

Athletic Event Security Capabilities of Intercollegiate Athletic Departments

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In March 2005, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released a National Planning Scenarios document that discussed fifteen most likely terrorist attack scenarios. This included a possible detonation of a nuclear device in a major city, release of a nerve agent in an office building, and the truck bombing of a sports arena (National Planning Scenarios, 2005). This is an extremely troubling new concern facing sports administrators since the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. With this new awareness of terrorism, guidelines for prevention and responding have been released by the Department of Homeland Security for implementation in case of an actual domestic terrorist attack, major disasters and other emergencies (Target Capabilities List, 2005).

On October 5, 2005, an explosion occurred outside a stadium with 84,000 spectators in attendance just before the half-time of a college football game played between the University of Oklahoma and Kansas State University (CNN.com, 2005). This incident was not terrorist related, but a suicide by a troubled youth. The young man had explosives strapped to his body, and only a few were detonated. No one besides the young man was injured or killed in this incident, but the possibilities of what could have happened sent alarming waves throughout the security and sporting event communities.

The question facing sport administrators is not if a future incident is going to happen, but when will the incident happen. Who is responsible for taking the security measures to prepare, prevent, deter, or delay a future terrorist attack on a sporting event or stadium? At the majority of Colleges and Universities, the Assistant/Associate/Senior Athletic Director is responsible, within the scope of their job, for event management, "game day operations," and security.

The purpose of this study was to document the level of knowledge and skills of the persons responsible for sporting events in intercollegiate athletics. The study targeted those that are responsible for event security (assistant/associate/senior athletic directors) at Division 1A football schools (N=238), according to the capabilities (e.g. knowledge and skills) that they perceive they have attained as well as the capabilities and training that they would like to attain (Target Capabilities List, 2005). These eight knowledge constructs were based on the necessary knowledge as suggested by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness (DHS/SLGCP) and the International Association of Assembly Managers (IAAM). These cognitive constructs (evacuation procedures, security policies and procedures, emergency/crisis management, credential control, perimeter control, liability, spectator control, and agency collaboration) was measured with a Likert type scale. Specific demographic variables of Division 1A football schools were also measured.

This documentation of the knowledge and skills will help in discovering the levels of athletic staff capabilities responsible for "game day" operations and event security. This body of knowledge will also facilitate in finding the gaps in security management capabilities of athletic department staff. These gaps, currently not discovered in recent literature, will aid in the future development of education, training, and certification programs that can be tailored to the gaps or needs of athletic departments. Future programs will help with the overall goals set forth by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS, 2002), the International Association of Assembly Managers (IAAM, 2002), and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2004) in ensuring the safeguard of intercollegiate athletics.

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