

**United States House of Representatives  
Homeland Security Committee  
Task Force on Enhancing Security for Special Events**

**“Lessons Learned: An Examination of Major Security Incidents at Mass Gathering Events”  
July 22, 2025**

**Written Statement of Proposed Testimony by  
Stacey Graves  
Chief of Police, Kansas City Missouri Police Department**

Thank you Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Pou, and Members of the Task Force for convening today’s hearing.

I lead the Kansas City Missouri Police Department, a department with a full strength of over 1,400 sworn law enforcement officers who serve a city with over half a million residents. Our police department covers over 300 square miles in Kansas City, touching four counties. Kansas City has hosted, planned and responded to numerous large-scale events. We have hosted the 2012 MLB All-Star Game, 2015 World Series Championship parade/rally, the 2023 NFL Draft, the 2020, 2023 and 2024 Superbowl World Championship parades and rallies, in addition to several events, celebrations, parades and protests.

**FIFA World Cup 2026**

The Kansas City Missouri Police Department is steadfast in its commitment to delivering a safe and successful World Cup experience. Drawing on valuable lessons learned from past incidents and embracing innovative strategies in resource management and collaboration, the department stands ready to meet the unprecedented challenges that lie ahead. The opportunity to host the World Cup is not only a testament to our city’s vibrant spirit but also an occasion to showcase Kansas City, Missouri on the global stage.

Full time dedicated planning for the World Cup events in Kansas City, Missouri started in January of 2024. Since then, the Police Department has dedicated even more full-time staff members in planning for all aspects of the upcoming FIFA World Cup 2026 events. Regional coordination has been key in planning from the beginning, with six planning committees comprised of various public safety leaders, as well as non-governmental organizations. Committees have now grown to over 20 distinct areas of planning to ensure the best possible preparations are in place. Planning committees ranging from intelligence analysis and sharing, interoperability, command control and coordination, critical infrastructure protection, and tactical coordination, to name a few.

Lessons learned regarding large crowd, mass gatherings and best practices have been implemented and have resulted in a layered security screening approach, expanded perimeters around venues, enhanced vehicle screening areas and additional transportation safety and security. Multiple training opportunities have been sought out and brought directly to our region in preparing specifically for World Cup events. The learning opportunities involve crowd management, public

communication, critical infrastructure protection and advanced incident command system training. Full Scale exercises and tabletop exercises have been executed and continue to be planned as we test and retest our plans and readiness.

### **Lessons Learned / Confirmed**

Kansas City has witnessed a remarkable era of championship sports over the past decade. The Kansas City Royals and Chiefs' World Championships have provided opportunities for celebration. The Kansas City Missouri Police Department plans large events using an all-hazards approach, integrating parade organizers, medical and fire personnel, federal partners, city services, state agencies, and regional law enforcement. This continued cooperation in our pre-planning has only enhanced our partnerships and has allowed for comprehensive contingency plans to be in place.

After each mass gathering celebration, the Police Department has conducted after-activation reviews which have led to improved security plans at subsequent events. For example, after the Royals Championship parade in 2015, we improved ingress and egress areas and created pathway barriers for first responders for an improved emergency response. Although we had vehicle mitigation along the route for the Chiefs' Super Bowl parade in 2020, an intoxicated driver drove through the start of the parade barricade and made it on to the route, causing officers to utilize a tactical vehicle intervention to stop the threat, resulting in no injuries. In 2020, we began utilizing DMAT (Disaster Medical Assistance Teams) to ensure a proper response to a potential mass casualty event. These lessons learned in 2020 and 2023, led to additional security measures such as enhanced vehicle mitigation, improved public communication, comprehensive traffic plans, and integrated operations at the 2024 Super Bowl parade and rally.

On February 14, 2024, a tragic shooting occurred during the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl LVIII (58) celebration parade and rally. Despite careful planning and the implementation of lessons learned from previous large-scale events, an act of violence disrupted what was intended to be a joyous occasion for Kansas City. The incident resulted in significant harm and cast a somber tone over the day, underscoring the unpredictable nature of such open-air, public events and the critical importance of coordinated emergency response and planning.

