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Securing Super Bowl XLVI

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Abstract: *In February 2012, the city of Indianapolis hosted the world's greatest sporting event of the year, Super Bowl XLVI. To fans, it was ten days of celebration with concerts, parties, a zip line through downtown, the NFL Experience, and concluding with the Patriots-Giants game on February 5th. But to local, state, and federal public safety officials it was a test of three years planning and coordination efforts involving thirty agencies working under a unified command structure. In this article, Dr. Frank Straub, former Public Safety Director for Indianapolis, gives a first-hand narration of the planning and experiences of hosting the city's first Super Bowl. The unified command structure employed, along with advanced intelligence and analytic software to assess real-time information, proved to be the keys to success for public safety officials and can serve as a best practices approach to other cities preparing to host a major event.*

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Indianapolis is no stranger to large sporting events, having run the Indy 500 and numerous sports championships over the last several decades. The City has hosted six NCAA men's college basketball "Final Four" games, and three NBA Championship games. In 2012, Indianapolis hosted the Super Bowl, and with the game came considerable public safety and security responsibilities.

Even with our broad experience and expertise, public safety officials in the City, and surrounding Marion County, faced some unique challenges in preparing for Super Bowl XLVI, which took place at Lucas Oil Stadium. Such a high-profile event with large concentrations of people and activities downtown as well as an increased threat profile, meant significant federal, state, and local public safety assets had to be deployed, in fact, more than were used in any previous Indianapolis event.

Under the direction of Indianapolis Public Safety Director, the designated Incident Commander for Super Bowl XLVI was Indianapolis Chief of Homeland Security Gary Coons. His mission was to protect 1.1million visitors, NFL teams and VIPs; over 200 critical assets; and 300-plus Super Bowl-related events over a 10-day period culminating in the Giants-Patriots game on February 5th – not just from potential terrorist attacks but also from crimes, gang violence, fires, accidents, natural hazards, and other disruptions – all of it coordinated with multiple government partners.

Thirty (30) agencies including the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD), Indianapolis Fire Department (IFD), Indianapolis Emergency Medical Services, the Indiana State Police, Indiana Department of Homeland Security, Marion County Sheriff's Department, Speedway (Indiana) Fire Department, and the Carmel Police Department, the FBI, Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection, worked under a unified command structure to protect the Super Bowl and associated events. Additionally, the NFL hired a cadre of security officers to work at the stadium and surrounding venues.

To meet the complex challenge, the Department of Public Safety established a computerized and networked command center known as the public safety compound; mobilized approximately 3,000 law-enforcement, fire and emergency-medical personnel to patrol a one-square-mile area around the stadium; deployed plainclothes field intelligence and hazardous materials teams; and pre-positioned hundreds of security cameras, specialized response and command vehicles, and other monitoring equipment, and flew four helicopters 24/7.

In the field, the public safety team concentrated its personnel and pre-positioned its equipment within a 44-block Area of Operation (AO) that included Lucas Oil Stadium; the Indiana Convention Center, which housed the NFL Experience; and a section of Georgia Avenue that was transformed into the Super Bowl Village, where parties, concerts, the zip line, and other activities took place.

The public safety team used a variety of intelligence and analytic software to provide rapid field intelligence reporting and enhanced situational awareness. The software allowed us to connect stakeholders within the command team and deploy resources to cover the events and areas around the stadium. Each team member – based on his or her role, jurisdiction, and need to know entered information about suspicious activities or emerging incidents into the database. The command team analyzed real-time information coming in from field intelligence reports, incident logs, police and fire calls for service, and even social networks, to create a picture of events as they unfolded. This information was shared with personnel in the field and in numerous command centers, including the
City's new $18-million Regional Operations Center (ROC). As a result, Super Bowl XLVI was the most technologically secure Super Bowl in the history of the game.

One of the hallmarks of the Super Bowl XLVI security operation was the large amount of real-time data originating from field personnel equipped with smart phones. The ability of mobile teams to collect and transmit data from various locations for immediate analysis was unprecedented. We used technology that was never used to protect any previous major sports event.

The deployed mobile units included nine Field Intelligence Teams (FITs), each composed of two to three plainclothes officers, plus 11 uniformed Hazardous Incident Teams (HITs), consisting of an explosives technician, a bomb-sniffing dog and a hazardous-materials specialist from IFD.

