



May 19, 2025

**Chairman Dale Strong AL-05
Emergency Management and Technology Subcommittee
Homeland Security Committee**

Thank you, Chairman Strong, Ranking Member Kennedy, and the honorable members of the Emergency Management and Technology Subcommittee for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing.

My name is Jeremy Hammond, and I have the honor of serving the sixteen member institutions of the Southeastern Conference as Assistant Commissioner. I am the Conference liaison to the event management, operations and facilities departments on our member campuses. I lead our efforts to produce the SEC Football Championship, NCAA Championships hosted by the Southeastern Conference, and support our team at various other events.

Prior to the SEC, I held several roles spanning venue management (Georgia Dome), tour management & promotion (WWE), and most recently as Vice President of Live Events at an event management and public safety consulting firm (Ingress Events).

I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective on the pressing public safety challenges facing mass gathering events, and particularly those unique to college athletics. I come to you today not only as someone involved in the day-to-day logistics of managing public events, but as someone deeply invested in safeguarding the environments where friends and families come together to celebrate traditions, community, and competition. However, we cannot share those experiences without the assurance that we can enjoy them in safe, well-managed environments.

Just as the rapid advancement of technology and weaponry has evolved global conflicts, the same can be said for the threats we must protect against at our favorite sporting event, concert, festival or convention.

My message today is not one of doom and gloom. As cities across the United States prepare to host the World Cup and the Olympics over the coming years, there is no group of professionals better prepared to plan for, manage, and mitigate challenges than those we call friends and colleagues here in this country.

The World Cup and the Olympics are the two largest international events in existence. They present a provocative and highly visible target for bad actors. However, as my counterparts here today will agree, large public events with high threat profiles are produced 365 days a year in this country. Whether in metropolitan cities or small college towns, college athletics welcomes fans week after week, from kickoff in late August to the last out in May.

Chairman Strong from Alabama can attest, in the SEC we like to say “It Just Means More”. During Saturdays in the fall, our campuses grow to the populations of a mid-size city. In 2024, five SEC schools averaged 100,000 fans in their venues at home football games. Accounting for schools in other leagues, that number grows to eight. It is also routine that campuses host 50,000-75,000 additional fans who take part in the fanfare around the stadium with tailgating and other activities. Nowhere else in the world do you see that volume of fans in such consistency.

If you follow college athletics, you know we love top 25 rankings. In a list of the largest sports venues (by capacity), college football in America accounts for 8 of the top 10 globally. Yet, rarely do any of these events register on the SEAR rating system higher than a 4 or 5 – meaning they have limited national importance to require federal interagency support.

I work with my colleagues at our member institutions to identify emerging challenges to their operations and I’d like to share a few of those with you today.

- Cost Management: with a consistently evolving threat picture, the tactics and tools of the trade are rapidly advancing. With that comes extreme growth in expenditure just to maintain the status quo.
- Staffing: to activate a security deployment that is in line with national standards, public safety officials on campuses routinely draw from surrounding city labor pools to supplement staffing needs. Spending on law enforcement personnel averages several hundred thousand dollars per game for SEC schools.
- UAS (Drone) Threat: we are encouraged by the efforts of both the Senate and the House to introduce legislation that would allow federal agencies to deputize local officials with the authority to mitigate drone threats with proper training and advanced technology. The proliferation of drones in modern warfare has exacerbated concern for this threat at full stadiums across the country.
- Vehicle Mitigation: as we experienced on January 1, 2025 in New Orleans as fans prepared to enjoy the Sugar Bowl as part of the College Football Playoff, a bad actor with a vehicle has become a hallmark of modern crowd attacks. Campus environments are full of soft targets at tailgates and team walks surrounding the stadium.

- Intelligence Sharing: It is critically important that our public safety officials on campus continue to receive and share important intelligence information from and with state and federal agencies.

