

STATEMENT OF
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
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Good morning, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member King and Members of the Committee. I am Roger Rufe, Director of the Office of Operations Coordination and Planning at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I am pleased to appear today alongside Assistant Secretary Stephan and the other distinguished witnesses. Thank you for inviting me to discuss how the Office of Operations Coordination and Planning (OPS) conducts planning for Mass Gatherings and other Special Events. I welcome this opportunity to discuss the Special Events Working Group and how their planning effort facilitates the ability of the Secretary of DHS (Secretary) to execute his incident management responsibilities in accordance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 (HSPD-5).

The Secretary's role in this arena is that of his overall responsibility for the execution of the key missions of DHS: preventing terrorist attacks; reducing the country's vulnerability to terrorism; minimizing damage and assisting in recovery from terrorist attacks that do occur in the U.S. It is important to recognize, though, that the vast majority of Special Events are the responsibility of State, local and tribal entities. As such, in almost all cases, Federal support to a Special Event or a Mass Gathering not on Federal property, comes only after a request is received from the Special Event planners for support and is deemed to require federal coordination.

Special Event Working Group (SEWG)

The Special Event Working Group (SEWG) is a group of representatives of various federal entities who may be involved in planning for or coordinating federal activities for a special event. To paraphrase, a special event is defined as a function that draws a large public crowd to the host city or venue in combination with political importance and local, regional or international significance. The SEWG was formed in April 2004, to validate a methodology for identifying and categorizing special events (other than those designated as National Special Security Events (NSSE)), and coordinating Federal support to those events.¹

The mission and purpose of the SEWG is to support a unified interagency planning and coordination effort for Special Events and to ensure coordination of Federal support to the designated event. The SEWG identifies events that may require a coordinated Federal response and collectively coordinates Federal assets to bridge any capability gaps

¹ National Special Security Events are significant domestic or international events, occurrences, contests, activities, or meetings, which, by virtue of their profile or status, represent a significant target, and therefore warrant additional preparation, planning, and mitigation efforts. The designation process for NSSEs is established by NSPD-46/HSPD-15, Annex II and HSPD-7.

identified by state and local partners that have not already been addressed by exhausting local mutual assistance agreements. Within this process, the mission of OPS is to act on behalf of the Secretary and his HSPD-5 responsibilities to integrate DHS and interagency planning and coordinate operations for designated Special Events in order to prevent, protect, respond to and recover from terrorist threats/attacks.

The SEWG consists of several elements: (1) the five Co-chairs of the SEWG who consist of senior or executive level (GS-15/SES) managers from OPS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the United States Secret Service (USSS) and DHS Office of Risk Management & Analysis (RMA), (2) the SEWG General Membership itself, and (3) the DHS programmatic, coordination and administrative staff dedicated to SEWG which is housed in OPS.

The membership of the SEWG consists of representatives designated by their respective Federal Departments, Agencies and/or Components. These representatives are traditional federal agencies with missions that are related to Special Events planning, coordination, and execution, and span the four pillars of the National Response Framework: Prevention, Protection, Response and Recovery. Presently, there are upwards of fifty Federal Departments/Agencies and their Components with representatives assigned to the SEWG (see the attached exhibit #1).

Prioritizing Special Events

DHS, including the Office of Risk Management and Analysis (RMA) and the Office of Intergovernmental Programs (IGP) has developed a method for assigning a relative risk level to the multitude of special events nationwide brought to our attention by state, local and tribal entities. This is important as the Federal Government cannot possibly support every "Special Event" occurring across the 56 States and Territories of the United States. It is important to understand that a request to be evaluated for a designated risk level is completely voluntary. Except exceedingly rare cases, DHS does not evaluate events for their appropriate risk level unless the event was nominated by an appropriate state, local, or tribal entity. On numerous occasions, DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis has reviewed and provided substantive input into a State and local produced threat assessments.

The first step in this evaluation process is the Special Event Data Call. This automated system, allows Special Event planners from States, cities and localities to enter information regarding upcoming special events into a data base. The most recent Data Call which covers Calendar Year 2008 had over 4,000 events entered primarily by State and/or local Planners. This list is the crucial starting point and is the only method that provides DHS and the SEWG with situational awareness.

In order to ensure the Special Event Data Call properly conducts a preliminary assessment of events, the DHS SEWG has developed a questionnaire for individuals at the state and local level who are users of the system and entering their special event data. Once the data call is closed, the events are run through the risk methodology program,

which analyzes response criteria captured by the questionnaire and assesses stages of threat, consequences and vulnerabilities for the event. This results in preliminary Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR) level results, which are categorized as SEAR Levels 1-5. The preliminary ratings are passed to the SEWG co-chairs by OPS for further consideration. The SEWG, OPS, RMA, and IGP work with their respective subject matter experts to ensure the methodology fits the needs for the users at the federal, state and local levels.

The SEWG co-chairs treat the preliminary SEAR rating output as a starting point to identify the final SEAR level. The co-chairs analyze the initial ranking to account for any special circumstances, such as whether there have been requests for assistance from planners and whether a current threat has been identified.

