

# Assessing Presidential Stalkers and Assassins

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A considerable body of research on stalking has helped in our understanding of what motivates and characterizes this behavior. The stalking typologies that have evolved fall short, however, when we attempt to use them to understand persons who have pursued the President of the United States. Because of this shortcoming, the author (a consultant to the United States Secret Service) has had to develop a unique framework for understanding persons who have threatened, approached, or attacked Presidents of the United States or have appeared at the White House without invitation. The author has developed a technique that integrates psychiatric diagnosis with a conceptualization of what is known about others who have acted similarly. By codifying their actions based on motive, presence or absence of delusions, active psychosis, and intent to do harm, the author presents five descriptive categories that he suggests capture the various motivations of presidential stalkers and assassins and characterize the clinical context in which the behavior occurs.

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There is no more visible celebrity in American society than the President of the United States. Understanding the unique nature of presidential celebrity and the psychopathology of the stalkers and assassins who target the occupant of that office is essential when performing a forensic psychiatric evaluation of these individuals.

The considerable research that exists on stalking has helped to codify our understanding of what motivates and characterizes this behavior. Stalking typologies have evolved from this work along two lines: empirical (derived from systematic evaluation of stalkers and/or their victims) and theoretical (derived from experience in reviewing the literature and/or direct experience with a population of stalkers).<sup>1</sup> These typologies fall short, however, when one at-

tempts to use them to understand the unique circumstances of stalkers who pursue the President of the United States.

There is limited published scholarship on presidential stalkers and assassins. Meloy and colleagues<sup>2</sup> have provided a comprehensive review of existing research on persons who have approached, attacked, or assassinated public figures in the United States. The earliest research narrowly focused on those who threatened the President or who appeared at the White House seeking an audience. These publications<sup>3–5</sup> do not include considerations of persons who actually made assassination attempts. Thus, that work showed an obvious lack of information that would permit a predictive connection between the threatener's ideations and the act. Only Rothstein's studies offered a profile of "presidential assassination syndrome,"<sup>6–8</sup> and it subsequently did not withstand psychometric scrutiny.<sup>9</sup>

Clarke<sup>10</sup> proffered an alternative approach in his archival study of 17 American assassins and would-be assassins. Influenced by the work of psychologist M. Brewster Smith,<sup>11</sup> he described four types of assassins based on a consideration of the cultural, political, and social context of their behavior and the immediate situation or circumstance in which the behavior occurred.

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Dietz *et al.*<sup>12</sup> authored the only published study of threats and approaches to celebrities that exists today. They also published the first systematic study of threatening and otherwise inappropriate letters to members of Congress.<sup>13</sup> Neither focused on the Presidency.

Finally, the Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project (ECSP) carried out by Fein and colleagues<sup>14</sup> provided a behavior-based case review and analysis of “the thinking and behavior of all 83 persons known to have attacked or approached to attack a prominent public official or figure in the United States from 1949–1996,” thereby dispelling many myths about assassination. This project operationalized how the idea of assassination developed into lethal or near-lethal action by focusing on motive, target selection, plan of attack, and communications and whether mental illness or life circumstances contributed to the assassination interest or behavior. However, no typology was offered, as the Project concluded that there is no profile of an assassin.

In my work as consultant to the U.S. Secret Service on protective intelligence cases, it is my clinical assessment that aids in their ultimate determination of who poses a potential risk to a protectee. In performing evaluations of persons who have either threatened or attacked presidents, pursued them without nefarious intent, or appeared at the White House without invitation, I have searched for a framework that would allow me to integrate my diagnostic opinion of an individual subject with a conceptualization of what is known about others who have acted similarly. None of the existing models described has been satisfactory.

As physicians, we are trained to identify signs and symptoms. As psychiatrists, we become disciplined in gathering clinical information and considering it in the context of a diagnostic nomenclature. My need for having a similar frame of reference for this work should then be apparent.

In an effort to integrate what has been learned from the existing pool of research and taxonomies in this area, and influenced by the typology of stalkers published by Mullen and colleagues<sup>15</sup> and the efforts of my colleagues at Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (GAP),<sup>1</sup> I have searched for a framework that would codify the actions of the presidential stalker based on motive, the presence or absence of delusions, active psychosis, and the intent to do harm. By drawing on the ECSP<sup>14</sup> and integrating the

Clarke<sup>10</sup> classification, with modifications, I have conceptualized five descriptive categories in an attempt to capture the various motivations of presidential stalkers and assassins and the clinical context in which their behavior occurs: Resentful, Pathologically Obsessed, Infamy Seeking, Intimacy Seeking, and Nuisance or Attention Seeking.

