VIPs at the Renaissance Hotel with hand-held magnetometers, to be a prudent deviation from advance planning. The latitude USSS allows its personnel to make adjustments based on circumstances is necessary to their ability to provide protection. We also observed that USSS officials expect personnel to critique operations and report derogatory or skeptical comments. This culture enables USSS personnel to identify and address weaknesses in USSS procedures.

### **USSS Internal Reviews Improve Security Planning**

Because USSS identified and addressed the necessary areas for improvement, both in the *Multi-Agency Response* requested by Senator Feinstein and in its after-action review of the concerns



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raised in the *Washington Post* article, we are not making recommendations in our report. Specifically:

- **New Communication Technologies.** The three tweets expressing concerns about lax security described in the *Washington Post* article did not appear to have been widely read or discussed, either at the time they were posted or in response to the article. Nonetheless, USSS concluded in the *Multi-Agency Report* that it must develop more advanced mechanisms to monitor and respond to social networking sites as technological advances expand the availability of real-time information. The recommendations in the *Multi-Agency Response* address this requirement.
- **Videotape Footage.** Media reports on inaugural security noted that more than 5,000 existing fixed outdoor cameras located throughout the Washington, DC, region would be operating during the inauguration, and those with views relevant for security would be monitored in real time. USSS currently does not routinely videotape political events, but may access footage obtained by other law enforcement agencies, the media, and the public. However, there was no usable footage of the Renaissance Hotel staging process. USSS determined that cameras fixed to neighboring buildings were not aimed at the area of the parking lot where the buses were staged, and that cameras fixed to poles in the parking lot were not turned on, as the parking lot was closed to privately owned vehicles during the inauguration. Without such footage, our review relied on eyewitness testimony and visits to the site to determine what happened on Inauguration Day. Although the after-action review process was labor-intensive, with more than 80 eyewitness interviews, we concluded that USSS methodology enabled eyewitnesses to identify potential weaknesses.
- **Areas For Improvement.** In its after-action review, USSS concluded that logistics at the Renaissance Hotel staging site would have been better if USSS personnel had screened donor VIPs through magnetometers on the same side of the street as the buses. In our review of the staging process, we determined that screening was slowed because there were too few magnetometers to screen VIPs who wore winter coats that needed to be opened and checked. In addition, a few donor VIPs observed that the concerns cited in the *Washington Post* article may have resulted from security that was difficult for

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the public to recognize, rather than a lack of security, and suggested during their USSS interviews that a more visible police presence would have allayed their concerns. Such critiques—by USSS personnel, by us, and by the donor VIPs—indicate that USSS could improve its process in some areas. However, the *Multi-Agency Response* and the USSS after-action review identified and addressed these concerns.

We recommend that the Director, U.S. Secret Service:

**Recommendation #1:** Provide documentation that the after-action report recommendation to improve logistics in situations comparable to the 2009 inaugural off-site staging has been incorporated into USSS planning materials, for example through a memorandum, or updated guidance, checklist, or training materials.

### **USSS Capably Managed Security for Historic Election**

During the 18 months before President Obama’s inauguration, USSS provided protective coverage to candidate and then President-elect Obama, and worked closely with local law enforcement officers, the FBI, U.S. Attorney’s office, and campaign staff. This coordination was central to the ability of USSS personnel to conduct threat assessment and provide security during the inauguration. USSS provided security for the Obama campaign as events became increasingly larger and more logistically complex. USSS was also conducting threat assessments as Senator Obama’s profile became increasingly prominent in the presidential primaries and the general election. Although the volume of threats was significantly more than for previous presidential candidates, we concluded that the USSS strategy of investigating all articulated threats while also planning to limit opportunities for an individual to bring unauthorized weapons near protected officials on the day of an event was appropriate.

