



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

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

The United States will soon host some of the world's largest sporting events and gatherings—the 2026 World Cup, 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and America 250 celebrations. I thank my colleagues, Michael McCaul and Nellie Pou, for spearheading the Committee's Task Force to help ensure our stadiums, arenas, and other venues are secure.

To protect the thousands of athletes, fans, and attendees, Federal agencies must closely collaborate with State and local partners, and Congress must provide first responders with the resources they require. Mass gathering events are attractive targets, including for bad actors who wish to inflict mass casualties to further their cause.

Our witnesses today know all too well the tragedy that can unfold in a matter of seconds. Mr. Edward Davis is testifying today. He worked closely with Congress during the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing that killed three and injured hundreds. Also testifying today is a representative of the Louisiana State Police. On New Year's Day, a vehicle-ramming attack took 14 innocent lives in New Orleans, and two police officers were shot. And Miami-Dade County, where Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz is the top law enforcement officer, hosted last year's Copa America soccer final, at which thousands of fans without tickets stormed the stadium and overcame security and police.

While we continue to face domestic terrorism threats inspired by foreign actors, we cannot lose focus on ensuring mass gatherings are protected from gun violence. Police Chief Stacey Graves oversaw the response to the mass shooting during the Kansas City Super Bowl parade in 2024, in which a personal dispute left one dead and more than 20 people injured. The persistent threat of gun violence in this country poses a significant public safety challenge, particularly around special events that will draw tens of thousands of spectators. This year alone, there have been at least 231 mass shooting events in the United States, leaving 175 people dead. We must do more than offer our thoughts and prayers.

Today's witnesses can teach us how to apply the lessons learned from these past security incidents to future events. We must also consider emerging threats, including drones. Drones, often a disruptive nuisance at sporting events, can be altered to deliver a deadly payload.

Last Congress, I cosponsored bipartisan legislation, H.R. 8610, the Counter-UAS Authority, Security, Safety, and Reauthorization Act, that would have extended and expanded counter drone authorities, including by establishing a pilot program for State and local law enforcement agencies to receive drone mitigation authorities. House Republican leadership never called the bill up for Floor consideration. Congress must act now to provide enhanced authorities to counter the increasing prevalence of drones.

It is also critical that Federal preparedness grants – which fund everything from emergency planning and training to equipment and exercises – are disbursed as required by law. President Trump and Secretary

Noem have frozen grant funding Congress provided for the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), and the Securing the Cities (STC) program. Law enforcement and first responders that help protect us all are counting on the Trump administration to follow the law and get this desperately needed funding to communities across America.

Ensuring that mass gathering events are secure from all threats, including terrorism, drones, and gun violence requires a whole of government approach. Democratic Members stand at the ready to provide a welcoming and safe environment for all who attend major events.

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