The swift actions of first responders and mutual aid personnel, whose roles had been expanded based on prior experience, played a vital part in mitigating further harm and provided aid to those impacted at the scene. This tragedy stands as a solemn reminder of the ever-present need for vigilance and preparedness in planning for mass gatherings.

Staffing for the 2024 parade was comprised of 900 law enforcement personnel from 71 different Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies. In addition to route security, specialized law enforcement personnel for explosive device detection and response, police K9s, SWAT, traffic control, and drone mitigation were included in the plan. Hundreds of additional first responders such as fire department and medical personnel also assisted with parade planning and implementation.

The 2020 implementation of DMAT (Disaster Medical Assistance Teams) at strategic locations was instrumental in providing immediate medical attention to victims in 2024, which saved lives.

Rapid triage and transport of critically injured patients to nearby hospitals, combined with pre-MCI standard medical treatment, minimized hospital transport and should be standard practice for large events.

The Kansas City Missouri Police Department completes risk assessments as part of the planning process. This allows for the pre-planning of both known and assumed factors leading to the correct allocation of resources. Placing the needed number of law enforcement officers in areas throughout the footprint allows for a quick and appropriate response. In addition, the priority placed on continuous training aligned with the latest standards. This was evident after shots rang out at the rally in 2024, as all law enforcement officers ran towards the threat. It is the direct result of this proper deployment and continued training that put law enforcement officers in the right place to apprehend the suspects quickly and secure the scene within minutes. By utilizing risk assessments, we can plan for complex-coordinated attacks, as well other acts of violence and public disorder.

### **Recommendations for Congress**

FIFA World Cup 2026 will arrive in 11 American cities in approximately 10 to 11 months. As we draw near, there are two key areas of concern in preparing for the events.

**Funding:** To date, the Kansas City Missouri Police Department has not received any federal funds toward the planning and preparation for the FIFA World Cup 2026. We have submitted a budget request for personnel costs and equipment to the KC 2026, FIFA World Cup, Planning Committee which was then used in a comprehensive Kansas City regional budget submission to the Federal Government.

We are grateful for the One Big Beautiful Bill (OB BB), providing \$625 million for planning and security costs relating to the 2026 FIFA World Cup host cities. It is our understanding that funding will be allocated among Host Committees based on their budget estimates submitted as part of the \$625 million, and will follow the general structure of the State Homeland Security Grant Program in the form of separate grants for each Host City Committee. Unfortunately, not much else is known about the timing, program restrictions and application process for this grant.

From experience, applying for and being sub-awarded State Homeland Security Program grants, funding most likely will not be available until this fall. This puts host cities in a compressed timeframe to procure equipment, train members for usage and deploy the equipment in time for the FIFA World Cup 2026 events. We anticipate we will likely be trying to purchase the same type of equipment, at the same time, as all (eleven) other host city agencies, which may negatively impact delivery times.

**We respectfully urge the parties to work quickly to finalize the funding execution process to secure the necessary equipment and resources identified in the Host Committee budget estimates.**

**Detection and Counter UAS Authority:** Despite our responsibility to safeguard the public, local law enforcement agencies are currently constrained by federal regulations that prohibit, or severely limit our ability to detect, disrupt, or disable unauthorized drones in real time. This creates a significant operational gap and hinders our capacity to respond effectively to aerial threats. The

proliferation of consumer drones, their affordability and their potential use by bad actors amplifies this concern.

At times, our officers are put in the position of observing potentially dangerous drone activity without the legal authority or technical tools to mitigate the threat. This not only endangers the safety of event attendees and infrastructure, but also undermines public confidence in our ability to provide a secure environment.