Although we concluded that there were no security breaches at the inaugural events described in the *Washington Post* article, the article illustrates the diverse elements that comprise good security. The *Washington Post* reporter was alert to potential security breaches. Based on our interviews with the named donors and bundlers quoted in the article, we concluded that they were motivated by a genuine concern for the President’s safety. Even though the article did not lead to other anecdotes of potential

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security breaches, it generated congressional concern. USSS response to the specific concerns cited in the article was to conduct an immediate and thorough investigation and to identify areas for improvement. Law enforcement officers, PIC staff, and donor VIPs provided necessary information for the USSS investigation and our parallel review. Finally, USSS cooperated with our review.

### **OIG Analysis of Management Comments**

The U.S. Secret Service has concurred with our recommendation and has indicated that it will provide information concerning compliance by November 14, 2009. We look forward to receiving that information and closing the recommendation at that time.

## Appendix A

### Purpose, Scope, and Methodology

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The Office of Inspector General, including representatives from the Office of Inspections and the Office of Investigations, met with USSS officials on February 4, 2009. We learned that USSS officials had responded immediately to the concerns cited in the *Washington Post* article. They already had conducted extensive interviews with USSS Uniformed Division personnel and special agents, and with other federal law enforcement officers who were present at the Lincoln Memorial concert on Sunday, January 18, 2009; Renaissance Hotel staging in the early morning of January 20, 2009; and the U.S. Capitol during the swearing-in ceremony. Our Office of Investigations reviewed USSS interview questionnaires with the interview subjects' responses to standard questions and USSS officials' interview notes.

We observed and participated in subsequent interviews USSS conducted with U.S. Capitol and Washington Metropolitan Police officers who accompanied the entourages from the Renaissance Hotel staging area to the Capitol for the inauguration. In addition, we met with the two USSS supervisory special agents responsible for the Renaissance Hotel staging to do a walk-through of the site and to discuss in detail the VIP bus staging process. We also reviewed security plans for the Lincoln Memorial concert, and reviewed the inauguration staging at the Capitol with USSS to discuss the security measures. We reviewed the after-action review report of the USSS internal investigation into the concerns cited in the *Washington Post* article, which included summaries of the 81 interviews USSS conducted. We also obtained an unredacted version of the *Multi-Agency Response*.

We observed and participated in interviews with several key PIC staff who were onsite at the Renaissance Hotel, and five of the six donors and bundlers quoted in the *Washington Post* article. We requested that USSS officials communicate with the owners of cameras in the vicinity of the Renaissance Hotel to determine whether there was any usable footage. USSS officials determined that cameras fixed to neighboring buildings were not aimed at the area of parking lot where the buses were staged. Cameras fixed to poles in the parking lot were not turned on, as the parking lot was closed to the public during the inauguration. USSS officials also informed us that they had requested that the *Washington Post* offer a meeting with the reporter who wrote the January 30, 2009, article, and the unnamed sources cited in the article, but did not receive a response.

## Appendix A

### Purpose, Scope, and Methodology

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In addition to participating in the USSS internal review, we reviewed several issues independently. We requested that the *Washington Post* forward a letter we wrote to the unnamed sources in their article, which asked the sources to call or write us to discuss what they remembered. The *Washington Post* confirmed that it had forwarded our letter, but we received no responses. We also interviewed PIC staff and incorporated their comments into this report. Finally, we met with representatives of the USSS Protective Research and Protective Operations offices to discuss USSS options for monitoring, anticipating, and addressing potential threats.

We conducted extensive Internet research to gauge whether there were other sources with allegations similar to those in the *Washington Post* article. In addition, we determined whether the issues cited in the article generated additional stories or concerns. We read accounts of the inauguration in hundreds of articles, blogs, and social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter.com. We determined that the concerns cited in the *Washington Post* article were isolated. We were not able to find specific allegations about lax security from others who wrote about the inauguration during or shortly after the event. Although the three tweets described in the *Post* article were available to the general public in real time, we could not locate anyone outside the donor VIP entourage who commented on the tweets or provided similar stories. The *Post* article was reprinted verbatim in many local papers and referenced on many websites, but it generated few comments and no new reports of specific security concerns.