SEAR Level 1 & 2 Events

The Federal Government involvement in non-NSSE special events is concentrated on those events designated as SEAR Level 1 or 2.

An event is considered to be a SEAR Level 1 when it is an event of significant national and/or international importance that may require extensive Federal interagency security and incident management preparedness. Pre-deployment of Federal assets as well as consultation, technical advice and support to specific functional areas in which the state and local agencies may lack expertise or key resources may also be warranted. In order to ensure unified Federal support to the local authorities and appropriate national situational awareness, a Federal Coordinator (FC) will be designated, and an Integrated Federal Support Plan (IFSP) will be developed.

A SEAR Level 2 event is a significant event with national and/or international importance that may require direct national-level Federal support and situational awareness. The magnitude and significance of these events calls for close coordination between Federal, state, and local authorities and may warrant limited pre-deployment of USG assets as well as consultation, technical advice and support to specific functional areas in which the state and local agencies may lack expertise or key resources. In order to ensure unified Federal support to the local authorities and appropriate national situational awareness, a Federal Coordinator (FC) will be designated and an Integrated Federal Support Plan (IFSP) will be developed.

On the other hand, SEAR Level 3, 4 and 5 events do not have a FC identified nor an IFSP generated, however, State and local officials may still solicit resources from Federal agencies at the agencies' expense.

Regardless of the SEAR Level designation assigned, the Federal government can remain involved with the special event. DHS will maintain awareness of all special events through reporting produced by the National Operations Center (NOC). In addition, State and local planners may request support for their events from the Federal Departments and Agencies located near the event.

I would like to note that the SEAR levels themselves are an excellent illustration of the cooperation and coordination accomplished in the SEWG. The SEAR level system is the evolution of various Special Event ratings previously used in the Federal Government. Until 2006, DHS used Special Event Homeland Security (SEHS) as the DHS standard. The Federal Bureau of Investigation used Special Event Rating Level (SERL) as their standard. Often levels were different from one organization to another. Through interagency cooperation fostered by the SEWG, it was agreed that the SERL/SEHS terminology would be eliminated, and the common term SEAR would be utilized by Federal planners for all rated events. For the first time, the interagency community had one term and one method to describe and categorize Special Events.

A Federal Coordinator (FC) is assigned for every SEAR Level 1 or 2 special event. The FC is nominated by a SEWG member agency, approved and appointed by the Secretary, and has responsibility for coordinating Federal Assets for an approved SEAR Level 1 or 2 Event. He or she serves as the Secretary's representative locally and is selected from the ranks of the trained Principal Federal Official cadre if available or another experienced senior or executive Federal manager. Whenever possible, the FC is selected from the local area of the event being supported.

Responsibilities of the FC include:

- Engaging Federal, State and local officials; consult State and local authorities on their event plans
- Coordinating the field information required for the completion of the Integrated Federal Support Plan
- Coordinating Integrated Federal Support Plan (IFSP) input from interagency HQS elements through OPS Special Events Staff
- Assessing, evaluating and de-conflicting requests for Federal assistance
- Coordinating requests for assistance and identified capability gaps with DHS, HQ and/or Field Elements and other Federal Departments/Agencies

For every SEAR Level 1 and 2 event, an IFSP is also prepared. The IFSP is a collaborative effort of the SEWG and is designed to:

- Inform the Secretary and FC of all the Federal activities and support in preparation for and execution of a Special Event
- Facilitate the FC's ability to initially participate within the Unified Coordination Group in case of an incident to support the Secretary's incident management responsibilities

- Educate federal interagency partners on Federal resource application

Additionally, there are special threat products produced for each SEAR Level 1 and 2 event. The SEWG has a robust interagency threat committee which works to generate Joint Special Event Threat Assessments (JSETA). These assessments are crafted by interagency intelligence community professionals who belong to the SEWG threat committee and are specific to Level 1 and Level 2 events. JSETA are distributed to the interagency community for situational awareness as well as to the state and local fusion centers in need of the information. They focus upon intelligence, threat and risk information, and identify critical infrastructure and key resources in proximity to large events.

Conclusion

I am very pleased to report on the progress DHS and the interagency community has made in how we support Federal, State, and local events. The SEWG, in conjunction with the SEWG Threat/Risk Assessments, Methodology, Airspace Security Committees, continue to work together to ensure that appropriate events are covered from a Federal perspective. The SEWG also ensures that there are no gaps in local plans and/or duplication of Federal efforts to support those plans. The SEWG does not interfere or limit any member agency's ability to conduct its core mission, if appropriate, regardless of the SEAR level of the event. The success of DHS in supporting Special Event Planners is due to the cooperation and coordination found in the SEWG, with the ultimate goal of rendering appropriate Federal support for mass gatherings and Special Events.

I hope that this testimony leaves you with an understanding for the efforts that DHS, OPS Coordination and Planning and the SEWG have made to improve planning and Special Event coordination. Thank you for the opportunity to report to the Committee on our ongoing efforts. I request that you place this testimony and the list of SEWG member agencies in the permanent record and would be pleased to answer any questions at this time.