**We respectfully request Congress to prioritize the following:**

1. Authorize the deployment of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) detection and counter-UAS technology at local and regional levels.
2. Current FAA BVLOS (Beyond Visual Line of Sight) waivers without visual observers are limited to 200 feet Above Ground Level (AGL), while standard UAV operations allow up to 400 feet AGL. This restriction hampers our ability to monitor and secure wide areas, particularly around stadiums and large venues. For events like the FIFA World Cup 2026, authorization for BVLOS operations at 400 feet AGL is essential.
3. Ensure Federal UAS teams are embedded at each FIFA World Cup 2026 host sites to provide airspace security.

Without these changes, the increasing use of drones, whether by careless hobbyists or bad actors, will continue to outpace the ability of local law enforcement to respond. We stand ready to collaborate with federal partners to close this critical gap in public safety.

American law enforcement officers are invested in the safety and betterment of our country. We are the first responders to violence and terrorism in our cities and stand ready to keep the people safe from all threats, every day. We look forward to working together to ensure the FIFA World Cup 2026 events hosted in American cities are safe and secure.

TESTIMONY OF EDWARD F. DAVIS III, FORMER COMMISSIONER OF THE  
BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT and FOUNDER OF THE EDWARD DAVIS  
COMPANY

LESSONS LEARNED: AN EXAMINATION OF MAJOR SECURITY INCIDENTS AT  
MASS GATHERING EVENTS  
TASK FORCE ON ENHANCING SECURITY FOR SPECIAL EVENTS IN THE UNITED  
STATES  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

July 22, 2025

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Pou and distinguished Members of the Taskforce, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing and to contribute to this important discussion on how the lessons learned in the 12 years since the Boston Marathon bombings can help drive meaningful security advancements as the United States prepares for a series of major upcoming special events — including the FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is critical that we apply those lessons to strengthen our collective preparedness, incorporating advancements in intelligence and technology, enhancing interagency coordination, and ensuring the safety of all who participate.

The tragic events of the 2013 Boston Marathon — a terrorist bombing that claimed the lives of Lu Lingzi, Krystle Campbell, Martin Richard, Officers Sean Collier and Dennis Simmonds, and left hundreds injured, forever changed the City of Boston. While the impact of that day will never be forgotten, the collective response has served as a catalyst for transformation. This incident reshaped how law enforcement, public officials, the media, and the broader community prepare for and respond to major emergencies. It highlighted the critical importance of interagency coordination and real-time communication strategies. The lessons learned continue to inform our approach to safeguarding public events, managing crisis response, and conducting complex investigations into terrorism. As we plan for future major events and incident response, the Boston Marathon bombing stands as a stark reminder of the stakes — and a testament to the importance of preparedness, resilience, and unified action.

The response to the attack demonstrated that effective preparedness depends not only on planning but also on seamless collaboration and the critical importance of intelligence cooperation across all levels of law enforcement agencies and government. Close coordination between local, state, and federal agencies was essential to ensuring public safety. This integrated effort was instrumental in the successful identification and apprehension of the suspects. The Boston Regional Intelligence Fusion Center (BRIC)

served as a central hub for intelligence gathering during and after the attack. As one of the intelligence-sharing nodes established by the Department of Homeland Security, the BRIC synthesized information in real time from surveillance footage, social media monitoring, citizen reports, and law enforcement databases. This centralized and collaborative approach significantly accelerated the identification of critical evidence and suspects. The performance of the BRIC underscored the value of integrated intelligence operations and led to broader national investment in fusion center capabilities. This highlighted their role as force multipliers in complex emergencies by breaking down agency silos and enabling a unified response. To best safeguard against evolving threats, intelligence agencies must remain open to collaboration — not only sharing what is known, but actively seeking out what is unknown through cooperative efforts across jurisdictions. Equally important is how that information is communicated, as intelligence is only as effective as the clarity, context, and timeliness with which it is received and understood by those who must act on it. This mindset starts with leadership; the tone set by the chief matters, because what their leaders say, the officers do.

