



Cop protecting presidential motorcade caught sleeping by ABC7

By Chris Papst

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For a police officer in D.C., there is possibly no greater assignment than protecting the president of the United States. But the 7 On Your Side I-Team found one officer who apparently didn't find that job very exciting.

The presidential motorcade is one of the most famous and recognizable motorcades in the world, drawing long lines of passionate spectators most everywhere it goes. But in early March, as a procession was rushing President Obama down Suitland Parkway, 7 On Your Side caught one officer catching some shut-eye.

Her badge read Officer A. White. Her engine was on. So were her blue roof lights. After observing her for a few minutes, ABC7 knocked on the window and woke her up. Startled, her eyes popped wide open. She then rolled down the wrong window. On the second try, she rolled down the correct one.

We asked her if she was on duty. In an apparent haze, she answered no. We asked if she were on break. She responded, "Something like that."

"I'm on a post right now. But, I'm not asleep," she added, contradicting her previous statement that she was not on duty. When pressed about her eyes being shut, she stated, "No, they were not."

Officer White, visibly groggy, then asked, "What's going on?" ABC7 informed her that we were in the area shooting a different story and noticed her taking a nap. She again refused the premise: "No, and I'm not taking a nap," she said softly.

A short time later, the president came through with Officer White directing traffic.

"It's disturbing," Metropolitan Police Chief Cathy Lanier told the I-Team. ABC7's video has become the focus of an internal investigation.

"We have policies that specifically address an officer's conduct while on a detail or a post. It will be addressed," added Lanier.

But this is not the first time a D.C. cop was caught sleeping. A passerby snapped a picture of another officer sleeping in a squad car in 2012. We never learned if he was disciplined. And it's likely we'll never know if this officer will be either.

"This is not about keeping information from the public," said Delroy Burton, the chairman of the D.C. Police Union. "These are personnel matters."

Burton says Officer White might be disciplined. But due to D.C. law and employee privacy rules, we'll never know. It won't be made public.

When asked if the public just has to trust the appropriate disciplinary measures will happen, Burton replied, "Yes, you don't surrender your rights when you become a police officer."

Tim Lynch, with the CATO Institute, sees it differently.

"How do we know if they are doing a good job if we can't tell how problematic officers are being dealt with?" he asked.

He believes a lack of transparency creates skepticism about police and can lead to a dangerous culture.

"When police officers know these things will not come to light, it sometimes creates a situation where bad officers do not fear being caught. It is a problem," added Lynch.