

Gatecrashers shook hands with Obama at state dinner

A new revelation that a celebrity-seeking couple who sneaked in uninvited into a state dinner shook hands with President Barack Obama and possibly Prime Minister Manmohan Singh too has prompted fresh questions about the seriousness of the security breach.

A White House photograph released Friday shows Michaele Salahi, wearing a gold-accented red sari, clasping her hands around Obama's right hand as her smiling husband, Tareq, looks on. In the photo, a smiling Manmohan Singh is seen standing next to the president in a reception line at Tuesday's dinner in his honour.

As a White House spokesman made the disclosure, an embarrassed Security Service, charged with protecting the president and visiting dignitaries, acknowledged Secret Service agents did not follow protocol at a security checkpoint.

'The Secret Service is deeply concerned and embarrassed by the circumstances surrounding the State Dinner on Tuesday,' the agency's director Mark Sullivan said Friday.

Although the Salahis went through magnetometers and other levels of screening, 'they should have been prohibited from entering the event entirely', Sullivan said. 'That failing is ours,' he said.

The investigation continues and 'appropriate measures have been taken to ensure this is not repeated', the agency said.

Rumoured to be a part of 'Real Housewife of D.C.', a TV show set to debut next year, Michaele Salahi made news Tuesday night as she and hubby Tareq showed up at the dinner.

The Salahis' photos posted on Facebook show them with celebrities, including Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr, Oscar winner composer A.R. Rahman, Pepsico's CEO Indra Nooyi and deputy chief of Indian mission in the US, Arun Singh.

'I was honoured to be invited to attend the First State Dinner hosted by President Obama and amp; the First Lady to honour India,' Michaele Salahi wrote on her Facebook page.

'WOW is all I can say. What a fantastic night! Honoured to be there,' she wrote in an e-mail to the Washington Times. 'I was really in love with the warmth and the feeling of us being comfortable, like we were at home.'

'I loved the presence of the military and how organised the evening was and flowed so beautifully! I am always impressed how the president remembers us by name. I don't know how he does it!'

The couple has been in close proximity to Obama in the past, photos show, raising fresh questions about how they have managed to get so near to the president, according to CBS.

One photo, apparently taken in the days before Obama took the oath of office, shows the Salahis in a group shot with Obama and some of the musicians who performed at an inaugural concert at the Lincoln Memorial, including Fergie and will.i.am.

'Lots of my dear friends here including, President OBAMA with MICHAELE, my husband Tareq, The Black Eyed Peas, Fergie, Will.i.am and amp; Randy Jackson, formerly with JOURNEY the Rock Band who I LOVE!, and now Judge on American Idol,' the caption says.

Other photos show the Salahis in the empty, glass-enclosed box from which the Obamas watched the concert and, according to the caption, 'backstage with the Secret Service at the Lincoln Memorial during the Presidential Inauguration'.

Meanwhile, FOX News questioned Michaela Salehi's claims that she was a former cheerleader for the Washington Redskins and she once modelled for Victoria's Secret, saying her resume as a Virginia socialite is increasingly looking like a fantasy.

A spokesperson for Washington Redskins told FoxNews.com Friday it's never heard of Salehi, while one for Victoria's Secret said she did not model for the company.

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