I have found this classification to be of great assistance in my clinical assessment of risk when consulting for the Secret Service and in considering treatment options, case management, and prevention strategies when providing opinions to the United States Attorney, the Federal Public Defender, or private counsel. I believe this method may also be useful for forensic clinicians when developing a therapeutic plan for the treatment of such persons in their care.

In this article I will compare my proposed classifications with those that have been described previously. By use of historical examples, I will demonstrate how this classification is applied. In addition, I will draw on cases in which I have been involved in an effort to show the practical utility of the system.

### Comparing and Integrating the Existing Classifications

Clarke's<sup>10</sup> contribution of a taxonomy of American assassins and would-be assassins provided a much-needed framework to conceptualize their behavior. He suggested the following (Ref. 10, pp 14–16):

- Type I assassins view their acts as a probable sacrifice of self for a political ideal.
- Type II assassins are persons with overwhelming and aggressive egocentric needs for acceptance, recognition, and status.
- Type III assassins are psychopaths (or sociopaths) who believe that the condition of their lives is so intolerably meaningless and without purpose that destruction of society and themselves is desirable for its own sake.
- Type IV assassins are characterized by severe emotional and cognitive distortions that are expressed in hallucinations and delusions of persecution and/or grandeur. As a rule, their acts are mystically “divinely” inspired—in a word, irrational or insane.

Through his contextual considerations of the cultural, political, and social circumstances that appear to motivate the assassin, Clarke<sup>10</sup> moved us closer to

a more thorough appreciation of this complex behavior. His work has been criticized because of its small sample size and the absence of any direct investigative or interview data on the subjects.<sup>2</sup> I believe its practical limitation is his exclusive consideration of attackers.

The ECSP<sup>14</sup> represents a change in our understanding of the thinking of presidential stalkers and assassins. Its conceptual methodology is useful in assisting law enforcement in preventing assassination. By focusing on the “threat assessment of targeted violence” with emphasis on the pathway a subject would take toward a target, rather than focusing on demographics or clinical status alone, the ECSP advanced the understanding of “approach” behavior first introduced by Dietz *et al.*<sup>13</sup> The ECSP behavior-based case study analysis provides an operational perspective that has greatly influenced my approach to risk assessment in any clinical setting.

The ECSP has sharpened the protective intelligence investigations of the Secret Service. Agents are driven by a fundamental notion that systematic threat assessment can prevent attempts to attack persons who are protectees.<sup>16</sup> Notable among the Project’s findings is the fact that motive and target selection are inextricably related. Targets are selected primarily on the basis of motive and accessibility and are often arrived at by a process of elimination.

Eight major motives were identified by the ECSP (Ref. 14, pp 185–6):

- To achieve notoriety or fame;
- To bring attention to a personal or public problem;
- To avenge a perceived wrong; to retaliate for a perceived injury;
- To end personal pain; to be removed from society; to be killed;
- To save the country or the world; to fix a world problem;
- To develop a special relationship with the target;
- To make money;
- To bring about political change.

While we have learned much about the thinking and behavior of presidential stalkers and assailants from the ECSP, by design it offers little understanding of these individuals comparatively or collectively. The ECSP offers no typology. Rather, it cautions that there is no profile of the American assassin. Like Clarke,<sup>10</sup> its focus is only those who have attempted

**Table 1** Comparison of Clarke Typology and the Exceptional Case Study Project

Clarke	ECSP
Attackers only Typology	Attackers and approachers No typology
Offers some comparative understanding	Offers little comparative understanding
Focus on attempted and successful assassinations only	Focus on attempted and successful assassinations only
No White House cases	No White House cases

or successfully carried out assassination. Nor does it consider the so called “White House cases”—those who do not fit into either category but are still of protective intelligence concern—for example, individuals driven by their delusional thinking who travel across the country for the sole purpose of meeting the President.

