

Report on Security Operations During Major Events

Prepared by AOBA's Emergency Preparedness Committee – June 2013

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline key success factors and lessons learned in the process leading up to and including the 57th Presidential Inauguration that took place in January 2013, which was considered a major event for the building in question. This report is designed to assist in planning for future major events for this building, and has been generalized for utilization as guidelines for other buildings and events.

Preparation

- Initiate planning and preparations at an early stage. For this particular event, preliminary meetings were held three months in advance, with increasing frequency as the event approached. Early planning allows for a convergence of viewpoints and ideas amongst stakeholders, which increases the likelihood of success on the day of the event.
- Preparations must be inclusive, involving tenants, vendors, local, state and federal authorities so that all parties are aware of the plans and operations that affect the building and its surroundings.
- Update tenants on a frequent basis. Plans will change, so it is important that a clear line of communication is established with the tenant base, so they can pass on any necessary changes to their guests. Hold regular meetings with all parties involved in the planning process, in order to mitigate the risk for miscommunication.
- Planning and preparations need to cover all aspects of operations on the day of the event, including but not limited to catering, access and procedures for bringing guests into the facility, as well as possible road closures around the building.

Day of the Event

- Management should be on site for the duration of the event. This allows for a quick and satisfactory response to any issues that may arise.
- Crucial to be flexible with schedules and procedures to adapt to unforeseen events.
- Close contact and coordination between teams working throughout the day is imperative to ensure early notification of any issue that might become a problem.
- Tenant compliance with the access procedures can be very helpful. Having tenants set up and register their own guests will remove part of the pressure on the security staff, and will add a second layer of security. This setup also facilitates in receiving VIP's in the appropriate ways, as it enables tenants and security to work closely together at the points of ingress.
- Security has to be well trained, with tailored standard operating procedures, and well-staffed. This will increase the flexibility of the entire operation, as officers can be pulled from one post to support another in more need. Ultimately, the efficacy of security's response will be contingent upon the officers' ability to adapt to the changing conditions on the ground. Thus properly trained, briefed and staffed security is vital.

- For this particular event, service hallways were shared both as a point of ingress/egress, but also with catering services. Sequencing the use of these spaces (allowing caterers access prior to and after certain times) was crucial to avoid blockades and accidents.

Lessons Learned

- Tenant compliance is fundamental, and tenant compliance is based on tenant awareness and understanding. For the tenants to abide by, and appropriately communicate the procedures that the facility has adopted for the event, the tenants must first understand the limitations and changes to normal security procedures.
- Property management should inform the tenant base of the maximum capacity that their suites can hold at an early point in the preparation stage. These numbers should be based on regulations imposed by the DC Fire Department, and tenants must be restricted to abide by these regulations.
- If the event impacts normal emergency response procedures (like the evacuation of the building) the new and augmented procedures for the event day must be adequately discussed and communicated to the tenant base.
- For events with a large number of people inside and outside the building, proper signage can make operations smoother. It will also allow security officers to focus on people entering and exiting the building, as opposed to being distracted by people passing by.

Conclusion

Major events take time to prepare for and undertake, and should not be underestimated. The planning and preparation that goes into a major event is as crucial as maintaining the ability to adapt to situations that arise on the day of the event. The guidelines above can serve as a rough framework for generic, yet vital aspects of security operations during large-scale events, but each building and event will have challenges of its own that are not covered herein. Inclusion of all stakeholders at an early stage in the planning process and staffing the event with well-trained and able staff will go a long way in identifying and resolving any issues that may impede a smooth security operation. This will by extension be viewed as a great success for the building undertaking the event.