

# Capitol Hill shooter was stalking President

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Russell Eugene Weston, Jr., the man who killed two Capitol Police officers and wounded a passerby in the July 24 shooting rampage at the U.S. Capitol, was on a Secret Service watch-list because of prior threats to President Bill Clinton. According to Secret Service director Lewis Merletti, Weston was seen in Lafayette Park, across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, six hours before he stormed the Capitol, suggesting that his prime target was the President.

One of the witnesses who saw Weston in Lafayette Park is *New York Times* White House correspondent John M. Broder, who was interviewed by the Secret Service the next morning. Broder was seated on a park bench when he was approached by Weston, who told him that “the storm cloud of war” was gathering over Washington, and that millions of people would die “because of the people you put in that house.” Merletti told reporters that he is convinced, based on the eyewitness reports, that Weston was “casing” the White House for a possible attack, and that he went to Capitol Hill after he realized he could not get into the White House grounds because of high-level security.

In July 1996, Weston had showed up at the Langley, Virginia gate of CIA headquarters and harangued guards there for several hours, with wild fantasies, including that he and President Clinton were clones, that Clinton killed President John F. Kennedy, and that Weston was, himself, a brigadier general who had invented a time machine. According to the *Times*, “Mr. Weston also sent the agency a job application.”

In April 1996, the Secret Service initiated an assessment of Weston, based on reports from police in Montana, where Weston was living, that he had made veiled threats against the President. After conducting two interviews with Weston, and developing a psychological profile of him, the Secret Service concluded that he did not represent an immediate threat to the life of President Clinton, and placed him on a low-grade computerized watch list. (Only several hundred people at any given time are listed as “Category Three” threats, which authorizes the Secret Service to maintain ongoing tracking of their activities and whereabouts, and bans them from access to the White House or any Presidential events.)

However, Weston apparently continued to voice violent anti-government and anti-Clinton views, and, as a result, was committed to the Montana psychiatric hospital in Warm Springs on Oct. 11, 1996.

The Helena *Independent Record* interviewed a former employee at Warm Springs, Jerry Swihart, who described his discussions with Weston, while the two men were working in the hospital warehouse. He said that Weston told him he had been hospitalized “for writing threatening letters to President Clinton. . . . He’d say things like, ‘I’ve got the dirt on him, but if I tell you, Clinton will get me.’ . . . His concentration would keep getting back to that focal point about Clinton and the government. He was real anti-government. I don’t remember him ever talking about much other than that.”

Weston was released from the hospital on Dec. 2, 1996, on condition that he return to his family’s home in Valmeyer, Illinois, south of St. Louis, and receive treatment at a mental health center in Waterloo, Illinois.

## Parallels to Hinckley

According to the Helena paper, Weston was arrested only once, on Aug. 7, 1991, for criminal sale of dangerous drugs; however, Weston was never prosecuted, and no formal charges were ever pressed. But family members and associates confirm that Weston was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic and placed on medication in the mid-1980s. According to a former business associate in an unsuccessful gold-mining venture, Weston became an anti-government fanatic after a 1988 dispute with the U.S. Forestry Service.

Weston lived within 20 miles of convicted Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski. So far, there are no indications that Weston had any links to Kaczynski, or was tied to any of the militia or radical environmentalist groups that have proliferated in the Northwest. He maintained a diary, which Federal authorities have not yet found. The FBI did confiscate a file cabinet of documents that Weston maintained at his parents’ home, that may shed light on the killer’s ties.

Weston’s father confirmed to the media that his son had been at the family home on the day before the shootout, and that he had thrown his son out of the house after his son had gone on a rampage and killed more than a dozen cats with a shotgun. Russell Weston, Sr. confirmed that his son had taken his .38 caliber Smith & Wesson special.

When Weston opened fire inside the Capitol, his aim was deadly accurate. One former high-ranking Secret Service official observed to *EIR*, “The parallels to the Hinckley profile are stunning.” John Hinckley shot President Ronald Reagan in March 1981, as the President was leaving the Washington Hilton Hotel. Like Weston, Hinckley had been under psychiatric care and medication prior to the incident. *EIR* discovered that several psychiatrists who had treated Hinckley just prior to the shooting had been involved in intelligence work, and had specialized in personality disorders that produced irrational violence, and also left people susceptible to “programming.” The Weston case, like the Hinckley case, provokes the question: Were these men programmed “Manchurian candidates”?