Both Clarke and the ECSP provide useful reference points for approaching a clinical risk assessment in this area. Neither accomplishes that goal independently. In an effort to integrate these two constructs for diagnostic purposes, I have conceptualized the five descriptive categories mentioned earlier, with the intent of capturing the various motivations of presidential stalkers and assassins and the context in which they operate: Resentful, Pathologically Obsessed, Infamy Seeking, Intimacy Seeking, and Nuisance or Attention Seeking. These classifications are treated separately in the following sections.

### **The Resentful Presidential Stalker or Assassin**

While resentful stalkers represent a minority of general cases that arise in workplace settings,<sup>15</sup> they appear to account for a significant number of presidential stalkings and most of the attempted or completed assassinations. The stalking arises from a quest for retribution. Resentful presidential stalkers or assassins feel justified in their actions and driven by anger without delusions. Their targeting behavior develops from political disagreement, displaced rage, or perceived narcissistic injury. They are committed to eliminating the target to achieve retribution and not as a means of attaining a platform to make a grand statement or to attain fame. They feel justified in their actions to the point of righteous indignation. While they may have some paranoid personality traits, they do not evidence delusional thinking.

## Presidential Stalkers and Assassins

**Table 2** Five Descriptive Categories of Presidential Stalkers or Assassins

	Motive	Delusional Thinking or Active Psychosis	Harm Intent	Animus Toward POTUS*
Resentful	Retribution	None	Yes	Yes
Pathologically obsessed	Retribution or Personal gain	Persecutory or Grandiose	Yes	Yes (Retribution) No (Personal gain)
Infamy seeker	Political statement	None	Yes	Not necessarily
Intimacy seeker	Realization of fanaticized relationship	Erotomantic	No	No
Nuisance	To provide help to or seek help from the President	Grandiose, narcissistic, or dependent; may be actively psychotic	No	No
or Attention seeker	To see or be seen with the President	None	No	No

\*President of the United States.

### **The Pathologically Obsessed Presidential Stalker or Assassin**

Pathologically obsessed presidential stalkers and assassins are characterized by a severe psychosis of a persecutory or grandiose nature that places the President in peril due to a persistent resolve to do harm. Their delusions can often be characterized as divinely inspired or of idiosyncratic importance. Most often, they incorporate the unshakeable belief that the President is responsible for their life problems and therefore they seek redress for some imagined wrongful act. In those instances, their purpose in assassination may be seen as retributive.

In others, the psychosis is without any animosity toward the President or desire for retribution. Instead, assassination serves their intense narcissistic fantasies. Though they may resemble infamy seekers in their desire to attract attention, it is the psychosis that distinguishes them. Their focus is actually not the President but others for whom their actions are intended as a statement of love or disdain.

### **The Presidential Infamy Seeker**

Presidential infamy seekers are a special class of individuals whose presidential targeting is intended to make a grand political statement. Though not delusional, the intensity of their characterologic disturbance is often palpable. Their primary characterologic construct is antisocial. Political extremism is the common thread that binds these individuals together. It is their fanaticism and the willingness to sacrifice themselves at any cost for the cause that makes them so dangerous. Their intent to do harm is clear, but it is often only a means to an end and not necessarily the primary motivation for their actions.

While the act of attempted or successful assassination constitutes by definition a negative direction of interest, infamy seekers may not bear any animosity toward the target. They seek only the opportunity to act out their particular drama on the world stage.

### **The Presidential Intimacy Seeker**

Presidential intimacy seekers manifest the same characteristics as other intimacy seekers, as described by Mullen *et al.*<sup>15</sup> They desire to realize a relationship with a person they delusionally believe is already interested in or in love with them. Erotomantic delusions are pathognomonic of this classification. Primarily seeking fulfillment of a fantasized sexual intimacy, an imagined platonic friendship, or a role as a special confidant can also be the primary motivation. Intimacy seekers persist with their approaches and attempts at personal contact, oblivious to any attempts to deter their advances. Their pursuit of the President can at times be reckless and unbridled, creating a “zone of risk” that extends beyond the delusional love object and places many others in jeopardy.

