

**United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications**

***Mass Gathering Security: A Look at the Coordinated Approach to Super Bowl XLVIII in New Jersey and Other Large Scale Events***

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**Testimony of Dan Grossi, Director of Special Events Security, National Football League**

Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Payne, Members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here to testify today. My name is Dan Grossi. I am the director of special events security for the National Football League. I appreciate the opportunity to be here and offer testimony. I hope that the NFL's successful experiences in working with a number of different public safety organizations to ensure the security of its games can be a model for similar high-profile mass gatherings.

The Super Bowl is one of our nation's archetypical mass gatherings. The league sets out to strike an appropriate balance, ensuring that fans enjoy a rich and festive in-stadium experience, while making their safety and security paramount. At Super Bowl XLVIII, MetLife Stadium hosted 82,529 fans, in addition to approximately 10,000 vendors, staff, and members of the national and international media. Additionally, 112 million people watched the game on television. And in the week leading up to the game, tens of thousands of people attended official Super Bowl events at several locations in New Jersey and New York. Ensuring the safe and successful outcome of such a huge undertaking requires significant advance preparation and cooperation between a number of stakeholders, including state and federal agencies as well as other public and private interests.

Over the past few decades, starting even before September 11, the NFL has developed extensive experience in applying protocols to facilitate cooperation and preparation among stakeholders responsible for designing and implementing Super Bowl security. These protocols have been continually refined over time. The NFL does not create the security plans for Super Bowls; that is the role of law enforcement and other public safety organizations. Instead, the NFL is a resource for these organizations, focusing on helping them with coordination and offering them its insights based on experience. Each Super Bowl is a unique event, depending on the characteristics of the location, the jurisdictions involved, and a number of other factors. One size does not fit all when it comes to planning Super Bowl security. The NFL's processes take these different needs into account by helping the coordination between state and federal agencies who can apply their expertise to the circumstances of that particular Super Bowl. The following is a brief summary of our experiences in coordinating the preparation and implementation of a Super Bowl security plan.

## **Importance of Advance Planning**

The NFL normally begins planning for Super Bowl security about a year before the game by meeting with public safety officials and discussing broad plans. For Super Bowl XLVIII, we started with planning meetings about two years in advance of the game, based on the request of the New Jersey State Police, who along with the N.Y.P.D., were the lead public safety organization for the event. Our first meetings are generally with the Super Bowl's lead coordination and planning organization, which since Super Bowl XXXVI (the 2002 Super Bowl in New Orleans) have been state or local law enforcement agencies. That Super Bowl was designated a full National Special Security Event (NSSE), with the U.S. Secret Service as the main planning and coordinating public agency. Subsequent Super Bowls have been Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR) 1 events, in which the lead planning and coordinating agency is a state or local one.

At these early meetings, we work on the basics of the security plans, for instance, determining which organization is responsible for which aspects of Super Bowl security. As the meetings continue, we focus on coordinating the efforts of the different organizations to ensure that their plans and protocols complement each other. These plans change as they are fine-tuned by the organizations, and we have found that in-person meetings are the best way to share information and keep the stakeholders updated throughout the planning process. We hold a planning meeting in April, a full production meeting in June, another planning meeting in October, and a final full production meeting in December. During the time leading up to the game, the group runs countless simulations of possible security events.

In addition, other security planners and I will generally attend five or six regular season games at the host stadium. These visits give us a first-hand look at the stadium in use and occupied by fans. Again, each Super Bowl is a unique event, depending on a variety of factors, some of which can be discovered only by experience. It is very important that the plan takes the different circumstances of Super Bowls into account. Super Bowl XLVIII was a cold-weather Super Bowl, held at an outdoor stadium. This factor affected our plan in a number of ways. For instance, we expected that fans would come to the game wearing winter coats and hats, therefore adding to the screening time that we normally see at warm weather Super Bowls. Although the cold weather turned out not to be an issue, seemingly minor details like fans' seasonal clothing need to be factored into the security plan.