**Appendix B**  
**Management Comments to the Draft Report**

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DIRECTOR

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
**UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE**

Washington, D.C. 20223

September 14, 2009

The Honorable Richard L. Skinner  
Inspector General  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Mr. Skinner:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report entitled *United States Secret Service After-Action Review of Inaugural Security*. I would like to express my appreciation to all who participated in the fieldwork, interviews, and preparation of this report. As an agency, we continually review and revise our methods and procedures as well as conduct self assessments. However, we welcome the scrutiny this process has provided and thank you for the fair and accurate review compiled by your inspectors. We are also especially grateful for their recognition of the monumental scope of the inaugural events, security operations, and the efforts and expertise of our employees.

In the report, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) made one recommendation addressed to the Secret Service. The recommendation requires that we provide documentation to show improvements to logistics in situations comparable to the 2009 inaugural off-site staging areas and that these improvements have been incorporated into our planning and training materials. We concur with the recommendation and will provide documentation within 60 days to outline planned changes for establishing off-site security screening checkpoints.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff to address the recommendation of this report. To address any questions or concerns, please contact me or you may contact Assistant Director George Luczko, Office of Professional Responsibility, at 202-406-5766.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Sullivan".

Mark Sullivan

cc: Carlton I. Mann  
Assistant Inspector General  
for Inspections

## Appendix C

### Relevant Articles And Correspondence

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Figure 1. January 30, 2009, *Washington Post* Article

# The Washington Post

## Security Around Obama Alarms Some VIP Donors

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Lack of Measures 'Absurd,' Guests Say

By Aaron C. Davis  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Friday, January 30, 2009; B01

Downtown Washington resembled a militarized zone last week for the inauguration of President Barack Obama, but some major contributors who had direct contact with Obama said they were surprised to find what they viewed as porous security surrounding the president-elect and vice president-elect.

Three contributors who raised \$300,000 or more for the inauguration said they were never asked to show identification to retrieve dozens of tickets, including VIP passes that allowed them and their guests to meet privately with Obama. One of the three said ticket checks were so lax that no one noticed when, after a breakfast for contributors, a friend whose name hadn't been submitted for a background check tagged along into a VIP room to take pictures with Vice President-elect Joseph Biden.

And a half-dozen said that after a screening to sit in a ticketed area near Obama for his swearing-in, they mingled with public crowds but were never again checked for firearms or explosives.

"I was surprised," said online retail executive Alfred Lin, who attended most of the events for major donors in the days leading up to the swearing-in. "It was less strict than going through airport security."

To be sure, presidents mingle in public with people who have not been screened, and some donors said they were not troubled by the level of security in place last week. Ed Donovan, a Secret Service spokesman, said the agency's security measures are not always visible. "We take a layered approach to security and don't rely on any one countermeasure to ensure that a site is safe," he said.

A half-dozen donors expressed concern that security close to Obama and Biden seemed lacking, especially in light of the measures in effect downtown that day.

A donor who bundled contributions for the inauguration, who recalled participating in events hosting former president Bill Clinton, said he was shocked at what he saw as the disparity between the strict advance work done to secure a site for Clinton and the way he felt donors breezed through security last week. "The lack of security was absurd," said the bundler, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to talk more freely about how he and others were able to circumvent security. "It was just broken somewhere; someone wasn't thinking it through."

Several donors said they were particularly troubled by an episode before dawn Tuesday: More than 100 corporate executives, Hollywood personalities and others had been told to gather for a security screening outside the Renaissance Hotel at 999 Ninth St. NW. Once cleared, they were told, they would board "secure" buses that would ferry them to seats close to the president's podium at the Capitol, and then to bleachers adjoining his viewing stand in front of the White House.

But after passing through a magnetometer outside the hotel, members of the group said they were directed to a public sidewalk and told to find their way across Ninth Street to buses waiting in a

## Appendix C

### Relevant Articles and Correspondence

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convention center parking lot. Along the way, they said they mingled with throngs of spectators streaming toward the Mall. The VIPs were not screened again or asked for identification, they said.

Suzi LeVine, a former Expedia executive, said volunteers lined her path to the buses. Even so, she said, "I was definitely thinking, 'Is there a way that people could be infiltrating this group?'"