### **The Presidential Nuisance or Presidential Attention Seeker**

Nuisance cases include those who approach the President or appear at the White House gate driven by delusional thinking without having any intent to do harm. The individuals who make up these “White House cases” are often quite different from those reflected in the ECSP. They are usually experiencing a thought disturbance but have no nefarious intent. The nature of their delusional thinking appears far less paranoid and threatening. The reasons for the

visits, as stated by subjects, appear more grandiose, narcissistic, or dependent (seeking help for a problem) than a response to fear or anger with an intent to do harm or seek revenge.<sup>17</sup> It is the nature and character of their delusional thinking that attracts them to the President or the White House and therefore to the attention of the U.S. Secret Service.

The absence of nefarious intent separates them from resentful presidential stalkers, just as the absence of a fanaticized delusional relationship distinguishes them from presidential intimacy seekers. One might actually characterize these individuals as creating more of a nuisance than posing a threat of imminent danger.

Presidential attention seekers, by contrast, approach the President driven by the notice that it garners, whether in sole service to their narcissism and sense of entitlement or because the media attention provides personal financial benefit. They are not delusional. Generally these individuals have no history of violence. They do not make threats to persons or property, nor do they attempt to gain access or proximity to the President for nefarious purposes. At best, they can be characterized as “wannabes”—people whose primary desire is to see and be seen with the leader of the free world in a manner that attracts attention to themselves.

Whether the stalkers are seen as nuisances or attention seekers, agents on the scene must determine whether such individuals pose a threat to the President or other Secret Service protectees and/or whether their behavior suggests the need for emergency psychiatric evaluation.

### Case Examples

Consider the following case illustrations as demonstrations of how my proposed classification system works. Some of the cases are well-known historical examples and others are taken from my own files.

#### **The Resentful Presidential Stalker**

John Wilkes Booth was a fairly well known Shakespearian actor who hated Abraham Lincoln. He blamed Lincoln for the Civil War and the impending demise of the South. Outraged by the Union's rejection of a plan for prisoner exchange, Booth organized a group of co-conspirators and planned to kidnap Lincoln and hold him hostage in an effort to effect a better negotiating posture for the Confederacy.<sup>10</sup> However, his plan to capture Lin-

coln while he attended a play on March 16 or 20, 1865, was foiled when Lincoln changed his itinerary.<sup>10</sup>

Booth's planning evolved from abduction to assassination. In addition to President Lincoln, the target expanded to include Vice President Andrew Johnson, Secretary of State William H. Seward, and General Ulysses S. Grant. Booth hoped the turmoil created by eliminating the upper echelon of the Federal government would afford the Confederacy an opportunity to negotiate a settlement rather than to surrender unconditionally.<sup>10</sup> However, before the plan could be executed, General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

The now-furious Booth learned that the President and General Grant were planning to attend the evening performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theater in Washington on the night of April 14, 1865.<sup>10</sup> He mobilized his co-conspirators for a simultaneous attack that evening, assigning himself the task of killing Lincoln and Grant at the theater. George Atzerodt was to kill Vice President Andrew Johnson at Kirkwood House, the Vice Presidential residence. Lewis Powell and David Herold were assigned to kill Secretary of State William Seward at his home (Ref. 10, pp 34–5).

The events of that fateful evening did not quite go according to plan. Grant did not attend the play; Atzerodt made no attempt to kill Johnson; and Herold abandoned Powell, who stabbed and seriously wounded Seward but failed to kill him (Ref. 10, p 35). In the presidential box at Ford's Theater, Booth successfully delivered one shot to the back of the President's head. Lincoln sustained a mortal injury and died the next morning.

Booth meets the criteria of a Resentful Presidential Stalker, as he was driven by anger, sought retribution not fame, felt justified in his actions, and demonstrated no evidence of delusional thinking.

#### **The Pathologically Obsessed Presidential Stalker or Assassin**

Charles Guiteau was a self-proclaimed lawyer, theologian, and politician who wrote and delivered speeches on New York City street corners during the 1880 presidential election campaign. He developed the delusion that his speeches were responsible for Garfield's success in the presidential election, and as

a consequence he believed that he was owed a political patronage position.

In Guiteau's mind it was not a question of whether he would be appointed but where—Paris or Vienna—and most important—when! He began writing to President Garfield and Secretary of State James G. Blaine incessantly (Ref. 10, pp 204–5).<sup>18</sup> Guiteau often appeared unannounced at the White House seeking an audience with the President and Secretary. Despite his persistence, he was unsuccessful in convincing them of his responsibility for the President's success or of his value to the administration.