While the fusion center's intelligence response was swift in Boston, the City of Los Angeles used lessons learned from Boston by integrating Emergency Operations Centers into the fusion centers to proactively embed the LA's Emergency Management Department software during the 2022 Super Bowl, enabling minute-by-minute threat analysis for on-the-ground tactical teams. Another tool exemplifying the benefits of interagency coordination is the Department of Homeland Security's Special Event Assessment (SEAR) Rating. SEAR ratings are voluntarily submitted for special events, which are sent to DHS's Office of Operations Coordination by state, local, and federal officials for an overall risk assessment. This intelligence is critical for on-the-ground security planning. The SEAR rating is currently utilized for major events such as the Super Bowl and Kentucky Derby, and I would highly encourage it for the upcoming events as well. As the United States prepares to host upcoming global events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games, the continued integration of fusion centers into emergency operations and interagency collaborative resources like the SEAR rating will be critical to facilitating real-time communication, coordinated decision-making, and effective threat mitigation across all levels of law enforcement.

As I have previously testified to this committee, during the Boston Marathon Bombings, cell network capabilities dropped for all of those in the direct vicinity of the attacks. The overwhelming number of phone calls, texts, and internet searches rendered voice communications practically useless for everyone, including the police officers on the scene and those responding. With a lack of a secure network, communications between municipalities, local and federal law enforcement were impeded, and change was critically important. In the years since, technological advancements have played an important role

in enhancing investigative capabilities and public safety since the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings.

As a member of the Board of Advisors for AT&T and the company's FirstNet platform, I've seen the public-private partnership of FirstNet take on this challenge and improve first responders' ability to communicate on scene. The goal of FirstNet is to provide law enforcement and first responders with the ability to access a highly secure and completely reliable service network during times when commercial servers become overwhelmed, exactly when it is needed most. In 2018, the network launched "The FirstNet Core, a physically separate and highly secure infrastructure that creates a differentiated experience for first responders. FirstNet ensures an encrypted, end-to-end communication network for law enforcement. This partnership works for first responders.

Another aspect of technology that has seen significant improvement is AI capabilities of video and photo surveillance, both private and public. It has been well documented that the use of video surveillance from Boylston Street restaurants and photos provided by spectators who were at the scene of the attack led to the identification of the two suspects and provided a timeline of their movements after the attacks, leading to their apprehension. While video surveillance can sometimes carry a negative connotation, it is essential to respect the fundamental right to personal privacy. However, in high-profile critical events, a clear cost-benefit analysis demonstrates that the enhanced safety and security provided by identifying and preventing the actions of bad actors outweighs the temporary compromise of privacy in public spaces. Law enforcement combined video with analytic resources available quickly and effectively after the fact. If only we had the tools to prevent it.

At the time of the bombings, law enforcement agencies also faced the challenge of sifting through and verifying information gathered from the scene, tips from the public, and witness accounts, while coordinating interagency decisions on how and when to share verified information with the public. The Boston Marathon Bombing was one of the first incidents where law enforcement utilized the tools of social media, such as "X" formerly known as Twitter, to communicate directly with the public and media agencies. This was the Boston Police Department's most effective way to share pertinent safety information to the masses in real-time. As was published in a white paper I helped pen for the National Institute of Justice's Harvard Executive Sessions on Policing and Public Safety in March 2014, "[The Boston Police Department] successfully used Twitter to keep the public informed about the status of the investigation, to calm nerves and request assistance, to correct mistaken information reported by the press, and to ask for public restraint in the

tweeting of information from police scanners. This demonstrated the level of trust and interaction that a department and a community can attain online.”<sup>1</sup>