Arjun Gupta, founder and managing partner of the Silicon Valley venture capital firm TeleSoft Partners and a co-chairman of the Presidential Inaugural Committee, stressed that on the whole, he was impressed with inaugural security, but said the walk to the bus appeared to be a lapse.

"I didn't think about it at the time, but we went through security and then we were in an open space, freely accessible to the public," Gupta said. "The street was an open thoroughfare. Cars were going up and down. If you really knew what you were doing, that was truly a gap."

The Presidential Inaugural Committee was in charge of transportation for the donors but not security, and two of the donors said they recalled seeing Secret Service badges on men staffing the checkpoint outside the Renaissance.

Donovan, the Secret Service spokesman, said he could not confirm whether the agency ran the checkpoint. Donovan said he was aware of no concerns about security outside the hotel, and he encouraged anyone with such concerns to contact the Secret Service directly.

To anyone surfing the Internet, accounts of the lax security surrounding the "secure" buses were being broadcast in near-real time.

Chris Sacca, a tech investor who raised money for the inaugural committee, posted a message on the social messaging Web site Twitter at 6:45 a.m. after passing through the checkpoint. "We were thoroughly X-rayed, then walked across a public street in the open," Sacca wrote, adding an acronym for an expletive to convey disbelief.

Evan Williams, chief executive of Twitter, was also in line -- ahead of film producer George Lucas, according to his posts. He republished Sacca's account for his 39,615 online followers 10 minutes later, adding "True. And yikes."

Alfred Lin, who is chief operating officer and financial officer for Zappos.com, replied, "If I got this sooner, we'd have slept and snuck in."

Asked about the Twitter exchange, Lin said he was surprised by the walk to the bus but didn't see anyone not go through security. Sacca and Williams declined to comment on their posts, but Williams said he assumed that with the Secret Service, "there's a lot going on behind the scenes that you don't see."

Two donors expressed concern about security screenings that preceded a meeting they and about 100 others had with Obama in a tent behind the Lincoln Memorial before the Sunday concert.

One said he was waved through with a camera that had no batteries despite warnings that it would have to be operational. The two said they later walked unattended by the president's motorcade and watched other donors lean on Obama's limousine, posing for pictures.

By the next morning, when Biden spoke to donors at a Northwest hotel, one said it had become clear



## Appendix C

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that ticket checks had become "a joke." He said he flashed a handful of coveted gray passes to gain access to the VIP room with Biden but brought in an extra guest.

Steve McKeever, founder of the music label Hidden Beach Recordings and another bundler, said he was never concerned about security because many in the groups were acquainted with one another, as well as with some Secret Service agents from past gatherings. "It wasn't like people won a lottery ticket to be there," he said.

*Staff researcher Meg Smith contributed to this report.*

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

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[<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/29/AR2009012903894.html>]

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### Relevant Articles and Correspondence

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Figure 2. February 2, 2009, Congressional Request

BRINLEY G. THOMPSON, MISSISSIPPI  
LEGISLATOR

PETER T. REED, NEW YORK  
SARNOFF MEMBER



One Hundred Eleventh Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2009

The Honorable Richard L. Skinner  
Inspector General  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Inspector General Skinner:

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The Committee has become aware of information that raises significant concerns about the Secret Service's protective operations and security procedures relating to the Inauguration of President Obama. Specifically, the *Washington Post* last week described several security vulnerabilities relating to screening operations, protection perimeters, and information sharing which may have directly impacted the safety of the President and other Secret Service protectees<sup>1</sup>. Among other things, the *Post* reported that half-a-dozen supporters who underwent security screening and were seated within close proximity to Secret Service protectees "mingled with public crowds but were never again checked for firearms or explosives". Similarly, guests screened at an off-site location reported that their secure buses could have been infiltrated because there were no mechanisms to prevent unscreened persons from joining previously screened guests and boarding a secure bus into the innermost security perimeter. Making matters worse, guests detailed their concerns in real time on popular public forums such as *Twitter.com* – which were accessible by anyone with an Internet connection – with apparently no response from the Secret Service.

