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LESSON LEARNED

Mass Evacuations: Planning for Sports Venues

SUMMARY

Public safety agencies should collaborate with stadium officials in their jurisdictions to develop evacuation plans for each venue.

DESCRIPTION

On December 12, 2004, the stadium Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid was evacuated because of a bomb threat. Police and stadium security personnel implemented the stadium's emergency mass evacuation plan for the first time. In eight minutes, more than 70,000 people left the premises without incident.

The Basque newspaper "Gara" received an anonymous phone call at 7:55 pm announcing that the terrorist organization Euzkadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) had placed a bomb in the Santiago Bernabeu set to detonate at 9:00 pm. At 8:15 pm, police officers notified the stadium's security chief and General Director of the Spanish police Victor Garcia Hidalgo, who was in the stadium watching the game. Garcia Hidalgo established an emergency crisis group at the site and consulted with the Minister of the Interior and police and security officers.

On May 1, 2002, 17 people were injured when a car bomb exploded near the stadium Santiago Bernabeu. The Spanish government strengthened stadium security practices in response to this ETA attack.

Pre-Evacuation Measures

Stadium security personnel included 500 police agents and bomb squad specialists (TEDAX), and Santiago Bernabeu's 190 security agents and 478 assistants. Fifty agents of the Spanish National Police and TEDAX specialists started searching the stadium's premises as soon as the threat was received. In Spain, bomb squad specialists are routinely on site during major games and perform searches before important sports events.

Police deployed four additional TEDAX units, with a total of 20 men and 5 dogs, and 20 police patrols to support the contingent already on the scene. They also suspended gas, electricity, and water services in the stadium and alerted the Spanish Red Cross and the Emergency Medical Services of Madrid (*Servicio de Urgencias y Emergencias de Madrid (SAMUR)*).

Evacuation Measures

Garcia Hidalgo ordered the general evacuation at 8:45 p.m., only fifteen minutes before the expected detonation time. Police agents and Santiago Bernabeu's security personnel managed the evacuation. They used the stadium's speaker system and megaphones, as well as the stadium's 315 surveillance video cameras to direct and monitor the evacuees'

flow. Thirty two-person security teams patrolled the exit routes, removing obstacles before and during the evacuation. They opened the 51 external exits and directed people across the soccer field through 27 anti-panic doors. The evacuation was completed at 8:53 pm without incident.

One hundred additional national and city police agents were also deployed to help set up a security perimeter around the stadium, reroute traffic, and direct stranded spectators. The cordoned off perimeter included the stadium, the parking areas, and the four main roads surrounding the Santiago Bernabeu. Police also hindered cell phone usage in the area as a security measure, since ETA and other terrorist groups have frequently used cell-phones as detonators. SAMUR sent six additional ambulances and a field hospital to the scene and stationed medical personnel outside and around the cordoned area.

The stadium search took almost two hours because people had abandoned a large number of backpacks and bags within the premises. The bomb threat proved to be a hoax and the area around the Santiago Bernabeu was reopened to traffic around 11 pm.

Some Spanish stadiums' capacity and evacuation speed based on drills:

- El Campo Nou (Barcelona): 98,000 spectators in 15 minutes;
- La Romareda (Saragoza): 34,000 in 10 minutes;
- El Jose Zorilla (Valladolid): 33,000 in 4 minutes.
- Santiago Bernabeu: 80,000 in 15 minutes.

On December 12, 2004, the evacuation of the Santiago Bernabeu took eight minutes.

Based on drills, complete evacuation was supposed to take 15 minutes. However, more than 70,000 people left the premises without incident in 8 minutes. Public safety agencies and stadium officials should collaborate to develop evacuation plans for each venue in their jurisdictions.

The Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Directorate of the US Department of Homeland Security developed an online [Vulnerability Self-Assessment Tool \(VSAT\)](#) for stadiums with large seating capability. VSAT allows security managers to identify stadium vulnerabilities and assess overall security of their facilities.

RESOURCES

- The Santiago Bernabeu's design and information on security characteristics are available at: <http://www.belt.es/noticias/2004/diciembre.14/bernabeu.asp>
- Information on the US Department of Homeland Security's VSAT is available at: <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=43&content=4273&print=true>

CITATION

- Spanish Interior Ministry. "Police evacuate the Stadium Santiago Bernabeu before the threat was confirmed." (<http://www.mir.es/oris/notapres/index.htm>)
- *El Mundo*. "Un aviso de bomba obliga a evacuar a 70.000 personas del Bernabéu." (<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/12/12/espana/1102886258.html>)

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