Reliance on open-source data, though, presents real challenges, as the sheer volume of information can both aid and hinder investigations. AI can now create realistic, false images of people and voice replication. As was the case during the marathon bombings, these “deep fakes”, when used to interfere or disrupt an investigation, pose a distinct challenge to law enforcement that Congress and legislation must anticipate and prepare for. Deepfakes pose a significant threat to major sporting events by enabling compelling disinformation campaigns that can erode public trust and incite fear. In the lead-up to the 2024 Paris Olympics, a Russian-linked group released a deepfake video of Tom Cruise warning of violence and corruption at the Games, part of a broader effort to undermine confidence in French security and the event itself. These tactics included spoofed news broadcasts, digitally fabricated graffiti threats, and false claims of mass ticket returns. In the U.S., the NFL has also flagged deepfakes and AI-generated phishing as emerging threats, warning that impersonations of players or staff could lead to reputational damage, data breaches, or public panic. As generative AI tools become more accessible, the potential for viral misinformation targeting athletes, teams, and venues continues to grow, making deepfake resilience a crucial component of modern event security.

Deepfakes are just one of the many resources available to cybercriminals. Cyberattacks have emerged as a sophisticated and escalating threat to major sporting events, with high-profile venues and organizations increasingly targeted for espionage, disruption, and extortion. Recent global incidents underscore the scope of this threat: as stated, Russian-linked hackers targeted French Olympic planners ahead of Paris 2024; Iranian actors leaked personal data of Israeli athletes; and ransomware crippled IT systems at the Grand Palais, an Olympic venue. In Asia, China reported over 200,000 cyberattacks against infrastructure supporting the 2025 Asian Winter Games. The threat has grown exponentially—Tokyo 2020 alone saw 4.4 billion cyberattack attempts, prompting agencies like Microsoft and the UK’s NCSC to classify sports as high-risk sectors.

In the U.S., the Super Bowl is emblematic of the cybersecurity stakes. This mirrors a broader trend: 70% of sports organizations now experience at least one cyberattack annually, often targeting sensitive financial data, internal communications, or live event feeds. Personal data from athletes and fans is increasingly vulnerable due to the widespread use of digital apps and IoT-connected systems. From data leaks that endanger athlete safety to attacks that disrupt critical venue functions or broadcast feeds, cyber threats now pose a tangible risk to national security, public confidence, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Davis, Edward F. , Alejandro A. Alves, and David Alan Sklansky. Social Media and Police Leadership: Lessons from Boston. New Perspectives in Policing (Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety) March 2014.



operational continuity of premier sporting events. A coordinated, layered cybersecurity strategy is no longer optional, it is a prerequisite for safe and resilient event execution.

As technology rapidly evolves, so does the potential for its misuse, with advancements capable of exponentially increasing the risks associated with emerging threats. A striking example is the rise of First-Person View (FPV) drones, which are becoming an increasing concern at major public venues across the United States. Often referred to as the biggest innovation in warfare in decades, FPV drones represent a transformative shift in how aerial threats are deployed, blending low-cost accessibility with high-impact potential. Unlike conventional GPS-stabilized drones, FPV drones are manually piloted, highly maneuverable, and capable of streaming real-time video to operators through goggles or screens. They bypass geofencing restrictions and altitude limitations, enabling them to navigate complex environments, such as stadium entrances, bleachers, or rooftops, with precision and speed. Their analog controls and low radar visibility make them challenging to detect, as they can be launched discreetly from areas like parking lots with little to no advance warning. The unfortunate reality is that it is only a matter of time until this technology is used for terrorist goals. To effectively address the evolving threat landscape posed by the proliferation of privately operated drones, a more robust approach is required, particularly with regard to identifying potential insider threats. This is especially critical in the context of high-profile or special events. For example, in 2014, individuals from Massachusetts were thwarted in an attempt to attack the Pentagon using self-piloted drones; this early attempt underscores the importance of proactive threat assessment and mitigation strategies.

Most recently, during the January 2025 AFC Wildcard game at M&T Stadium, the game was stopped due to the use of an unauthorized drone hovering above the stadium. This incident marked the third drone-related disruption at the venue in two years, highlighting ongoing security concerns about how FPV drones can interrupt and cause potential threats to major events.