The *Post* further noted that security standards were lax in less open forums. As a rule, the Secret Service conducts criminal history checks on guests and staff that will be in close proximity to a protectee at intimate functions. More than one event attendee, however, told the reporter that they had brought along un-vetted guests into isolated areas that may have required credentials and preclearance. This allegation, which arguably is a violation of accepted policy, is a cause for alarm. If these accounts are true, it would appear that any enterprising terrorist or other criminal could have easily infiltrated even the most secure areas on Inauguration Day with potentially disastrous results.

In the interest of ensuring the integrity of Secret Service protective operations, and the security of our nation's leaders, I request that you audit the Secret Service protective security plans for the Inauguration; investigate and identify any deficiencies in

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<sup>1</sup> Aaron Davis, "Security Around Obama: Alarms Some VIP Donors," *Washington Post*, January 30, 2009

**Appendix C**  
**Relevant Articles and Correspondence**

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**February 2, 2009**

Page 2

security operations, including but not limited to communications and information sharing between security personnel, deviations from security plans, as well as any mitigating circumstances or justifications; and if appropriate, critique these operations and make recommendations to strengthen Department of Homeland Security and Secret Services practices.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent matter. Please direct any questions to Cherri Branson, Chief Oversight Counsel for the Committee on Homeland Security, at (202) 226-2616.

Sincerely,



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Bennie G. Thompson

Chairman

Committee on Homeland Security

BGT/1

[<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2009/02/03/ST2009020301448.html?sid=ST2009020301448>]

## Appendix C

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Figure 3. February 4, 2009, *Washington Post* Article

# The Washington Post

## Lawmaker Wants Inaugural Events' Security Checked

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Obama Donors' Remarks Drive Action

By Aaron C. Davis  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Wednesday, February 4, 2009, A04

The chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security has requested an independent audit of security surrounding Barack Obama's inauguration after several top donors said they were not screened for firearms or explosives between the time they left a public street and entered areas near the president.

Six donors told The Washington Post last month that after a security screening early Jan. 20, they mingled with the general public before being allowed to board "secure" buses that took them to seats near Obama at the Capitol and later to bleachers next to him at the White House.

In a letter Monday to Homeland Security Inspector General Richard L. Skinner, Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) said the allegations raised "significant concerns" about inaugural security led by the Secret Service. He asked Skinner to "investigate and identify" any security deficiencies.

"It would appear that any enterprising terrorist or other criminal could have easily infiltrated even the most secure areas on Inauguration Day with potentially disastrous results," Thompson wrote.

Ed Donovan, a spokesman for the Secret Service, said the agency has been working with D.C. Police, the U.S. Park Police and other law enforcement agencies since the inauguration to complete a review that is standard for the agency following major events.

"Although we have not directly received the information referenced in the Washington Post article, we will look at the areas reported," Donovan said in an e-mail.

He also said the agency will cooperate with any inquiry conducted by the inspector general's office. "Although protection agencies from around the world come to us for guidance, we have never relinquished our commitment to learn and improve upon our security protocols," Donovan wrote.

The audit would be the Homeland Security inspector general's first probe of Secret Service operations involving protection of a president, aside from technical audits of computer systems in 2005.

In an interview, Thompson said he wants someone with broad authority to review all aspects of local, state and federal homeland security efforts to determine whether breakdowns occurred and, if so, whether they were the responsibility of the Secret Service or another agency.

"This is not to point blame," Thompson said, noting that without a single arrest on Inauguration Day, security apparently was effective.

Thompson said he was also concerned that VIP guests were quick to post online accounts of what they viewed as lax security.

## Appendix C

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Donors faulted the security for private meetings with Obama and Vice President-Elect Joe Biden in the days before the inauguration. One said ticket inspections were so lax that no one noticed when, at a breakfast the morning before the inauguration, he brought in a guest whose name had not been submitted for a background check to take pictures with Biden.