In closing, as this committee evaluates the role of the federal government in supporting the host efforts for large public gatherings, I'd respectfully request that we remember the schools, venues, and promoters hosting large gatherings on a nightly and weekly basis throughout the calendar year. We are encouraged by the work of this committee and the collaboration and communication that will usher in progress.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Hammond
Assistant Commissioner
Southeastern Conference

**United States House of Representatives
Homeland Security Committee
Emergency Management and Technology Subcommittee
May 21, 2024**

**Opening Statement of
John Junell
Chief Security Officer, Live Nation Entertainment, Inc.**

Chair Strong, Ranking Member Kennedy, other Members of the Emergency Management and Technology Subcommittee, I'm John Junell, Chief Security Officer at Live Nation Entertainment. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the critical safety and security considerations in the live entertainment industry.

2024 marked a historic milestone for live music—it was the industry's biggest year to date. Artists toured the globe, and fans showed up in record numbers. Live Nation hosted more than 54,000 events, including 137 festivals, welcoming more than 151 million fans. 2025 is already shaping up to surpass last year's benchmarks – with more stadium shows scheduled than ever before, and the demand for both festivals and concerts growing at an unprecedented pace.

As the scale and complexity of live events grow, we are advocating for security measures to enhance as well. As the Chief of Security at Live Nation, I am responsible for leading the company's security program working in close contact with local and federal authorities to help keep fans, artists, and workers safe. Our commitment to safety is unwavering—we've continuously advanced our protocols and technologies, a dedication that was recognized through our receipt of the Department of Homeland Security's SAFETY Act Designation Award. Yet, there are limits to what we can achieve on our own, particularly when it comes to the emerging and rapidly escalating threat posed by unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). It's important to emphasize that Live Nation, as a private entity, does not have the legal authority to mitigate

drone activity in airspace, nor can we require our local law enforcement partners to acquire and use the necessary surveillance systems or counter-UAS technologies to prevent unauthorized activity. This limitation underscores why it is critical that more events fall within the scope of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued temporary flight restrictions (TFRs).

With the continued rise in domestic drone usage—highlighted by the FAA's recent report that the number of registered drones has surpassed 1 million¹, a roughly 160% increase since 2019's 385,000 reported²—and in light of recent high-profile incidents that have made national headlines, it is clear that an expansion of TFR authority is urgently needed. Strengthening these protections is essential to ensuring public safety and preserving the integrity of large-scale events. With that context in mind, I'd like to highlight several key areas where we believe Congress can take further action.

Congress took an important step in the right direction with the passage of Section 935 in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. Live Nation was proud to be among the foremost industry advocates for Section 935, which expands the FAA's authority to issue TFRs for drones at large public gatherings, including stadium concerts with at least 30,000 attendees, and festivals with 100,000 people. Enactment of Section 935 marked progress in protecting our events from airborne threats. However, more work remains to ensure the provision is effectively implemented and to further enhance its scope to broaden protections for fans, performers, and event personnel at live events across the country.

¹ <https://www.faa.gov/node/54496>

² https://www.faa.gov/sites/faa.gov/files/data_research/aviation/aerospace_forecasts/FY2020-40_FAA_Aerospace_Forecast.pdf

To maximize the impact of Section 935, it's essential that the FAA, state/local law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders across the country are fully aware of this new authority and equipped to utilize it. Clear communication, interagency coordination, and proactive outreach are critical to ensuring that TFR coverage for drones are authorized in a streamlined and timely fashion. We support a seamless TFR drone coverage application process by collaborating with our law enforcement and venue partners to reach out to federal agencies and request a TFR on our behalf. Even as the producer of a show or festival, we rely on our partners to request and grant any TFR. Ultimately, success depends on the venue or local law enforcement reaching out to federal law enforcement agencies, federal law enforcement's willingness to request the TFR, and the FAA's readiness to approve it. Without consistent engagement and follow-through, this new provision falls short of its intention to create more secure live events. Further education and acknowledgement of this provision enhancement is needed—including mention of the change on the FAA's TFR application webpage and the addition of a dedicated submission form to streamline the process for law enforcement officials.

