



UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF
119 D STREET, NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7218

Testimony of

Chief Phillip D. Morse, Sr.

United States Capitol Police

before the

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Subcommittee on Homeland Security and

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Mr. Chairman and Madam Chair, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the joint planning for the myriad events associated with the Fifty-Sixth Presidential Inauguration.

By any measure, the Inauguration of President Barack Obama was an historic event. Following tradition, the Swearing-in ceremony was held on the West Front of the United States Capitol. The nation's elected leaders, former presidents, governors, foreign diplomats, Supreme Court Justices, military leaders and over two hundred thousand invited guests gathered to watch the President take the oath of office in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. An unprecedented 1.8 million people gathered in Washington D.C. on January 20th to witness and experience this Inauguration.

The challenges presented to the law enforcement agencies who were partners in the planning and ground-level security operations were also unprecedented. The National Special Security Event joint planning and command structure was put in place to coordinate the efforts of all agencies involved in the various inaugural events. The foremost focus was ensuring the safety and security of the assembled dignitaries and the public for an orderly transition of power.

SECURITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

The overall security plan had to balance two separate and distinct concepts—security and accessibility—throughout each different venue. The combined requirement of providing the necessary level of security while maintaining the traditional openness of an inauguration created one of the greatest logistical challenges ever faced by law enforcement planners.

Planning for the security of this event meant consideration of many challenging realities and unknowns. Key to managing these was a thorough check and re-check of intelligence and threat levels in a post 9/11 environment. Through the National Special Security Event structure, we ensured everyone had a common picture of the threat and that lead and support roles were clearly designated for quick decision-making.

To meet the challenge of protecting those assembled on the West Front, we developed plans for concentric rings of security around the Capitol. This concept allows for strategically positioned law enforcement personnel to identify and mitigate a threat at the farthest possible point away from the target. Security was accomplished through vehicle barriers, fencing and security screening of guests at designated checkpoints.

We anticipated and planned for the 240,000 ticketed guests to enter through security screening points and assemble on the West Front and a portion of the Mall. Planning had to encompass the travel, arrival, screening and departure of these guests, possibility under adverse weather conditions. The number of ticketed guests was

consistent with prior Inaugurations, although we expected a larger percentage of ticket holders to attend this inauguration than in the past. For this reason, overflow areas were identified to handle the expected additional guests. The color-coding of the tickets designated which Metro stop and entry gate guests should use to access the event site. To help guide guests once they arrived in the area of the Hill, police officers and civilian staff were deployed at various metro stops and intersections along the pedestrian routes leading to the gates. Further, elevated signs, banner-bridges and variable message boards were used throughout the Capitol Complex to give guidance and direction to guests.

The highest standard of security, coupled with ease of accessibility meant deciding on a screening plan that combined magnetometers, hand wands, and waistband checks. The number of magnetometers assigned to each entry point was jointly decided by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Capitol Police. Based on projected flow rates, the number was thought to be sufficient to allow for the screening of ticketed guests within the times the gates were to be opened. The mutual goal was to screen all 240,000 guests in the four hour window.

It is clear the security plan worked well with regard to the safety and security of all 1.8M guests who arrived on Inauguration Day 2009. That is a testament to the hard work, dedication and professionalism of those who prepared and executed the security plan.

It is also clear that the plan to ensure access of all ticketed guests onto the West Front was not realized. While we expected and planned for almost two million people to descend on the core area of the city, we had no benchmark or historical perspective to forecast the cascading effect this size crowd would have on various aspects of Inaugural events, particularly access to the Swearing-in Ceremony, the Mall, and the parade route.

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

On January 20th, ticketed guests and citizens destined for the open public viewing areas on the Mall began arriving before 4:00 a.m. In fact, the Mall between 4th Street and 7th Street filled to capacity by 6:30 a.m. This had not happened in any previous inauguration. In the area of the Capitol, when all of the gates for ticketed guests opened between 7:35 a.m. and 8:10 a.m., large crowds of ticketed guests and individuals with no tickets were already amassed in the area, all trying to access to the screening points. As people continued to enter the city and migrate to various locations, crowd management issues compounded, particularly near the northwest and southwest areas near the Capitol where crowds with different destinations merged.

Due to the resulting congestion, attempts by law enforcement officers in those areas to provide guidance and relieve crowd pressure were ineffective or resulted in people being directed to stage in areas never intended for pedestrians or queuing. Further, poor up-channeling of information from the field to officials at the various law enforcement command centers or miscommunication hindered situational awareness and eventually led to crowd management problems not being properly addressed and corrected. While a large number of guests were properly screened and admitted to the

West Front, the combined detrimental effect of these cascading events led to several thousand ticketed guests not being able to attend the ceremony. We understand the disappointment and frustration of those who were eager and hopeful to witness this historic event but were not able to access their ticketed location.

As deliberate and thoughtful as the planning process was, challenges manifested themselves in the operational execution of the plan on the day of the event. The challenges we collectively confronted or later discovered included the human factor, adequacy of numbers, command and control, unified decision-making, and having the right resources in the right place to successfully and effectively influence and manage the unprecedented numbers of people in the city.

LESSONS LEARNED

Law enforcement challenges are always complex, particularly in a post 9/11 environment. The team assembled for the 56th Inauguration was, without exception, the best in the world. Our team, which included federal, state, and local officials from all over the United States poured over every detail, implemented extraordinary security and public safety measures, and spent hours in tabletop exercises mitigating all the conceivable threats. In the end, the logistical impact of the arrival and movement of almost two million visitors served to strain the seamless implementation of our plans.

Although it may sound simple, the solutions lie in understanding the very basic challenge of guiding the right people to the right place and being able to deconflict and adjust procedurally and operationally for future events.

Everyone who visited Capitol Hill, the Mall and the parade route that day entered and left safely. Most left with historic images of the Inauguration emblazoned in their minds, but some left disappointed. We will work even harder for future events to ensure that everything humanly possible is done to maximize the experience for all who travel to witness history in our Nation's Capital.

As the executives of the law enforcement agencies responsible for handling large scale security events on a regular basis, we have jointly conducted a thorough after action review of the 56th Inauguration. This critical review resulted in recommendations to improve planning, communication, coordination, crowd management, and security operations. We will take the lessons learned and apply new protocols and procedures to improve our planning and operations as we continue to balance the requirements of security and accessibility at major events.

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