Rebuffed by the Secretary of State during an exchange in which he reportedly told Guiteau “never to bother me again with the Paris consulship for as long as you live!”<sup>20</sup> (Ref. 19, p 39), Guiteau's admiration turned to animosity. A despondent and narcissistically wounded Guiteau began to plan his assassination attempt.

He purchased a revolver and began stalking the President.<sup>10</sup> On the morning of July 2, 1881, he placed a package containing his writings at a nearby newsstand for intended delivery to the press and entered the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station (Ref. 19, p 42). He shot and mortally wounded President Garfield at the train station, firing twice when the President had his back turned.<sup>21</sup> He was subsequently tried for murder of the President of the United States.

Despite a 72-day trial of the century, involving a “Who's Who” of American psychiatry of the time presenting testimony that he was insane, Guiteau was found guilty and sentenced to death. On June 30, 1882, he was executed by hanging after reciting a hymn he had written for the occasion.<sup>10,19</sup>

In retrospect, the evidence presented of Guiteau's insanity included more than his grandiose behavior and expansive delusions. His correspondence both before and after the fateful day provides a trail of his deteriorating mental state. Prior to the instant offense, his writings characterized his intent, “This is not murder. It is a political necessity” (Ref. 10, p 207). Later he added, “The President's nomination was an act of God. The President's election was an act of God. The President's removal is an act of God” (Ref. 10, p 207).<sup>18</sup>

Guiteau was psychotic, held idiosyncratic delusions, blamed the President for his current life circumstances, and sought retribution. He meets the

criteria for a Pathologically Obsessed Presidential Stalker.

John W. Hinckley, Jr. shot and wounded President Ronald Reagan on March 30, 1981, at the Washington Hilton Hotel as the President headed toward his limousine. Three other individuals were inadvertently struck by gunfire, among them Press Secretary James Brady, who sustained a debilitating head injury. Hinckley's belief that his actions would lead to fulfillment of his romantic delusions was an uncanny example of life's imitating art.

Hinckley had become fascinated with the 1976 movie *Taxi Driver*, in which actor Robert DeNiro played Travis Bickle, an alienated schizoid taxi driver who begins stalking a young woman who works for a senator-turned-presidential candidate. Failing to win the woman's affection, Bickle turns his anger toward the senator and begins methodically plotting his assassination, only to have his scheme foiled by the heavy presence of Secret Service agents. Bickle subsequently fixated on Iris, a young prostitute played by a little-known actress, Jodie Foster. In the film, Bickle becomes a hero when he rescues Iris from her pimp in a violent gun battle.

Hinckley became obsessed with Travis Bickle and began to emulate him in dress and manner. Most important, he became obsessed with Jodi Foster. Hinckley traveled to New Haven in August 1980 to make contact with Foster, who was then a freshman drama student at Yale University. He left poems and letters in her mailbox and spoke to her twice by telephone, recording the conversations.<sup>22</sup>

Unsuccessful in his efforts to win Foster's affection, Hinckley began stalking President Jimmy Carter on the campaign trail in the belief that assassinating the President would bring Foster closer to him. Hinckley continued leaving correspondence for Foster. Concerned that he was despondent and suicidal, his parents arranged an appointment with a psychiatrist.<sup>22</sup> Although he saw the psychiatrist occasionally over the next four months, Hinckley never disclosed appearing at a presidential campaign, his plans of assassination, or his love of Foster.

In November 1980, Hinckley's interest shifted from President Carter to President-elect Reagan, as evidenced by Hinckley's traveling to Reagan's transitional residence in Washington, DC. He also made several trips to New Haven and left more notes for Foster. Finally, on March 30, 1981, one day after he checked into the Park Central Hotel in Washington,

Hinckley wrote a letter to Jodi Foster outlining his assassination plan.<sup>22</sup> He then went to the Washington Hilton and attempted to execute it.

John W. Hinckley, Jr.'s psychosis was without any animosity toward the President or desire for retribution. Instead, his planned assassination serviced his intense narcissistic fantasies. Though he may resemble an infamy seeker in his desire to attract attention, it is the psychosis that is distinguishing. His focus was actually not the President but another, for whom his actions were intended as a statement of love. As such, he too meets the criteria for Pathologically Obsessed Presidential Stalker and Assassin.

