

# President Obama Literally in Gun Sights

The bullet-riddled tee shirt of President Obama posted brazenly on Facebook by seven semi-automatic gun toting men among them a Peoria, Ariz., police sergeant was much more than the by now standard non-stop litany of racist cartoons, depictions, web postings, and kooky loose talk threats against President Obama. The gun-toting men and the police sergeant were taking target practice on the president's likeness at an undisclosed desert locale. This is Arizona. The state where many legislators think it's ok to pack guns in the legislature, and for citizens to openly pack them in public. This is the state where former Arizona congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords was nearly killed in an assassination attempt, and where there's a wide body of respectable opinion starting with a finger in the face of the president by Governor Jan Brewer, that openly loathes the president's policies and in many cases him personally. The gun-toting men made a virtual public call for the gunning down of the president.

It comes against the backdrop of Secret Service reports that the rate of threats against the President Obama has increased 400 percent from the 3,000 a year or so under President George W. Bush. He receives dozens of assassination threats continuously, and that number has been steady before and during the campaign and



**THE LAST WORD**  
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increased after he took office. Federal law is very clear on Threatening the President of the United States. It is a class D felony under United States Code Title 18, Section 871. It consists of knowingly and willfully mailing or otherwise making "any threat to take the life of, to kidnap, or to inflict bodily harm upon the President of the United States."

The Secret Service has taken the threats against the president seriously and has diligently investigated every one of them. In a few cases, prosecutors have brought charges. But here is the problem, in fact several problems. How seriously do other public officials take them, especially in places like Peoria, Arizona? Peoria, Arizona, officials did not suspend the police sergeant pending review and investigation, let alone fire him or call for a prosecution of him or his gun toting pals. Their weak, duck and dodge response was at worst that he may have violated the police department's employee conduct

rules on the use of social media. There was no immediate response from Peoria, Arizona, Mayor Bob Barrett or Peoria, city council persons to calls for them to take action against the officer and men involved.

The Secret Service also has had other worries, namely about staffing. At one point, in 2010 there was a report that in a budget request the Secret Service was understaffed and under-resourced.

trail. This didn't ease the jitters over his safety. Several congressional members even then demanded that Secret Service officials provide all the resources and personnel they could to ensure Obama's and the other presidential candidates' security. They heard the whispers and nervous questions from his constituents about Obama's safety.

During the presidential campaign in 2008, the flood of crank,

right murder of JFK.

There is nothing shadowy or conspiratorial about what police sergeant Pat Shearer and his gun-packing friends in Peoria, Arizona, did. It was brazen and very open. The clueless Shearer for his part saw nothing inappropriate, let alone, dangerous, about what he did. He chalked it up to much ado about nothing or as he put it, he didn't think that shooting up a t-shirt with President Obama's face

on it "was that big a deal." It was more than a big deal. The target in their in gun sights was not a regular bullseye, a likeness of Howdy Dowdy, or a cactus plant. It was President Obama. Federal prosecutors should see it as the "big deal" that it is and bring charges.

The concern over Obama's safety has been intense since he announced he would seek the presidency in February 2007

The Service denied it and insisted it had the resources and personnel to meet any security issue involving the president. But the president's hands on meet the people routine during his non-stop road travels throughout the country is a constant challenge to any protective and enforcement agency.

The concern over Obama's safety has been intense since he announced he would seek the presidency in February 2007. He had the dubious distinction of being the earliest presidential contender to be assigned Secret Service protection on the campaign

crackpot, and screwball threats that promised murder and mayhem toward Obama continued to pour in. This prompted the Secret Service to tighten security and take even more elaborate measures to ensure his safety. This was especially important given the deep doubt and even paranoid suspicion that some blacks have that shadowy government agencies were complicit in the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr, and the fervent belief of millions of other Americans that the CIA or other government agencies were deeply complicit in the killing, if not out-

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