Additionally, we ask Congress to consider lowering the current attendance thresholds to ensure that more events can benefit from the protective coverage of drone-related TFRs. These current thresholds are too high to address the wide range of large-scale events that still face significant security risks but fall just below the current limits. Many of our events occur at outdoor venues, which regularly attract 10,000 to just under 30,000 attendees. Last year alone, we had more than 1,000 shows in venues with a capacity of 10,000. While these shows fall below the current threshold, they still present significant and similar security challenges due to their open-air design and dense crowds. Similarly, Live Nation produces festivals across the country that draw upwards of 85,000 festival goers, require more than 10,000 credentialed

workers, as well as artists and their teams —yet are not considered to meet the 100,000-person threshold. Given their scale, visibility, and logistical complexity, they too warrant TFR protection. Expanding eligibility to include these types of events is a necessary reality to keep pace with the technologically advanced risks at large-scale events associated with aircraft activity.

As such, we respectfully ask Congress to lower the attendance threshold to 10,000 for events taking place outdoors. These proposed adjustments would represent a meaningful step forward—significantly expanding safety coverage for high-density events that are currently excluded, despite facing comparable security risks.

We also urge Congress to build on the progress made in last year’s FAA bill by further strengthening airspace protections to include not only *unmanned* aircraft systems (UAS), but also small, *manned and unmanned* aircrafts. We appreciate the bicameral and bipartisan attention this issue has received and commend Rep. Raul Ruiz and Sen. Marsha Blackburn for recognizing these evolving threats by sponsoring *H.R.2887, the Protecting Outdoor Concerts Act*³, which would expand Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) coverage to include small, manned aircraft. By doing this, there would be a critical gap closed in current policy which would provide a more comprehensive security framework for TFR eligible events.

We urge Congress to consider granting carefully defined mitigation authority to trained local law enforcement agencies. In the event of an unauthorized or suspicious drone entering restricted airspace, response time is critical. While federal agencies play a central role in countering unidentified aircraft efforts, they are not always positioned to respond immediately at

³ Senate companion bill expected to be introduced soon.

the local level and/or do not have the bandwidth to do so. Empowering designated local and regional law enforcement agencies to take timely and proportionate action, under clear guidelines and in coordination with federal partners, would strengthen real-time response capabilities and improve the overall effectiveness of TFRs. We appreciate the bicameral and bipartisan attention this issue has also received, and we commend Reps. Greg Stuebe, Dina Titus, Rudy Yakym, Lou Correa, Cory Mills, Jill Tokuda, Sens. Tom Cotton, and Jacky Rosen recognizing that empowering local law enforcement is a necessary step to mitigate UAS risks by cosponsoring *H.R.3207/S.663, the Disabling Enemy Flight Entry and Neutralizing Suspect Equipment (DEFENSE) Act*.

On behalf of Live Nation, we appreciate your continued leadership on these important issues and look forward to working with you to advance the safety and security of live events across the country. I look forward to answering your questions.

Statement for the Record by

Sheriff Don Barnes

Orange County Sheriff's Department (California)

Major County Sheriffs of America's Vice President responsible for Homeland Security

**Hearing Before the U.S House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Emergency Management & Technology**

"Mass Gathering Events: Assessing Security Coordination and Preparedness"

May 21, 2025

Thank you Chairman Strong and Ranking Member Kennedy for holding today's hearing.

I am here today representing the Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA), a professional law enforcement association of the largest Sheriff's offices across the country. Our members serve more than one third of the United States population. Our membership is comprised of Sheriffs Offices serving counties with a population of 400,000 or more and employing over 700 personnel.

As Sheriff of Orange County, I lead an agency of more than 4,000 men and women who provide exceptional public safety services to 3.13 million residents. As a major population center and popular tourist destination in the Southern California region, mass gathering events are a regular occurrence in our area of responsibility.

Nationwide, managing the security for mass gathering events and addressing associated public safety impacts largely fall on the shoulders of sheriffs and our partners in city police departments.