### **Presidential Infamy Seekers**

Francisco Martin Duran was an avid supporter of antigovernment ideologies who saw gun control as a "big brother" conspiracy. He was more angry with the government and the President for signing the assault weapons ban of 1994 than for failing to reconsider his court-martial and dishonorable discharge from the United States Army. He left work on September 30, 1994, without contacting his family or employer, and began his cross-country journey to Washington, DC, with an arsenal of weapons.<sup>23,24</sup> Before leaving Colorado, he told several people of his intention to kill the President and gave one person a card bearing his signature, which he said would be valuable some day.

En route, he visited the clock tower at the University of Texas in Austin, the site where Charles Whitman killed 13 and wounded many others, and the book depository in Dallas, Texas—the site where Lee Harvey Oswald is believed to have fired on President Kennedy.<sup>25</sup> He stayed at various hotels in the Washington area between the 10th and the 29th of October, including the Washington Hilton, the site of the attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan.<sup>25</sup>

On October 28, 1994, Mr. Duran wrote a letter to his wife that included a will. On the same date he was in a hotel room watching television and saw a news report that the President was arriving in Washington the next day.

On the morning of October 29, wearing a trench coat and carrying his shotgun and an SKS assault weapon, Duran headed for the White House. He walked up and down Pennsylvania Avenue, passing the various White House entrances for tourists for several hours.<sup>26</sup>

While Duran was standing in front of the north side of the White House fence in the early afternoon, two eighth-grade students on a field trip ran to a nearby spot along the fence. Pointing toward a small group of men dressed in dark business suits in the vicinity of the north portico of the White House, one of the excited students remarked, "That man looks a lot like Bill Clinton," to which his friend replied, "Yeah, it does."<sup>26</sup> The man they saw, Dennis Basso, was on a tour of the White House and did bear some resemblance to the President.

Hearing this, Duran fired at least 29 shots at the White House. Eleven of the rounds struck the White House facade. One bullet penetrated a window in the Press Briefing Room in the West Wing.<sup>27</sup> Miraculously, though there were people on the north grounds at the time, no one was injured in the attack.

Duran began running east along the fence while continuing to fire in the direction of the White House.<sup>27</sup> When he stopped, apparently trying to reload a second 30-round clip, a passer-by tackled him. Soon thereafter, Secret Service agents arrived to subdue Duran and confiscate his rifle.

A search of Duran's truck after his arrest revealed a rifle, ammunition, and a nerve gas antidote.<sup>24,26</sup> Several documents were found, including a letter in which he had written, "Can you imagine a higher moral calling than to destroy someone's dreams with one bullet?"; a road atlas on which he had written "Kill the Pres."; a cover torn from a telephone book bearing a picture of President Clinton, which Mr. Duran had defaced by drawing a circle around Clinton's head and an "X" on his face; a handwritten document with the heading "Last will and words"; an order form for the book *Hit Man*; and several books about out-of-body experiences.<sup>24,26</sup>

When they searched his house and office, law enforcement agents found a business card on the back of which Duran had written "Kill all government offices [sic] and department heads," and assorted other pieces of antigovernment literature.<sup>23,26</sup>

Duran meets the criteria for Presidential Infamy Seekers because his actions targeted the President to make a grand political statement. Notably, when examined pretrial by a government expert, Mr. Duran's first question on introduction was, "Doc, are we going to be on *Hard Copy*?"<sup>28</sup> Duran's actions emerged out of a desire to become famous. Assassinating the President would attract attention to himself and his

cause. He exhibited extreme character pathology, not psychosis. His political zealotry was palpable.

### **Presidential Intimacy Seekers**

Ms. Doe first came to the attention of the U.S. Secret Service in the 1990's when she appeared at a presidential site with flowers that she intended to give to President Clinton. When interviewed, she spoke of a great affection for the President and indicated that she had sent many small gifts and letters to him in the past. At that time, after a full factual investigation was conducted by the Secret Service, she was deemed not to present a threat or danger to any protectee of the Service or to herself.

Subsequently, she returned to the presidential site and was again interviewed by U.S. Secret Service agents. This time she said that she loved the President and that she had returned with the hope of jogging with him. Ms. Doe said that had she known she would not be allowed to jog with the President, she would not have returned. Again, following an additional investigation, the Secret Service agents thought that she did not show any threatening attitudes, and no further action was taken.

