

“This Could Be Serious”

Interviewee: Ashley Estes Kavanaugh

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Project: George W. Bush Oral History

Ashley Estes Kavanaugh, personal secretary to President George W. Bush, was working in the White House on September 11, 2001. She describes how Secret Service agents swiftly escorted Vice President Dick Cheney to the White House bunker. Kavanaugh recalls realizing the magnitude of the event.

Ashley Estes Kavanaugh: I remember the Vice President came in. His office is very nearby. I heard a bump in the Oval Office, and no one goes in the Oval when [the President] he's not there. We would go in every once in a while and pick up papers, but we didn't go in unless we had a true purpose, and didn't let other people go in. They had to check in with us, and it was a privilege to go in. I heard a bump and thought, *What is that?*

I looked and saw the Vice President with the Secret Service agents. To me, it looked like they were almost lifting him, like underneath his arms and scooting him along, and he was going to the PEOC [Presidential Emergency Operations Center], I guess, which was still foreign to me. I assumed there was something, but I wasn't sure what was going on, except that they definitely were moving fast and it was not a routine thing. That was when it occurred to me that this was not an accident, that this could be serious.

End of excerpt.

Interview with Ashley Estes Kavanaugh, September 22, 2015, George W. Bush Oral History Project, Presidential Oral History Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia. URL: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/ashley-estes-kavanaugh-oral-history>