Although several promising technologies exist, including jamming systems that can intercept or disable threatening drones, these technologies are expensive and not readily available outside of a military setting. The most glaring concern remains the lack of an acceptable, coordinated response protocol available to state and local law enforcement agencies. A number of bipartisan bills have been introduced over the years; however, these efforts have stalled. The recent executive order helps, but does not go far enough. It is imperative that we prioritize meaningful legislation that equips law enforcement with the necessary tools to address the growing threat posed by the public availability of drones. This absence of a clear tactical and legal framework to respond to drone incursions represents a critical gap in our current public safety strategy, and one that must be urgently addressed to safeguard future events.

As the United States prepares to host a series of high-profile international sporting events, we must draw clear lessons from past domestic incidents like the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings. That tragic event underscored the devastating potential of lone-wolf actors and the vulnerabilities of open-access venues. Since then, the threat landscape has evolved significantly: extremist-driven acts of violence, foreign influence operations, and ideologically motivated terrorism, both domestic and international, have surged across the country. Recent attacks targeting public officials, religious gatherings, and diplomatic personnel reveal a growing pattern of politically and religiously motivated violence, often involving veterans, foreign nationals, or radicalized individuals exploiting ideological divisions. Coupled with rising threats of espionage and terrorism from state and non-state actors such as Iran, North Korea, China, and ISIS, these developments demand a comprehensive security posture. Protecting the integrity of large-scale events now requires not only traditional counterterrorism efforts but also robust intelligence coordination, foreign influence detection, cyber resilience, and proactive community threat assessments.

In closing, while advancements have created a better environment for law enforcement and agencies to respond to crimes, the risk of danger and sacrifice that police throughout our nation face should not be understated. As new technology becomes available to law enforcement, it is also becomes available to criminals and terrorists. New threats, both physical and cyber, emerge daily, especially those related to drone technology and advancements. Police will continue to adapt and overcome but it is critical to ensure a coordinated effort for detection and avoidance is in place. I want to extend my gratitude to our law enforcement and intelligence community partners for their unwavering commitment to protecting our nation. And I thank you and this task force for the opportunity to reflect on the hard-won lessons since the Boston Marathon tragedy 12 years ago—and to consider how we can apply them moving forward. As the United States prepares to take center stage by hosting several major international sporting events in the coming years, we have a unique opportunity to demonstrate leadership, resilience, and innovation in public safety on a global scale.



Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz

July 22, 2025



Good afternoon, Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Pou, and members of the House Homeland Security Task Force on Special Events. I would also like to acknowledge the representative from my hometown Congressman Carlos Gimenez. Congressman always so nice to see you.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Task Force and provide a detailed analysis of the lessons learned from Copa America, and the ways in which we have reassessed and put into motion advanced safety protocols in preparation for future high-profile events such as FIFA 2026.

While it is appropriate to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the event, it is equally incumbent upon us to acknowledge the inherent challenges we encountered during Copa America. Foremost among the lessons learned is the critical importance of meticulous, early-stage planning including comprehensive scenario-based drills. Equally vital is the development of robust mitigation strategies that prioritize crowd dynamics, layered security perimeters, agile deployment forces, event-based intelligence gathering, and seamless interagency collaboration at local, national, and international levels.

During World Copa, stadium personnel, alongside members of the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office, faced considerable operational challenges stemming from a large influx of individuals at the stadium premises. The crowd demonstrated persistent attempts to breach established security measures in an effort to gain entry. The existing single gate entry system was inadequate for efficiently managing the volume of attendees. Notably, many individuals present did not possess tickets but still attempted to access the sold-out event. Due to the density of people at entry points, it was difficult for deputies, security staff and other law enforcement agencies to accurately distinguish ticketed guests from those without tickets, and no procedures were in place for the removal of unauthorized individuals.