Upon returning to her hometown, Ms. Doe repeatedly sent the President numerous letters expressing her love and affection, in addition to sending many small gifts—some of which she had purchased, others she had made—as tokens of her affection for him. It is believed that Ms. Doe made repeated visits to Washington, DC, in the hope of seeing and meeting the President.

Months later, Presidential Protection Detail agents observed a woman behaving strangely along a rope line as the President was shaking hands at a political fund raiser at a Washington, DC hotel. When the woman greeted the President, she was tongue-tied and acted somewhat bizarrely. It was noted that she broke into the receiving line and returned to a position that would allow her to shake the President's hand again.

Agents interviewed the woman and determined that she was Ms. Doe, who apparently had a legitimate ticket to attend the event. Her behavior was not deemed to be threatening to the President, and she returned to her hometown.

Over the course of the next several years, Ms. Doe began to change her appearance radically. She continued to gain legitimate entrance to presidential functions.

Finally, during a presidential visit to her hometown, Ms. Doe carried a cell phone while breaching the secure perimeter surrounding the presidential limousine. Entering a secure site with an object in hand that could have easily been mistaken for a weapon demonstrated the greater danger she posed to herself and others when her delusional thoughts became so intense that she could not control them. Ms. Doe was subsequently civilly committed to a hospital.

Presidential intimacy seekers manifest the same characteristics noted to be found among other intimacy stalkers. They desire to realize a relationship with a person they believe is already interested in them or in love with them. They persist with approaching and attempting personal contact, oblivious to any attempts to deter their advances.

Ms. Doe meets the criteria for an Intimacy-Seeking Presidential Stalker because she possessed a delusional love interest in the President. She sought fulfillment of a fantasized relationship and made repeated attempts at approach or contact. In so doing, she recklessly created a zone of risk, placing in jeopardy herself, as well as innocent bystanders.

### **Presidential Nuisances or Presidential Attention Seekers**

In 1991, Richard Weaver attended a prayer breakfast at the Washington Hilton Hotel. According to his Web site, Weaver was the founder and president of Spiritual Revolution Thru Christ, Inc., in Sacramento, California.<sup>29</sup> He mingled in the grand ballroom with senators and dignitaries, as is customary. What distinguished Mr. Weaver is that he managed to follow a VIP into the holding room of then-President George H. W. Bush and have a picture taken shaking hands with the President.

Richard Weaver had succeeded in meeting celebrities, sports figures, presidents, and other politicians with great ease for nearly three decades. He enjoyed the media attention and often used the photographs taken with celebrities to promote his ministry.

Three weeks before the 2001 inauguration of George W. Bush, Mr. Weaver reported that he felt a strong inner sense that God wanted him to deliver a message to the President: "Your miracle election is to remind you to stand for Christ daily without political compromise. Keep Christ first and God will give you another miracle election in four years."<sup>30</sup> Armed with the typed message on a laminated blue card and

a medallion bearing the image of former President George H. W. Bush, Mr. Weaver headed to Washington.

In an interview Mr. Weaver stated that, on the morning of Inauguration Day, he was given a blue standing-room ticket by a woman who had an extra one.<sup>30</sup> As he approached the entrance, he came upon a group of VIPs and overheard one of them talking about a special entrance.<sup>30</sup> Mr. Weaver's distinguished appearance and impeccable dress allowed him to blend in with the group as they entered the Capitol grounds.

Once inside, he asked a guard for directions to the nearest restroom. He was directed through a metal detector at the entry to a VIP seating area. Mr. Weaver claimed to have taken a seat only 20 rows away from the podium to hear the Inaugural Address. Following the ceremony, he walked into the Capitol and began to wander around upstairs.