An Apple iPhone™ was distributed to each of the 20 FIT/HIT teams. Configured with Digital Sandbox's *Mobile Indicator* reporting application, field personnel used the phones to transmit suspicious activity reports (SARs), incident reports and regular status check-ins every half hour via dedicated FIT and HIT 'channels'. The field reports contained photos , a selectable type of incident and written descriptions of activities and packages. Inbound field reports were scored and prioritized immediately upon receipt and presented with geo-location information on-screen at the Public Safety Compound. Over the course of 10 days, more than 540 submissions came in from the FIT/HIT teams. If a field report surpassed pre-determined risk prioritization thresholds the system would trigger automatic alerts and email notifications and route those to interested parties.

Once it was fully operational, the Public Safety Compound became the hub of a risk management ecosystem that gave incident commanders an unprecedented level of real-time situational awareness, thanks to a detailed picture of critical assets, scheduled events and emerging threat situations formed by integrating data entered in advance with a constant stream of status and incident reports from mobile units in the field, information on resource availability

and personnel locations and numerous third-party updates such as emergency dispatch calls, local news reports and social media posts.

Inside the Compound, Director Straub and Chief Coons, with his Deputy Chief over law enforcement operations and intelligence and his Deputy Chief over tactical rescue and hazardous materials, along with other officials monitored the security environment using threat and risk monitoring tools, which showed information displayed in timeline, triage (priority) and geospatial (map) formats. They also monitored a master incident log that fused all incident reports from all sources into a central tracking log.

On these displays the command team could see details of all field intelligence reports, calls for service, incident reports and Twitter chatter throughout the Super Bowl period. As Chief Coons put it: "I was able to watch every dimension of an incident up to and including its clearing." This detailed situational awareness allowed Indy team members to adapt their operations to the changing environment, decrease response times and better coordinate the massive resources at their disposal.

Officials like former Public Safety Director Frank Straub, Chief Coons and the FCO were also free to move about the city without sacrificing their situational awareness, thanks to the availability of Apple iPad™ tablets. A Digital Sandbox app provided executive and field commanders with the same prioritized geospatial situational awareness they could get in their command centers. While in the field, at the stadium, off shift, or at home, commanders continuously monitored data on critical assets and events, CAD 911 calls, FIT/HIT reports and monitored social media feeds. Each commander could configure the app to filter on different feeds and analytic scoring based on individual information needs and command style.

ANATOMY OF AN INCIDENT RESPONSE: TWO CASE STUDIES

The real-time responsiveness of the Indy system and the decision-making power it gave to commanders and field operations personnel alike can be illustrated by two specific incident examples.

PROPANE TANK

On Wednesday morning, February 1st, a citizen reported seeing an unattended propane tank on a sidewalk in front of the Indiana state capitol building. The following timeline shows the sequence of steps that the Indy public safety team took in response.

10:30 – Suspicious package reported by passerby
10:37 – HIT Team 4 responds, takes photo, submits suspicious package report (Image 1)
10:43 – HIT Team 4/ICE EOD team X-rays tank, submits image of X-ray (Image 2)

10:44 – Incident commanders able to evaluate text description and imagery of tank
10:45 – HIT team removes tank for later disposal

With confidence that the tank had not been converted into an improvised explosive device, the Indy team was able to wrap up the incident quickly and with minimal disruption to people in the area.

PROTEST MARCH

In a second incident that directly impacted security, several groups opposed to a newly signed 'Right-To-Work' bill organized a march from the state capitol to Lucas Oil Stadium on January 28th. The Indy public safety team, aware of the disruption a 3500 person protest could cause, began analyzing all information feeds at its disposal. Commanders were kept abreast of protesters' movements through mobile intelligence devices, which allowed them to position resources and assets along the protest route in such a way as to best accommodate the protesters, while minimizing any disruptions to the fans participating in Super Bowl activities.

Conclusion.

The success of Super Bowl XLVI was a direct result of three years of planning, outstanding inter-agency coordination and collaboration, and the tireless efforts of federal, state, and local public safety personnel. The command and control structure flowed directly from the City of Indianapolis' unified public safety model that brings the Department's six divisions – police, fire, EMS, homeland security, communications, and animal care and control together every day to prevent, respond to, and mitigate routine emergencies and critical incidents. Furthermore, the unified command structure with its emphasis on inter-agency coordination and collaboration routinely brings together state and federal resources while preparing for and implementing security operations during the City's numerous large public events. It is without question that the daily interaction between Indiana public safety officials provided the foundation on which the Super Bowl plan was built. Aided by sophisticated and first-of-its-kind technology and analytics Super Bowl XLVI was a tremendous success and provided the model for cities endeavoring to host future games.