Mass Gathering Dynamics

There are several types of mass gathering events that present a multitude of risks and security concerns. These mass gatherings can occur daily at destinations like Disneyland in Orange County, CA or the Disney World Resort in Orange County, Florida. There are annual mass gathering events like the Coachella and Stagecoach Music Festivals in Riverside County, California. This past year many of my colleagues were responsible for ensuring the safety of those who attended the various political events associated with the 2024 election. And there are quasi-spontaneous events like protests. The unpredictable nature of these events often makes them the most complex.

Finally, there are the once-in-a-generation events we are primarily focused on today-the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics. It has been three decades since our nation hosted these events so close to each other. The FIFA World Cup 1994 and 1996 Olympics in Atlanta were significant moments for our country. Neither were without their challenges. World Cup games were

hosted in Los Angeles just six months after the devastating North Ridge Earthquake. The Atlanta Games featured memorable scenes like Muhammad Ali lighting the Olympic Torch and Keri Strug securing Gold for Team USA, but the Games were also marked by a deadly terrorist bombing at Centennial Park.

Thirty years later we will host these events in Southern California and in a dozen other regions under a much more complex threat environment. We have greater technology available to assist with our security efforts, but risks associated with cyber-attack are ever present. Our border is more secure since the beginning of this year, but many of the nefarious actors who entered our country over the last four years remain. An event that hosts visitors from all corners of the world brings with it tensions from the multitude of conflicts occurring around the globe.

Mitigating these risks falls to all those of us entrusted with national security, homeland security and local public safety. We must always remember that we have no national security or homeland security without local public safety. We can be successful in our goal of a safe World Cup and Olympics if we use proven strategies we know work and if we are properly resourced with the right mix of people and technology.

Successful Strategies

Today I will highlight strategies my colleagues and I believe are most worthy of this Committee's focus and efforts.

Communication Among Law Enforcement Partners. Sharing intelligence information across levels of government is critical. This type of communication can best occur through the National Network of Fusion Centers. Fusion centers are where local, state, federal, and private sector partners collaborate to analyze and share threat-related information. In Orange County, we use our fusion center regularly in our work to help maintain safety at mass gathering events.

A recent example occurred in the Spring of 2024 when multiple Orange County law enforcement agencies were called to respond to protests at the University of California, Irvine centered on the conflict in the Middle East. Activity associated with the protests was deemed unlawful and necessitated action by law enforcement. The fusion center played a central role in communicating intelligence to personnel on the ground, resulting in a safe conclusion to the event.

This work highlights the need for those who work at the 80 recognized state and regional fusion centers around the nation to maintain access to local, regional, state, and federal sources of information at the classified and unclassified levels. This includes continued access to law enforcement records, criminal intelligence databases, the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN), the Homeland Security Data Network (HSDN), the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS), the FBI Network (FBINet), DHS's Treasury Enforcement Communications System (TECS), and systems for collecting and sharing tips, leads and threat-to-life data.

This access enables fusion centers to add local and regional context to national intelligence, as well as provide information and value-added intelligence to support counterterrorism and other criminal investigations that would otherwise be difficult or unlikely for lead Federal, state, or local investigative agencies to obtain through traditional channels.

Use of Incident Command System (ICS). The Orange County Sheriff's Department has long used ICS to manage our response to emergencies and plan for special events. ICS is a standardized approach to the command, control, and coordination of a public safety response. ICS was initially created by Southern California fire chiefs in 1968 to organize their response to wildfires. It has proven to be a scalable model that can be applied to a variety of public safety incidents and events. My department has utilized ICS in response to barricaded suspects, active shooters, and emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. We have also used ICS in the planning of large-scale events, like the August 2008 Saddleback Civil Forum which featured the presidential nominees of both parties.