Donovan said the Secret Service neither issues nor checks tickets. It is the responsibility of the event host to handle such matters, he said.

Donors questioned the ticket checks at events hosted by the Presidential Inaugural Committee. Josh Earnest, former communications director for the committee, said the ticket checks were for crowd control, not security.

Asked about The Post report during a TV interview Monday, Obama expressed confidence in the Secret Service. "These guys and gals are unbelievably professional," he said. "They know what they're doing. And I basically do what they tell me to do."

[[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/metro/pdf/Skinner.pdf?sid=ST2009020301448&s\\_pos=list](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/metro/pdf/Skinner.pdf?sid=ST2009020301448&s_pos=list)]

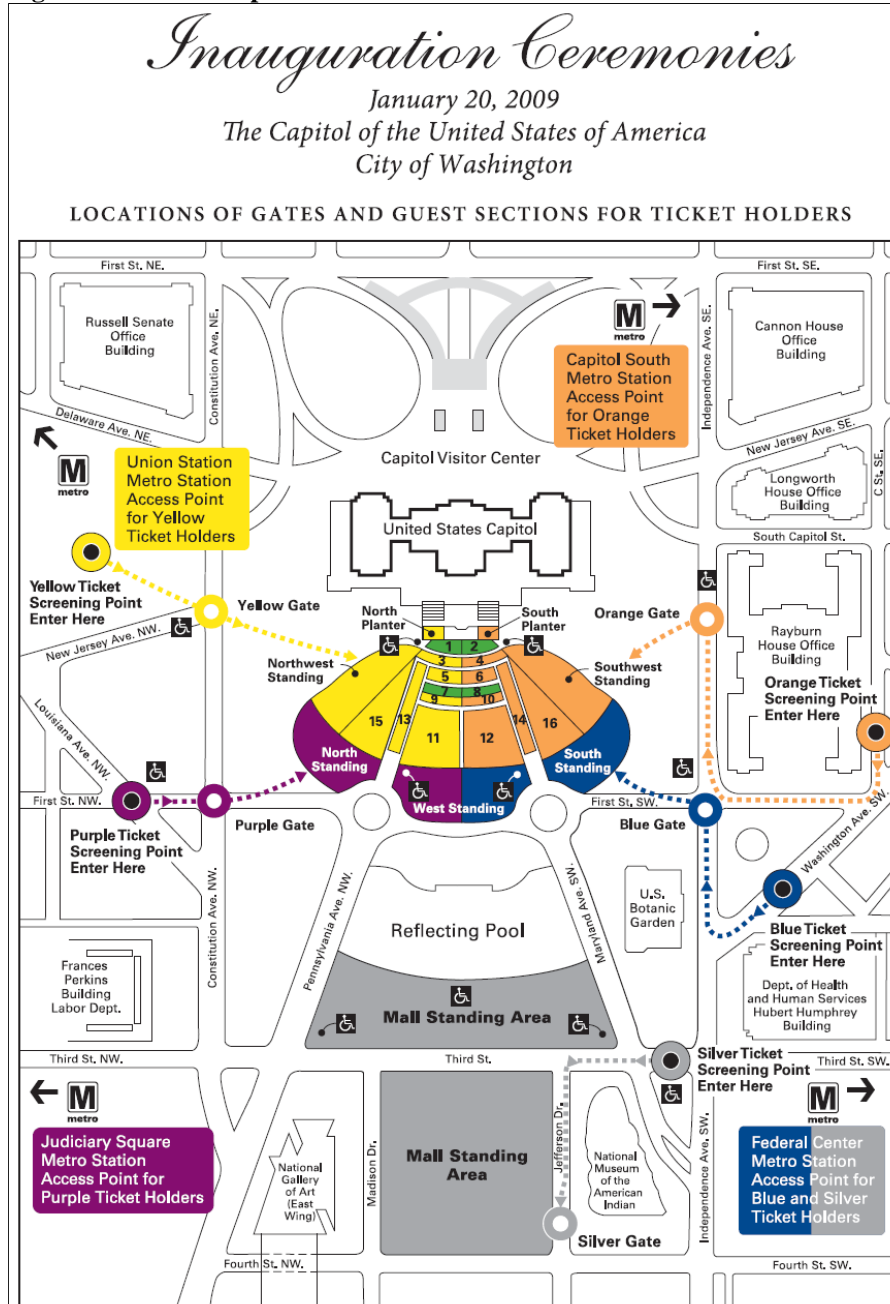
Appendix D  
Relevant Graphics

Figure 1. JCCIC Orange Ticket



Appendix D  
Relevant Graphics

Figure 2. JCCIC Map of Reserved Ticketed Areas



Please Note: All Entrances Accessible

Entrance will only be granted at Gate indicated on Admission Ticket.

Please Note: Screening Entry Points have been updated, especially Silver – Mall Standing Area.

Ticket holders will be required to pass through security screening.

Packages, coolers, thermos bottles, mace, pepper spray, weapons, and supports for signs or posters ARE PROHIBITED.

## Appendix D Relevant Graphics

Figure 3. Renaissance Hotel Offsite (Donor VIP Movement From Hotel to Buses in Red)

