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## LESSON LEARNED

### Special Event Planning: Establishing Protest Zones

#### SUMMARY

Special event planners should consider establishing protest zones prior to a special event. Doing so will help to ensure the safety of protesters as well as individuals attending the event.

#### DESCRIPTION

The City of San Diego hosted Super Bowl XXXVII and Super Bowl-related events from January 18 to 26, 2003. The Department of Homeland Security designated the Super Bowl as a Special Event Readiness Level (SERL) 2 because of its high profile nature and tens of thousands of attendees. Under this designation, the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) retained jurisdiction as the lead law enforcement agency. SDPD worked in conjunction with Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to provide security for all Super Bowl-related events at sites such as the Qualcomm Stadium, hotels, and practice areas. SDPD had exclusive responsibility for managing any demonstrations or protests. Some law enforcement planners anticipated anti-war or other political demonstrations due to the impending US military action in Iraq.

SDPD established protest zones in the Qualcomm Stadium parking lot and the Gaslamp area prior to the Super Bowl to contain any demonstrations that might occur. SDPD advertised in newspapers and on television that protests could be held only in these protest zones. SDPD also informed protest groups that permits would be required to access the zones. Protest groups could obtain permits to use the zones for 50 minutes by registering with SDPD 72 hours prior to the Super Bowl. SDPD also deployed two sergeants to identify, meet, and assist the registered groups on game day. The sergeants explained applicable ordinances and laws to the protest groups and then provided them with a microphone and access to the zones via trolley.

No protests were held at the Gaslamp zone and only three small groups used the Qualcomm protest zone. Despite the lack of protests, establishing the zones enabled SDPD to have the information it needed to prepare for and meet the needs of protesters. SDPD knew in advance how many protesters to expect and when the groups would be protesting. As a result, SDPD established zones of the appropriate size and provided adequate manpower support.

Special event planners should consider establishing protest zones prior to a special event. Doing so will help to ensure the safety of protesters as well as individuals attending the event.

**CITATIONS**

Bryden, Joel. Special Operations Assistant Chief, San Diego Police Department. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*. 28 March – 17 April 2006.

San Diego Police Department, *San Diego Police Department Super Bowl XXXVII: Operational Assessment*.

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