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What we know about the apparent Trump shooting attempt

18 September 2024

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Emergency services cordoned off the area outside the Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach on Sunday

Donald Trump was rushed to safety on Sunday after what the FBI termed an apparent assassination attempt at his golf course in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Ryan Wesley Routh, 58, was arrested and charged with firearms offences.

The incident comes almost exactly two months after a shooting at a Trump rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, which left the Republican nominee with minor injuries and killed a man in the crowd.

Here is what we know so far about Sunday.

How was the suspect spotted?

The incident unfolded at the Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, about 15 minutes from Trump's Florida residence, Mar-a-Lago.

A gunman was first seen by Secret Service agents, who were sweeping the course. Agents usually go one hole ahead to perform security checks, according to police.

The muzzle of a rifle - an SKS semi-automatic - was spotted sticking through the shrubbery that lines the course.

At the time, Trump was about 300-500 yards (275-460m) away from the spot.

An agent "immediately engaged" with the person holding the rifle, who fled, Sheriff Rik Bradshaw said. The suspect did not fire his weapon during the incident.

On 16 September, acting Secret Service director Ron Rowe said Trump was "across the course and out of sight of the sixth green" when the Secret Service agent opened fire.

At no point is the suspect believed to have had a clear line of sight to the former president.

Records show that Routh's phone had been in the area for about 12 hours, from around 02:00 to 13:31 local time, according to court documents and police officials.

How was the suspect caught?

Agents fired four to five rounds of ammunition upon seeing the gun muzzle.

The suspect dropped the rifle and fled in a vehicle, abandoning the weapon along with two bags, a scope for his rifle and a GoPro camera, Sheriff Bradshaw said.

A witness saw the gunman flee from the shrubbery to a black Nissan SUV, the sheriff said. The witness captured a photo of the vehicle and provided it to law enforcement.

* [Follow live: Latest updates and analysis on apparent assassination attempt](https://www.bbc.com/news/live/c8dp10d4vq2t)
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* [Trump thanks Secret Service - but is he protected enough?](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c6255djzj68o)
* [Who is Ryan Wesley Routh, suspect in Trump assassination attempt?](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3611zjjnd2o)

The suspect was arrested by police driving northbound on the I-95 highway after crossing into Martin County, roughly 61km (38 miles) from Trump's golf course.

The car was later determined to have licence plates belonging to a 2012 Ford that had previously been reported stolen.

Who is Ryan Routh?

From Martin County Sheriff Office

Ryan Routh, in picture released Monday by sheriff's office

Routh has an extensive criminal history dating back to the 1990s.

In 2002, he was convicted in Greensboro, North Carolina, for possession of a fully automatic machine gun - characterised as a weapon of "mass death and destruction".

In March 2010, he was convicted in North Carolina of multiple counts of possession of stolen goods.

In 2019, the FBI also received a tip that Routh was a felon in possession of a firearm. The unverified tip was passed on to local law enforcement in Honolulu.

He visited Ukraine after Russia's full invasion and tried to recruit volunteers to fight for Kyiv. The International Legion of foreign fighters said he was never a member, and one volunteer stated he was a hindrance during his visit.

Getty Images

Officials shared images of the suspect's belongings - what appear to be bags hanging from a fence next to a rifle

What happened to Trump?

Trump - who was not injured - said a day after the shooting that "everything was beautiful, nice place to be, and all of a sudden we heard shots being fired in the air".

He said the Secret Service knew "immediately" it was gunshots and they grabbed him before "everybody just got into the [golf] carts, and we moved along".

"I was with an agent and the agent did a fantastic job, there was no question that we were off that course,” Trump said.

The gunshots turned out to be from an agent firing at Routh, Trump said in the livestream.

"The Secret Service did a great job, everybody did a great job,” he said later in the interview.

Real estate mogul Steve Witkoff, who was with Trump at his golf course on Sunday, echoed the former president.

"I saw the Secret Service do exactly what they're supposed to do, which was get right on top of the president," he told Good Morning America.

"The Secret Service was whisking him out of there, getting him back to the club house, as he's the first priority," Witkoff said.

Has there been any political reaction?

The former president has sought to blame President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris - his rival in November's election - for the attempt.

"Their rhetoric is causing me to be shot at," Trump said.

The White House said both Biden and Harris had called Trump to convey their relief that he was unhurt.

Leaders from the bipartisan congressional task force set up to investigate the 13 July assassination attempt in Pennsylvania said they were also thankful the former president was not harmed, "but remain deeply concerned".

The task force has requested a briefing with the Secret Service.

What happens next?

Routh appeared in court for a hearing that lasted less than 10 minutes a day after his arrest.

It was not an arraignment - meaning he did not enter a plea - but the charges against him were read in court. They included possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and possession of a firearm with an obstructed serial number.

He will appear in court again next Monday.

Palm Beach County's state attorney, Dave Aronberg, told US media that Routh could face "a lot of time in prison". The charges made against him carry a maximum term of 20 years in jail.

The FBI is now leading the investigation.



1:44

Watch: Ros Atkins on…the apparent Trump assassination attempt

North America correspondent Anthony Zurcher makes sense of the race for the White House in his weekly [US Election Unspun newsletter](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-68093155). Readers in the UK can [sign up here](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsletters/zgmn46f). Those outside the UK can [sign up here](https://cloud.email.bbc.com/US_Election_Unspun_newsletter_signup?&at_bbc_team=studios&at_medium=Onsite&at_objective=acquisition&at_ptr_name=bbc.com&at_link_origin=azurcherarticle&at_campaign=uselectionunspun&at_campaign_type=owned).

[Trump rushed to safety and suspect held after man spotted with rifle](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3rllnd1pypo" \t "_self)