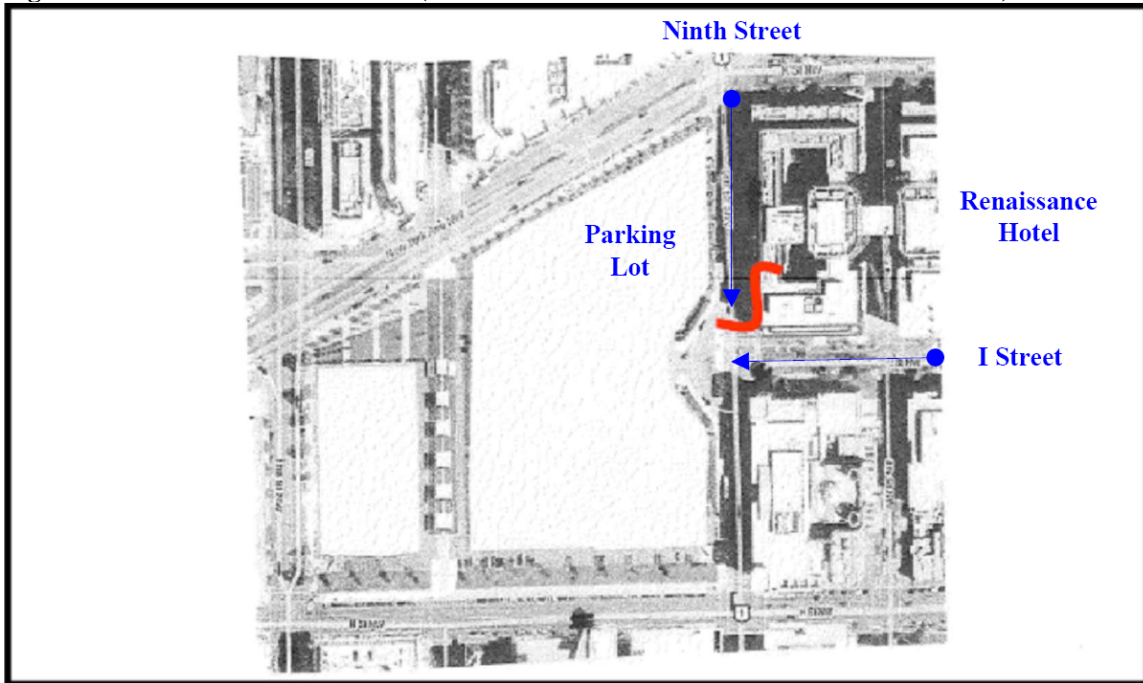


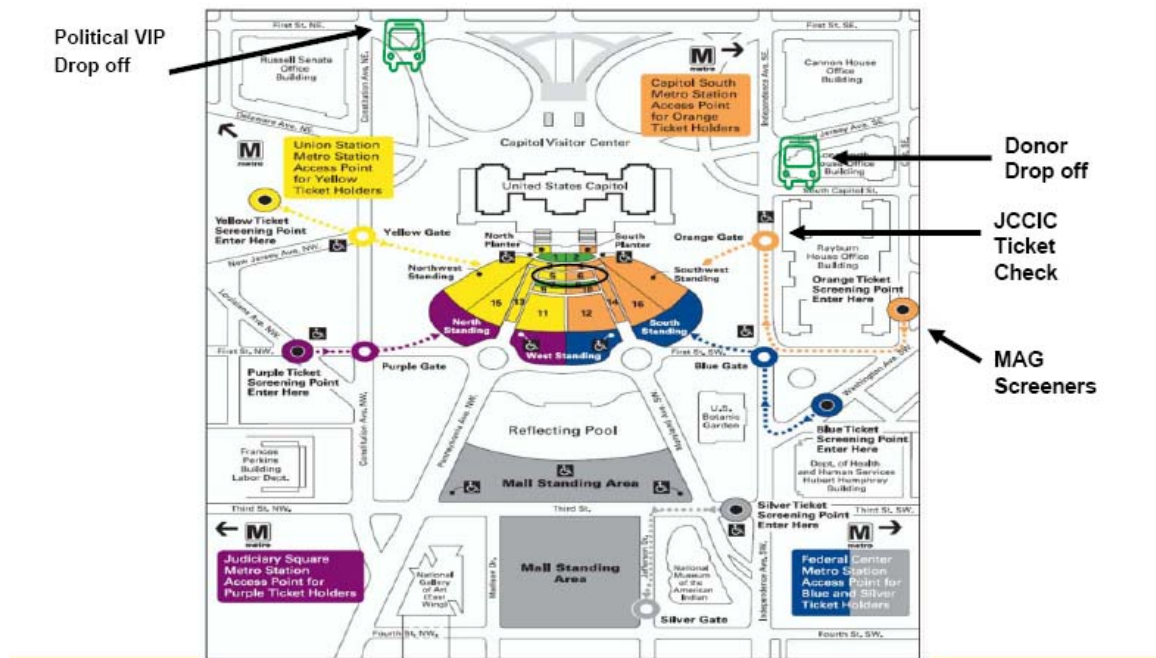
Figure 4. Donor VIP Tweets on Inauguration, From Twitter

<p><b>SACCA at 6:45</b></p> <p>In school, I often got in trouble for bad language. Now, a couple million people are gathering to see Obama swear. Will he drop an F-bomb? 8:12 AM Jan 20th from Tweetie</p> <p>It is way too cold for fist-bumping. Fingers could be lost. 6:52 AM Jan 20th from Tweetie ↗</p> <p><b>We were thoroughly x-rayed, then walked across a public street in the open. WTF?</b> 6:45 AM Jan 20th from Tweetie ↗</p> <p>If blaring pre-6am sirens equal security, this city is untouchable. 5:57 AM Jan 20th from Tweetie</p>	<p><b>WILLIAMS at 6:55</b></p> <p>Have been waiting on a bus for about 45 minutes. The sun has come up. Not moving. At least it's warm. 7:29 AM Jan 20th from Tweetie ↗</p> <p>RT @sacca: <i>We were thoroughly x-rayed, then walked across a public street in the open. WTF?</i> [True. And yikes.] 6:55 AM Jan 20th from Tweetie in reply to Sacca</p>	<p><b>LIN at 7:44</b></p> <p>If I got this sooner, wd have slept &amp; snuck in. RT @sacca: <i>We were thoroughly x-rayed, then walked across a public street in the open. WTF?</i> 7:44AM Jan 20th from txt</p>
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# Appendix D Relevant Graphics

Figure 5. Donor VIP Seating; Sections 5 and 6 Circled



**Appendix E**  
**Major Contributors to This Report**

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Douglas Ellice, Chief Inspector  
Lorraine Eide, Senior Inspector  
Susan Fischer, Inspector  
Harry Horton, Senior Special Agent

**Appendix F**  
**Report Distribution**

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