

July 16, 2024

THE FALLACY OF THE 130 YARD

“CHIP SHOT”

Since President Trump’s assassination attempt, I’ve been watching the news incessantly trying to learn all I can about it. A common theme from many of the so-called experts on all the news outlets is that a 130-yard head shot using an AR-15 is a “chip shot” that even a novice can make. I couldn’t disagree with that assessment more based on my experience.

It is not an easy shot at all, unless you’re shooting a static piece of paper under controlled circumstances with a rifle/optic that you have zeroed. There is a huge difference and difficulty factor associated with successfully engaging the human head at any distance while you are under great stress. The head tends to move more than any other large part of the human body. Unlike the static paper or steel reactive target, the real live human head is consistently presenting different exposures, locations, levels, and angles, making it much more difficult to hit than most people understand.

In this case, the assassin may have had some rifle shooting experience according to the news. Reportedly he went to range the day before the assassination attempt where I presume, he zeroed the rifle. What he failed to account for when his opportunity came was the level of stress he was going to be under as it begins to manifest with an adrenaline dump causing the heart rhythm and breathing rate to drastically increase. Then came the pain associated with the burning heat coming off that roof that he was crawling on coupled with the constant flow of sweat dripping in his eyes. Then there was the pressure from the cop who tried to stop him, telling him he had limited time left to accomplish his mission. Once he crested the roof line to where he could finally see President Trump, he likely realized that he had never fired from that sort of awkward position before. He also had no idea that in the time it took him to align his sights on President Trump’s head, make the decision to press the trigger, then actually press the trigger in conjunction with the one-tenth of a second it took that bullet to reach President Trump 130 yards away, that President Trump could move his head, in essence, saving his own life. All these factors played a role in the outcome of this event.

I would agree that a body shot on a minimally moving torso would be a chip shot at 130 yards, even with iron sights. I thank God that the assassin didn’t take body shots to increase his odds of hitting the intended target or he likely would have succeeded at seriously wounding or killing President Trump, assuming the President’s suit jacket is not made of rifle rated body armor.

The attempted head shot was no chip shot, even for well-trained precision rifle shooters. This is a very common situation for the police sniper to encounter in hostage rescue callouts. In fact, according to the American Sniper Association’s, Police Sniper Utilization Report, the average police sniper engagement is

only 56 yards, which is even more of a chip shot, right? If it's a body shot, yes, but if it must be a cranial vault shot, absolutely not, as the live moving human adversary's head is far more difficult to hit than static pieces of paper or steel found on the safe, controlled, flat training range.

There is a huge difference between one's ability to make body shots and one's ability to make head shots. There is a huge difference in one's ability to be a successful static flat range sniper where limited, if any realistic stress is ever induced, versus a true professional who master's the fundamentals and then continuously trains under extreme conditions, pressure and expectations to learn their true capabilities and limitations.

I've watched these things play out operationally and in training for 30 years in the sniping industry. President Trump is alive because this assassin was not a professional.

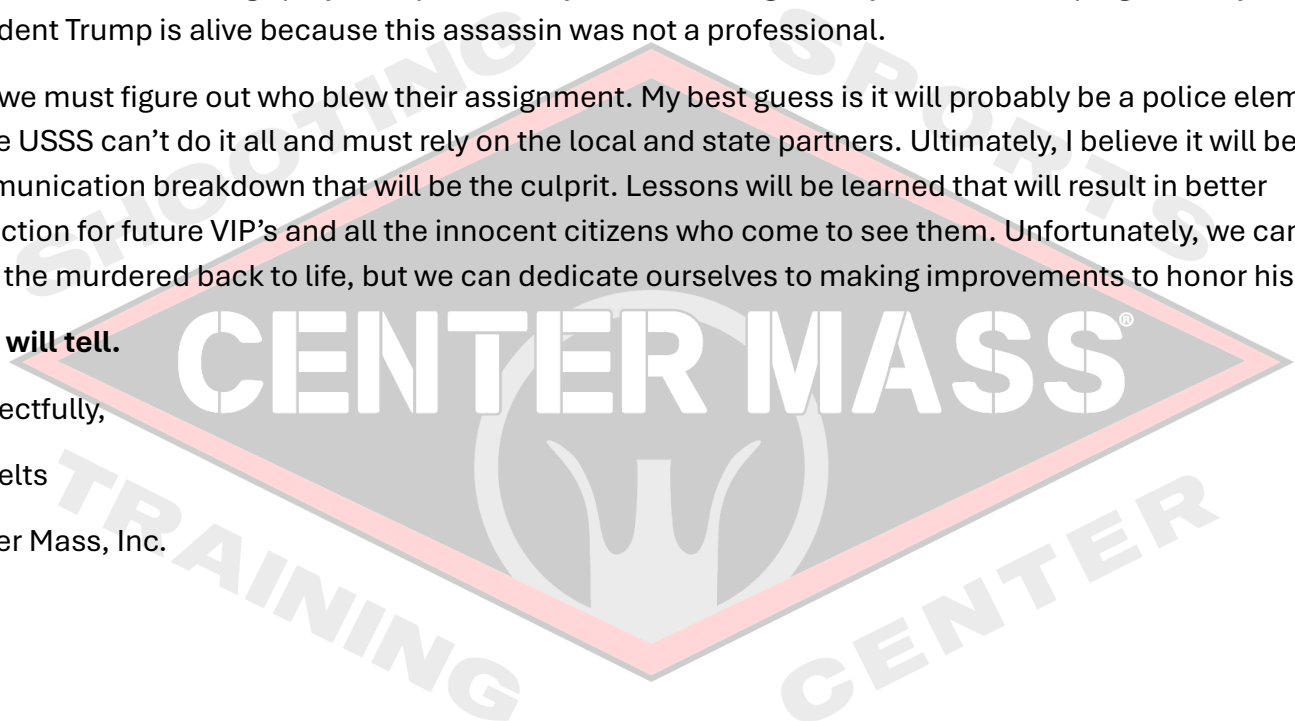
Now we must figure out who blew their assignment. My best guess is it will probably be a police element as the USSS can't do it all and must rely on the local and state partners. Ultimately, I believe it will be a communication breakdown that will be the culprit. Lessons will be learned that will result in better protection for future VIP's and all the innocent citizens who come to see them. Unfortunately, we can't bring the murdered back to life, but we can dedicate ourselves to making improvements to honor his life.

Time will tell.

Respectfully,

Jeff Felts

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