When used properly, ICS is particularly effective when multiple agencies are involved in an event or response to an incident. The model is rooted in the concept of defined roles, a common hierarchy, and a commitment by all involved to the planning process. On July 13, 2024, we saw the tragic results that can occur when roles are not clearly defined. In reviews of the attempted assassination of then-former President Trump, it was clear that several tasks and responsibilities were not carried out due to lack of coordination. The ICS model is designed to ensure coordination takes place and that all involved are clear on their specific roles.

Embedded Personnel. Federal personnel should be embedded with local staff during events where they have a role. For example, in Orange County we have had several events featuring the President, Vice President, presidential candidates, and other Secret Service protectees. Having an embedded secret service agent with our personnel has enhanced communication and filled information gaps that could be exploited by bad actors.

Recommendations for Congress

Based on the success of these strategies I recommend this Committee work to support and implement the following:

Ensure Use of ICS Construct. Law enforcement across multiple jurisdictions need to be on the same page. If we all are utilizing ICS, people will know their roles, responsibilities and easily integrate with one another. In my view it is important that federal agencies adopt the ICS model for their incidents and responses. ICS is a universal model used by public safety agencies throughout the nation. Adaptation by federal agencies would ensure better integration when they work with state and local agencies during mass gathering events.

Sustained Federal Investment in Homeland Security Funding. Continued and enhanced federal funding is essential to preparedness, providing support for strategic planning, and maintaining operational readiness. The Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), State Homeland Security Grant

Program (SHSGP), and Operation Stonegarden provide funding that supports intelligence sharing through fusion centers, builds critical incident response capabilities, and creates federal-local partnerships that strengthen national security. These programs have transformed our prevention, preparedness, and response capabilities for both terrorist threats and natural disasters, creating capacity that would not exist without federal support. A major part of our nation's threat prevention and response capabilities are sustained by FEMA grant funding – primarily through UASI and SHSGP. The information access and analytical collaboration enabled by these grants cannot be easily replicated. Therefore, it is a core federal responsibility to ensure these programs continue to support capabilities that would otherwise be unavailable to the federal government.

Direct grant funding to local agencies—bypassing state-level intermediaries—would eliminate bureaucratic hurdles, reduce administrative overhead, and deliver resources more effectively to frontline departments where they matter most.

Counter UAS Authority. Drones have proven to be significantly beneficial for public safety and emergency response, and we anticipate that drone capabilities will be leveraged extensively to help protect World Cup and Olympic sites. Congressional support through legislation like HR 1058, the DRONE Act, co-sponsored by Representatives Correa and Nehls can help.

At the same time, the unauthorized misuse of drones presents a significant security concern for mass events. Mass gathering events are vulnerable to unauthorized Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), which puts both public safety and national security at risk. This was seen the past summer when concerts were paused due to drone activity.

Current federal law limits the use of counter-UAS technologies, such as signal jamming, tracking, and drone interdiction, to just four federal agencies. This legal gap is dangerous and must be addressed. Lawmakers must establish a legal framework that provides broad-based, but carefully regulated authority for locals to deploy and operate counter-UAS systems. This framework must be supported by funding, training, oversight, and transparency.

Alleviate Resource Impacts on Local Law Enforcement. The number of simultaneous events in multiple cities across the nation will put stress on our resources. We must remember that law enforcement presence will be needed not only at the games themselves but also at the locations that will house the millions of visitors traveling into and around our country.

Much of what we do will fall on the shoulders of our existing personnel. The overtime costs associated with filling shifts will put a burden on our local agency budgets. Local agencies alone cannot shoulder the burden for additional personnel, equipment, technology, and supplies required to protect thousands of athletes and foreign dignitaries, and secure Olympic housing and competition facilities across hundreds of square miles. Federal grant funding to help offset these costs – which has been provided during previous Olympic Games hosted in the United States – will help us maintain operations associated with these events while also fulfilling our day-to-day law enforcement responsibilities in our communities.

These recommendations are the four best things Congress and the administration can do to ensure the 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 Olympic Games are remembered as the safest and most secure on record. Sheriffs stand ready and willing to work with you and your colleagues. I look forward to answering your questions.