To address these challenges, a three-tiered entry protocol has since been adopted to ensure early identification and preemptive removal of individuals without valid

credentials, thereby alleviating pressure at main entry points. Each tier features a screening process that mandates attendees to present valid admission tickets. This approach enables the effective identification and removal of individuals without tickets prior to their arrival at the main entrance. Further security enhancements include reinforced barriers and specialized fencing within the inner perimeter, providing an additional layer of deterrence against unauthorized access. Staffing at each checkpoint has been increased, with both private security personnel and MDSO staff deployed to ensure the efficient management of large crowds.

The strategic placement of specially trained deputies throughout the stadium has proven effective in overseeing large and potentially volatile crowds. These officers serve as a significant deterrent and are prepared to effectively manage complex scenarios. During recent FIFA Club World Cup events, Rapid

Deployment Force personnel were assigned to critical areas, successfully addressing unruly spectators and ensuring comprehensive security around the stadium perimeter.

The initial event preparations involved gathering baseline data; however, this information proved insufficient for supplying stakeholders with actionable insights. As a result, an enhanced methodology has been implemented, incorporating crowd behavior monitoring, social media analysis, and threat identification. This comprehensive approach empowers key stakeholders to make timely and well-informed decisions.

At this time, I would like to present an overview of the strategies and safety protocols being implemented and evaluated in preparation for future high-level events such as FIFA 2026. For example, the adoption of integrated communication systems is essential. Real-time, synchronized communication among all stakeholders including law enforcement, emergency response services, event organizers, and local authorities ensures seamless information flow and coordinated responses. Additionally, transparent communication with the public is crucial for fostering trust and encouraging compliance with safety protocols.

Empowering qualified volunteers and personnel through comprehensive training programs is also a key priority. Regular drills and scenario-based exercises equip staff with the necessary skills to respond swiftly and effectively to emergencies, suspicious activities, and guest assistance needs. It is equally important to ensure that venues and communications are accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities and

from diverse cultural backgrounds. Employing multilingual law enforcement agents, both overt and covert, further supports effective crowd management and engagement.

A healthy budget is fundamental to ensuring the highest level of safety at major events. Adequate funding is required for additional deputies, overtime, and investment in advanced technologies which will enable rapid response capabilities and reinforce MDSO's commitment to safety.

The establishment of centralized command centers throughout the venues is critical for the coordination of resources, information sharing, and decision-making during large-scale events. Command centers serve as operational hubs, enabling authorities to monitor situations in real-time and deploy resources where needed most efficiently.

Community engagement and educational outreach prior to high-level events are vital to overall safety efforts. Informative campaigns through op-ed pieces, videos, and other media will educate both locals and guests about safety protocols, emergency procedures, and available resources, thereby enhancing preparedness and promoting a culture of safety throughout the host community and beyond. Before closing, I would like to underscore one final point. The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office is committed to public safety. While we recognize and appreciate the partnership between event organizers, vendors, and sponsors for large community events; their operational costs and projected revenues should NOT override or minimize the importance of public safety considerations. MDSO maintains sole authority over personnel deployment and resource allocation for these large-scale events.

In conclusion, the World Cup served as a pivotal event, offering valuable insights, experiences, and lessons learned. A thorough analysis of areas for enhancement has strengthened MDSO's approach to safety and security for forthcoming major events. By embracing technological advancements, fostering interagency cooperation, and implementing comprehensive training, we remain committed to ensuring a secure and exceptional experience for all participants at FIFA 2026.

We should move forward with collective responsibility and vigilance to ensure that FIFA and other international events hosted by Miami Dade County exemplify both the celebration of achievement and the highest standards of safety, unity, and resilience.

Thank you for your attention. I am available to answer any questions or receive recommendations.