## **Need for Coordination**

The coordination I have been describing is particularly important given the number of organizations involved and their varying roles. As I mentioned earlier, the identities of the lead security coordinating organizations depends on the security rating that the Department of Homeland Security gives to the event. When the Super Bowl is deemed an NSSE, like the 2002 New Orleans Super Bowl, the Secret Service is the lead security coordinating organization, and under other ratings, the lead organization is generally a state or local law enforcement agency for the jurisdiction in which the host stadium sits. The lead planning organization or organizations also depend on the circumstances of the particular Super Bowl. For Super Bowl XLVIII, although the game was held at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, a number of significant events,

such as the almost week-long Super Bowl Boulevard event, were held in New York City, so the New Jersey State Police and the N.Y.P.D. shared the responsibilities as co-leads. Public safety organizations from surrounding jurisdictions assisted with game day security. When the game is being held in a jurisdiction with a smaller law enforcement agency, the coordination lead will generally consist of a coalition of local law enforcement agencies from surrounding jurisdictions and the state law enforcement. This is the case for Super Bowl 50, the 2016 Super Bowl, which will be held at Levi's Stadium, the San Francisco 49ers's home stadium, located in Santa Clara, California. The Santa Clara Police Department will be the lead agency, and it will receive significant support from other public safety organizations from surrounding jurisdictions.

A number of federal agencies also play an integral role in preparing and implementing the security plan. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Secret Service are significant resources for the NFL and our public safety partners. They provide valuable intelligence, and lend their expertise in security planning. The FBI also works with state and local law enforcement and other federal agencies to run background checks on the staff who will be working the Super Bowl. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is also involved in the security plan and are responsible for searching and screening vehicles that come within the Super Bowl's secure perimeter. The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is responsible for screening mail and parcels. Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) assist our state and local partners with mass transit security. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is in charge of planning the Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) for the event, which restricts aircraft from flying in close proximity to the Super Bowl, and the U.S. Air Force and CBP enforce that perimeter. And for Super Bowl XLVIII, the Coast Guard provided security on the waterways surrounding MetLife Stadium.

There are also private contractors that the NFL uses for preparing and implementing the security plan. For instance, the NFL has worked with Populous, formerly known as HOK Sport, on security architecture for Super Bowl stadiums for at least 20 years. They assist in adapting the security plan to suit the stadium's physical structure and help determine where to put security structures, such as magnetometers and where to station certain security personnel.

### **Game Day**

Our goal with all of the advance planning is to ensure that everything goes as planned, while at the same time preparing for any eventuality. It is absolutely vital that every organization knows its role and responsibilities and that information is shared among the organizations seamlessly and in real-time. To help facilitate this cooperation and communication, senior officials from all of the stakeholders remain in a command post during the event. Decisions there can be made immediately, which is particularly important given the fluid nature of the plans and circumstances.

One of our biggest concerns is securing the stadium perimeter. Starting about a week before the game, the CBP, Department of Energy, and other federal and state and local agencies work together to screen every vehicle that comes into the stadium secure perimeter. The TFR also protects the stadium perimeter by air, which is an extremely important component of Super

Bowl security. For Super Bowl XLVIII game day, the FAA issued two TFRs. The first TFR, beginning at noon, was for a one-nautical-mile ring around MetLife Stadium. No flights other than law enforcement flights were allowed within this one-nautical-mile ring. The second TFR began at 5 p.m. It consisted of two rings, one with an eight-nautical-mile radius and one with a 30-nautical-mile radius. Only law enforcement flights were allowed within the eight-nautical-mile ring. Only aircraft squawking a transponder code and in contact with Air Traffic Control were allowed within the 30-nautical-mile radius ring. The CBP, and if necessary the Air Force, were responsible for enforcing the TFR. TFRs are very important for helping to ensure the security for all NFL games, and the Super Bowl in particular.

We also have an extensive credential system in place to ensure that staff are where they are supposed to be. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many people want to be as near the field as possible. But we work closely with our federal and state law enforcement partners to ensure that the credentials for sensitive areas are very tightly controlled and that on game day only properly credentialed individuals are in these locations. We use electronically restricted access and color-coded credentialing, and we train all staff to challenge anybody who does not have the proper credential for a given area.

### **Conclusion**

Of course, this is just a brief summary of the massive undertaking that is securing the Super Bowl. Success requires the cooperation of and coordination with numerous organizations and countless people. The NFL is very thankful for the assistance of our federal, state, and local partners, and we hope that we can continue to be a resource to them. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today on such an important issue to the NFL and the nation. I look forward to your questions.