

Trump to bring private security staff to White House

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Several press accounts this week detail president-elect Donald Trump's intention to retain a private security staff upon occupying the White House, in addition to the United States Secret Service. Trump, who has already retained his private security details beyond the usual timeframe—most presidential candidates turn security work over to the Secret Service as soon as the opportunity is available—will be the first chief executive in American history to carry privately employed security staff into his presidency.

Over the course of Trump's presidential campaign and subsequent "Thank You" tour, his private security force served mainly to evict protesters in a bullying, demonstrative fashion. "Get 'em out of here" became a line that Trump rally attendees could generally expect to hear from the speaker's platform, and it was not infrequently met with applause, or even violence from Trump supporters themselves. There is an element of authoritarian and even fascistic showmanship in such occurrences that plays to Trump's reactionary social base.

There are presently three lawsuits involving 10 plaintiffs against Trump, the Trump Organization and associated security contractors alleging unnecessary and wrongful physical contact by these would-be White House security staffers.

A key figure in the security apparatus is Trump's personal bodyguard since 1999, Keith Schiller, a former New York City narcotics officer who boasts that he is no stranger to "putting my hands on people" and that he hires "big guys to do all the fighting." Schiller says he has a staff of more than a dozen in his employ. Filings with the Federal Elections Commission reveal direct payments to Schiller of \$181,000 between July 2015 and mid-November 2016.

Likewise, Trump's campaign paid for \$50,000 of

security services to KS Global LLC, a cryptic corporation registered anonymously in Delaware in October 2015, which carries Schiller's initials. On top of this, Trump paid over \$106,000 in the last four months of the presidential campaign to Black Tie Protection Services, also associated with Keith Schiller, and another \$28,000 to ASIT Consulting, owned by former FBI agent Don Albracht.

Yet another security outfit, XMark LLC, is the largest beneficiary of Trump campaign funds, weighing in at \$579,000 in payments. The company consists in part of former FBI agents Eddie Deck and Gary Uher, as well as former New York City cop Michael Sharkey.

In all, the Trump campaign spent over \$1 million for security services, dwarfing the Clinton campaign's \$360,000.

Aside from their high-profile, macho approach to executive security, the coterie overseen by Schiller is also marked by boorishness. *Politico* cites ex-Secret Service officers and security experts as taking a critical attitude toward Schiller, who tended to get in the way of protocol like protecting an evacuation route, and otherwise contributed to confusion between the Secret Service, local police departments and Trump's security personnel.

In addition, the companies associated with Schiller boast about their tactics, abilities and assignments, whereas the Secret Service generally refuses to disclose its methods in order to keep would-be attackers from dissecting and obviating their protocol, an elementary aspect of executive protection.

In the same *Politico* report, sources from the Trump transition team anticipate that Schiller will serve as the president-elect's "full-time physical gatekeeper," which is at least part of his role presently. Schiller "knows Trump inside and out" and "is kind of a

consigliere ... he knows all the players, all the properties.”

The word “consigliere”—popularized by the 1972 film *The Godfather*—reveals perhaps more than the Trump insider intended, underscoring the Mafia Don persona that so defines the billionaire-turned-president.

Federal law currently prohibits anyone from carrying firearms in a federal building, especially the White House, except for the Secret Service. It is unclear whether the incoming private security force will abide by this or not, nor is it clear what role Trump would have the Secret Service perform.

With or without pistols, the personal protection squad that will supplement the Secret Service in the Trump White House represents a noteworthy and authoritarian departure from bourgeois norms.

The question arises: what does Trump have so much anxiety about that the Secret Service—a federal detachment almost as old as the Civil War—could not protect him from? At the very least, the purported need for such a private auxiliary force reflects once more the degraded, personalist and authoritarian character of the Trump White House.

It may well mean more.

Tensions within the American deep state have reached an all-time high in the 2016 presidential election, with different factions supporting different policies—including the plotting of war with different countries, namely, Russia or China. This ruling class internecine war takes place in cloak-and-dagger fashion, as the allegations of Russian hacking and election interference make clear. See for example “Obama threatened war over alleged Russian election hacking”.

Trump alienated a substantial faction of the American military brass and Central Intelligence Agency with his criticisms of such foreign debacles as the Iraq war, however limited and insincere his remarks were. These forces, and others that tend to favor an escalation of tensions with Moscow, lined up squarely behind Clinton. More recently, the CIA has sought to validate the totally unsupported claims that Vladimir Putin ordered cyber warfare aimed at securing a Trump election victory.

In the other camp are elements favoring a confrontation with Beijing. Supporters of this tactic within the FBI pressured the agency’s director to

resurrect claims of Hillary Clinton’s email malfeasance in the final stretch of the 2016 election, without precedent, and without any legitimate law enforcement need to do so.

Viewed in this light, Trump’s selection of a personally loyal security staff over and above the norm for all preceding presidents recalls the Roman satirist Juvenal’s adage on imperial palace intrigue: who will guard the guardians themselves?



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