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Intruder raced through White House

Fence jumper is said to have made it much deeper into building

BY CAROL D. LEONNIG

The man who jumped the White House fence this month and sprinted through the front door made it much farther into the building than previously known, overpowering one Secret Service officer and running through much of the main floor, according to three people familiar with the incident.

An alarm box near the front entrance of the White House designed to alert guards to an intruder had been muted at what officers believed was a request of the usher's office, said a Secret Service official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The officer posted inside the front door appeared to be delayed in learning that the intruder, Omar Gonzalez, was about to burst through. Officers are trained that, upon learning of an intruder on the grounds — often through the alarm boxes posted around the property — they must immediately lock the front door.

After barreling past the guard immediately inside the door, Gonzalez, who was carrying a knife, dashed past the stairway leading a half-flight up to the first family's living quarters. He then ran into the 80-foot-long East Room, an ornate space often used for receptions or presidential addresses.

Gonzalez was tackled by a counterassault agent at the far southern end of the East Room. The intruder reached the doorway to the Green Room, a parlor overlooking the South Lawn with artwork and antique furniture, according to three people familiar with the incident.

Secret Service officials had earlier said he was quickly detained at the main entry. Agency spokesman Edwin Donovan said the



Secret Service officials had said that Omar Gonzalez was quickly detained at the main entrance.

Graphic: How far did he get?

See how Omar Gonzalez allegedly made it into the East Room. **A4**



BILL O'LEARY/THE WASHINGTON POST

Sightseers last week on the Ellipse. The Secret Service is reviewing its procedures and has added an additional layer of temporary fencing around the White House in the wake of recent security lapses. ■ For video on the agency's recent troubles, go to wapo.st/SecretService.

office is not commenting during the ongoing investigation of the incident.

Breaches of the White House fence have become more common, but most jumpers are tackled by Secret Service officers guarding the complex before they get even a third of the way across the lawn. Gonzalez is the first person known to have jumped the fence and made it inside the executive mansion.

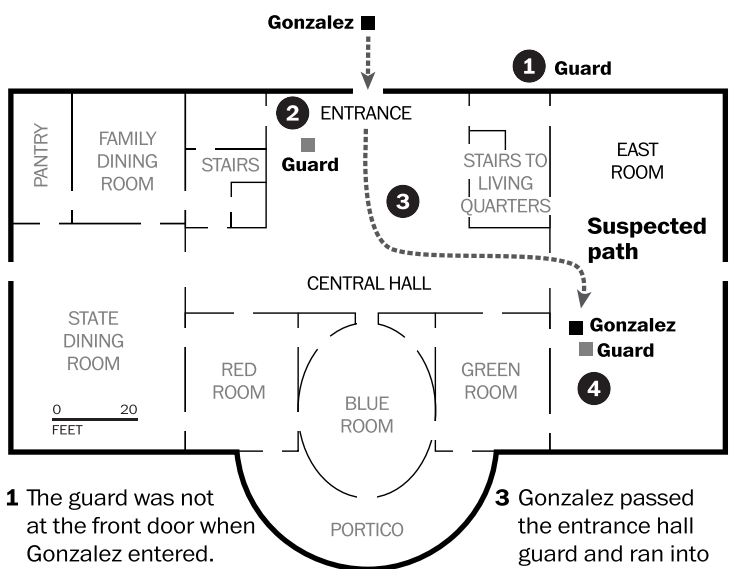
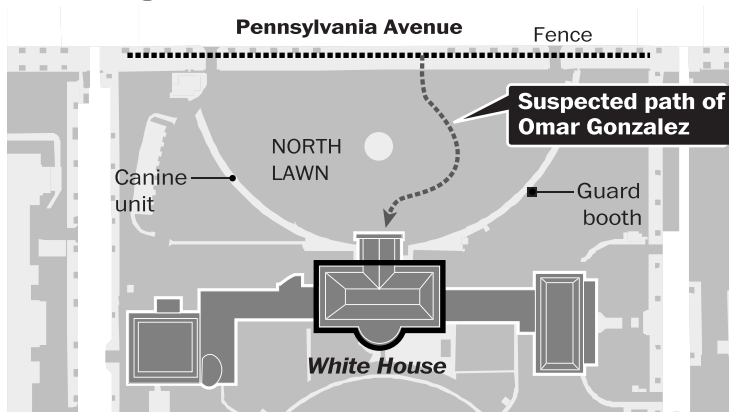
Secret Service Director Julia Pierson has said the breach was “unacceptable” to her, and on Friday she briefed President Obama on her plans to shore up security.

Pierson is expected to face tough

questions about the Gonzalez incident Tuesday at a hearing of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. The hearing is likely to cover a number of security lapses by the agency, including new revelations published over the weekend by The Washington Post about the failure to identify and properly investigate a 2011 shooting attack on the White House.

The more detailed account of this month's security breach comes from people who provided information about the incident to The Post and whistleblowers who contacted Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), chairman of the oversight panel's

Eluding security in the White House



- 1 The guard was not at the front door when Gonzalez entered.
- 2 An alarm box that would have alerted the guard inside was muted.
- 3 Gonzalez passed the entrance hall guard and ran into the East Room.
- 4 Gonzalez was tackled in the East Room.

Source: Washington Post reporting and sources

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because the White House usher staff, whose office is near the front door, complained that they were noisy. A Secret Service official told The Post that the usher's office was concerned the boxes were frequently malfunctioning and unnecessarily sounding off.

The alarm boxes, which officers call "crash boxes," are key pieces of the agency's first-alert system, according to former agents and officials. If officers spot an intruder, they are trained to hit the large red button on the nearest box — sending an alert to every post on the complex about the location of an incursion and piping sound from that location to other boxes around the property.

"If true, the fact that crash boxes were muted to avoid being 'disruptive' is not due to a lack of resources or an insufficient number of checkpoints or barriers," Chaffetz said.

He called the incident a "failure of leadership" by the

Secret Service.

"The agency needs a solution that goes deeper than more fences and more people," Chaffetz said. "It must examine what message is being sent to the men and women who protect the president when

subcommittee on national security.

Chaffetz said he plans to ask Pierson how an alarm meant to alert officers to intruders could be silenced or turned down. The congressman said two people inside the agency told him that boxes were silenced

their leader sacrifices security to appease superficial concerns of White House ushers.”

The new revelations follow accounts provided to The Post last week detailing how Gonzalez’s ability to enter the White House reflected a failure of multiple levels of security at the compound. The agency relies on these successive layers as a fail-safe for protecting the president and the White House complex.

In this incident, a plainclothes surveillance team was on duty that night outside the fence, meant to spot jumpers and give early warning before they made it over. But that team did not notice Gonzalez. There was an officer in a guard booth on the North Lawn. When that officer could

not reach Gonzalez, there was supposed to be an attack dog, a specialized SWAT team and a guard at the front door — all at the ready.

The dog was not released, a decision now under review. Some people familiar with the incident say the handler probably felt he could not release the dog, because so many officers were in pursuit of Gonzalez and the dog may have attacked them instead.

Since the incident, the Secret Service has added an additional layer of temporary fencing while the agency reviews its procedures.

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Alice Crites contributed to this report.