# LOUISIANA STATE POLICE

COURTESY · LOYALTY · SERVICE

**COLONEL ROBERT P. HODGES**  
SUPERINTENDENT



**Written Testimony of Colonel Robert P. Hodges**  
**U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security**  
**Task Force on Enhancing Security for Special Events in the United States**  
**July 22, 2025**

## **Resilience in Action: Louisiana State Police's Unprecedented Start to 2025**

Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon. I am Colonel Robert Hodges, Superintendent of the Louisiana State Police (LSP). I was born and raised in New Orleans and have served this great state for over 30 years. During that time, I've held a variety of positions in Patrol and Investigations, culminating in my appointment as Superintendent in January 2024.

I am here today to provide an overview of how Louisiana navigated extraordinary public safety challenges in 2025, ranging from terrorism to extreme weather. This testimony reflects not only what we've endured but what we've achieved through resilience and partnership.

### **January 1, 2025: Vehicle-Ramming Terrorist Attack**

On New Year's Day 2025, just after 3:00 a.m., a vehicle bypassed police barricades and plowed into pedestrians on Bourbon Street in New Orleans. Fourteen lives were tragically lost, and dozens more were injured. This was not a tragic accident—it was confirmed by federal partners to be a terrorist attack.

LSP Troopers and local first responders immediately rendered aid and secured the scene. Due to longstanding partnerships with Homeland Security Investigations, the FBI, and the ATF, LSP initially took complete control of the scene, allowing a rapid stabilization while federal teams mobilized to begin their investigation. Agencies across multiple states worked together to identify and locate the suspect.

In the wake of the attack, and with the Sugar Bowl scheduled just days later, public safety priorities immediately shifted. LSP and its partners implemented an expanded security plan that delayed the College Football Playoff game by only one day, demonstrating the strength of interagency coordination and our shared commitment to public safety.

## Snowstorm, Super Bowl, and Mardi Gras: Resilience in Action

As we began preparations for Super Bowl LIX, Louisiana was struck by a historic snowstorm that brought over 12 inches of snow to New Orleans. The city was effectively paralyzed, with roadways coated in ice, access routes shut down, and emergency services stretched to the limit. Nonetheless, LSP Troopers continued operations—conducting rescues, securing roads, and pressing forward with Super Bowl preparations.

On February 9, 2025, Super Bowl LIX went forward without incident. More than 500 LSP and DPS personnel and over 300 National Guard members were deployed, including in the French Quarter's Enhanced Security Zone. The operation demonstrated the effectiveness of planning, discipline, and community coordination.

Immediately afterward, our attention turned to Mardi Gras. Enhanced safety protocols remained in place throughout the state. Over 150 Troopers and DPS personnel were deployed for the Carnival season to ensure secure, accessible celebrations.

## Conclusion

In a three-month span, Louisiana overcame a terrorist attack, a paralyzing snowstorm, and multiple high-risk public events. These experiences tested our infrastructure, systems, and resolve, but they also reinforced our readiness, unity, and mission focus.

Louisiana State Police has demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and professionalism. Our efforts have been grounded in partnership with our federal colleagues, local agencies, and the people of Louisiana.

Through these events, we confirmed the need for several critical resources from the Department of Homeland Security, including the Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR), TFR expansions and UAS mitigation, and funding for training and equipment.

Once Super Bowl LIX was approved as a SEAR 1 event, the deployment of over 100 explosive detection canine teams significantly increased the ability to provide pre-event sweeps of several large venues throughout the week of Super Bowl activities.

Furthermore, the allowance for TFR expansions and UAS mitigation efforts enabled LSP to collaborate with local and federal public safety agencies to establish a Drone Mitigation Team. This team identified over 250 TFR violations and intercepted over 80 pilots violating the temporary flight restriction.



The SEAR 1 classification also opened funding sources for training and equipment, including additional robotic and x-ray devices for explosive detection and other tactical enhancements.

The challenges we faced were unprecedented, but the lessons learned will shape our path forward.

As we say in our department: One Team. One Dream. One Louisiana.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I welcome your questions.

Sincerely,

Colonel Robert P. Hodges  
Superintendent, Louisiana State Police  
Deputy Secretary, Department of Public Safety