

amBUSHed Part II - City says Secret Service towed for expired tags

By Stephen Janis, *Investigative Voice*, March 22, 2009,

A vehicle used by Jenna Bush's Secret Service detail was impounded and towed because it had expired license plates, Baltimore officials have revealed. Department of Transportation spokeswoman Adrienne Barnes contradicted statements she and other city officials made Friday that the vehicle was towed because of unpaid parking tickets. "It was the expired tags that resulted in the tow, not the parking citations," Barnes said Saturday, responding to several questions from *Investigative Voice* about the nature of the citations.

Officials initially said the vehicle was impounded and towed for several non-moving violations, but the revelation that it had expired tags left city officials little choice but to tow, Barnes said.

Barnes also said city officials are not planning to provide permanent spaces for the Secret Service vehicles. *Investigative Voice* first reported Friday morning that Bush's Secret Service vehicle had been towed.

The South Baltimore neighborhood where Bush lives with husband Henry Hager is notoriously short of parking spaces, said John Robinson, a resident of nearby Federal Hill.

"Generally we have one and a half to two cars registered for every available space in the neighborhood, and that doesn't include visitors," he said. "It's a simple supply and demand problem."

Robinson said Bush and her Secret Service detail had worked with neighborhood leaders to ensure as little disruption as possible.

"They kept us informed and were extremely friendly. They really tried to be as gracious and unobtrusive as possible."

City Councilman Bill Cole said the shortage of parking spaces in the area meant city parking agents were justified in towing the vehicle.

"I think it is a good thing that the city towed the vehicle; we have a serious shortage of parking spaces," said City Councilman Bill Cole, whose 11th district borders the neighborhood that Bush has called home for about a year.

"Everyone should be treated the same when it comes to traffic laws, and everyone should have to pay their tickets."