When challenged by a U.S. Capitol police officer, Mr. Weaver said he was lost and searching for an exit. The officer escorted him to an exit that happened to be in proximity to the President's awaiting motorcade. Mr. Weaver presented Mr. Bush with the medallion and card.<sup>30</sup>

On February 6, 2003, Mr. Weaver gained entrance, again without invitation, to another prayer breakfast at the Washington Hilton. After clearing the magnetometers, he entered the ballroom and went from table to table socializing. When he happened on the table of a distinguished senator at prayer, he joined in and asked if he could be seated there. The senator agreed. The table was located in front of the stage where the President spoke. As the President came down a set of stairs leaving the stage, Mr. Weaver came from behind a rope line and stanchion, shook the President's hand, and handed him an eight-page typed "Message from God" about Iraq. When questioned by authorities, Mr. Weaver stated "I don't try to sneak in. I just go where I think God wants me to go."<sup>31</sup>

Mr. Weaver was not so successful during George W. Bush's second inaugural on January 23, 2005. Although he had previously told journalists that God made him "invisible and undetectable by security," he was apprehended at a checkpoint on First Street and Pennsylvania Avenue and never made it to the Capitol.<sup>32</sup>

Mr. Weaver was the quintessential example of a Presidential Attention Seeker. Narcissistic and

feeling entitled, he was driven by the need to be noticed. With no history of violence and having displayed no evidence of intent to do harm, he is best characterized as a "wannabe." He wanted to be seen, to be noticed, and to be in the presence of the President.

## Conclusions

Existing stalking typologies fall short when applied to the unique circumstances of those who pursue the President of the United States. The early research on presidential assassinations was hampered by small sample size and consideration only of those who threatened or those who appeared at the White House. Those studies did not examine individuals who actually made assassination attempts. That criticism, however, must be balanced with the reality that the number of presidential assassins is small. The contribution by Clarke<sup>10</sup> of a taxonomy of American assassins and would-be assassins provided a much-needed framework to conceptualize their behavior. By classifying American assassins and potential assassins with a contextual consideration of the cultural, political, and social circumstances that appear to motivate their behavior, we are led for the first time toward a more thorough appreciation of this complex behavior. However, this understanding, too, falls short because of a lack of consideration of individuals whose intent is not to do harm.

The work of Fein *et al.*<sup>14</sup> advanced the discipline by conceptualizing the research model as a prospective tool for protective intelligence rather than as a methodology for creating a nomenclature. In so doing, we are now able to apply what we have learned both to those who have made and those who may make a move on a presidential target. Their work dispelled many myths about assassination, and as a result we now recognize that there is no clear profile of an assassin. Furthermore, persons who pose a danger often do not threaten overtly. Mental illness only rarely plays a key role in assassination behavior. Its presence, however, increases the risk but does not necessarily predict or determine other behavioral and motivational risk factors that may be of greater importance and ultimately be potentially lethal.

This article has presented a framework that integrates what I have learned from evaluating presidential stalkers and assassins with the existing pool of research and stalking taxonomies. It is an attempt to categorize the actions of would-be and actual assas-

sins based on motive, the presence or absence of delusions and/or active psychosis, and the intent to do harm. The framework is one that should be familiar to physicians. It utilizes the signs and symptoms manifested by the subject and considers this information in the context of a diagnostic nomenclature. It has permitted me to provide a uniquely clinical perspective to the risk-assessment process when consulting with the U.S. Secret Service on Protective Intelligence cases.

By drawing on the ECSP<sup>14</sup> and integrating the Clarke<sup>10</sup> classification with modifications, I have conceptualized five descriptive categories to try to capture the various motivations of presidential stalkers and assassins and the context in which the incidents occurred.

I have found these categories to be of great assistance in the clinical assessment of risk when consulting with the Secret Service as well as considering treatment options, case management, and prevention strategies when providing opinions to the United States Attorney, the Federal Public Defender, or private counsel. They may also be useful when developing a therapeutic plan for treatment of such persons by forensic clinicians who are responsible for their care.

The question raised by this effort is whether such a classification system may be useful to others. Would, for example, the six other psychiatrists who consult nationally for the Protective Intelligence Division of the Secret Service find this system useful when conducting their clinical assessments? Are there practical applications for this model beyond protecting the President? Are there parallels between stalking and assassinations of other public officials and celebrities?

It would be important to subject this model to empirical review. Given the low base rate of assassination and attacks coupled with the nonpublic nature of the cases in which attempts have been prevented, the adequacy of sample size will always be a concern. Although there is a greater number of White House cases, they represent a distinct group. We may be left with a descriptive methodology as the only viable alternative.

The opportunity for encouraging continued collaboration between the Secret Service and academic psychiatry is exciting. For those entrusted with the task of protecting the life of the President of the United States and other protectees, the ultimate se-

curity decisions are daunting. In my work, a clinical frame of reference to assist the Secret Service in their work has been essential.

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