

## **Terror Attacks: Are We Prepared?**

### **Bill Number:**

**Hearing Date:** July 22, 2004, 10:00 am

**Location:** SD-430

### **Witness:**

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### **Testimony**

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on this very important issue. I am Dr. Ricardo Martinez, a board-certified emergency physician and a senior medical consultant to the National Football League on emergency and disaster planning and response. I have attached to my statement a brief CV that more fully describes my background and prior public service. I am joined today by Mr. Milt Ahlerich, Vice-President of Security for the National Football League.

The National Football League places a premium on fan safety and security. During the professional football season, the National Football League maintains a national communications center to coordinate and integrate the various events that take place around the country on game days. On any given weekend, as many as 16 large-scale events may take place, involving an average of 65,000 fans and personnel. In many ways, each event alone represents the population of a small city and the expected challenges and incidents that accompany such a population.

In the aftermath of September 11th, the Commissioner's office, under the direction of Mr. Ahlerich and his staff, began to identify the best security practices in stadiums from around the country and created an advisory board of professionals with expertise in facilities and game operations, security, and emergency planning. As a result, the NFL created a Best Practices program that was recommended to all NFL Teams through a series of conferences around the country. The NFL followed up with on-site reviews of each facility by an independent security firm that observed and reported the level of compliance with the NFL's Best Practices and made recommendations to improve. In the summer of 2002, the NFL held a training seminar for team security officials on the best practices and offered advice on steps clubs could take to enhance security without unduly inconveniencing fans.

In 2003, the NFL conducted a training program for up to five people from each team, and provided them with in-depth presentations on pre-game and game day security, venue inspections, vehicle inspection, access and credentialing, proper screening procedures and techniques, basic emergency procedures and much more. In addition, "train-the-trainer" courses were provided so that local facility staff could be trained on the basics of this important information. The NFL firmly believes that complacency can erode well

thought-out plans and procedures and therefore it is essential to continue to review, upgrade and assist the NFL member clubs in maintain their high levels of compliance with the Best Practices.

The NFL subscribes to the firm belief that security, medical and venue operations must work in an integrated fashion to maximize the effectiveness of event operations and to strengthen and coordinate the response to an emergency. More important perhaps is the recognition that front line staff, be it ushers, parking attendants or concessioners, are the first contact point in the “chain of survival” for medical emergencies and for managing security and operations incidents.

Therefore, this year the Commissioner’s office updated and expanded the Best Practices program to include information on emergency medical and disaster planning and response. Subject matter included in-depth discussion of the planning, prevention, response and recovery phases of emergencies and disasters; an overview of the Incident Command System used for disaster response; special situations such as biological, hazardous material and other public health threats; and issues such as full and partial evacuation principles.

Again this year, the NFL sponsored a training program for senior staff from each NFL team and their associated facilities, which program was conducted at three locations across the United States. In addition to the presentations, the NFL created a separate training program module for teams and facilities that can be modified and used for the training of their front line staff in the local facility. This program teaches staff how to recognize an emergency, what to do in an emergency; how to contact help and what information to report; what to do until help arrives; how to protect themselves and others, how to recognize and respond to special situation such as hazardous materials; their role in a Multiple Casualty Incident, and how to evacuate calmly and safely. This current version of the Best Practices program is being used to train staff around the country as we speak here today.

Like any search for best practices, the information continues to evolve as people gain experience in this new environment. What is important is that we all continue to look for ways in which we can all improve our readiness and response to both the expected emergencies of everyday life and to the new threats that are emerging. That is why Congressional hearings like that of today are so important. We listen, and we learn. Perhaps no single event provides the National Football League an opportunity to put these principles into practice than the Super Bowl. Each year, the NFL brings together a large cadre of experts from both inside and outside the NFL and oversees and manages the Super Bowl and its associated events. It is hard and demanding work. Having been the senior medical advisor since 1988, I can attest to the enormous changes in complexity and magnitude over time. After September 11, this complexity increased even more dramatically, both in intensity and in scope. The unthinkable is no longer unthinkable. As you know, by its nature, the Super Bowl has a huge impact on the local community where the game is played. This can be very challenging, but it also offers the opportunity to increase the emergency preparedness and capacity of the community. Because of the terrific support of the local community and surrounding areas for this event, Super Bowl planning can provide a forum for improved communications, strengthened relationships, and can help overcome organizational and political barriers, and foster innovative and creative partnerships. Cooperation among all agencies, resources and organizations that

could potentially prevent or respond to a major incident is vital. Preparations and planning include incidents resulting from causes as diverse as crowd overload, to major trauma, a hazardous exposure, or a major incident.

The NFL works in partnership with agencies at all levels of government, as well as private organizations, to share its expertise and to create an environment that fosters teamwork and integration. Starting up to a year in advance, the NFL ensures that venue management, security, emergency medical services, local hospitals, police, fire, local emergency management, public health, civic organizations such as the Red Cross, business leaders and the local political community come together early in the discussions of emergency and disaster planning and response. Such an effort provides a better understanding of the complexity, and the reality of responding to and managing the consequences of possible incidents, and focuses attention on the practical aspects of how a community would actually respond to a given incident. Since 9/11, we do not ask “what if”; rather, we ask “when if” and then work with others to hammer out a solution.

Our physicians spend a great deal of time working with their counterparts in the state and local medical communities, as well as government officials, to facilitate the coordination and teamwork required for the Super Bowl. In addition, such emergency and disaster planning requires intimate cooperation between these groups and federal agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the EPA, and the Department of Energy. Of particular note is that these groups are also brought together with architectural and transportation planners to plan and prepare ingress and egress paths, emergency access routes, staging areas, triage and treatment areas, decontamination areas, blow out gates, signage, and other needed infrastructure. Planning and cooperation are not enough. Therefore, the NFL encourages broad-based drills and training, incorporating as many providers and resources as possible. In addition, specific medical plans are written for the Super Bowl venue and the associated events, with orientation and training programs offered for a myriad of supervisors and front line staff. Emergency medical and disaster response information is integrated into staff handbooks, as well as on lanyard hang tags that many staff wear around their necks for ready reference.

For game day operations, an integrated operations command post facilitates information sharing and coordination across a host of agencies and disciplines. In the weeks prior to the event, scenario practices and table top exercises provide an opportunity for teamwork and problem-solving, as well as for improvement of existing response services.

Does all of this make a difference? Comments and feedback from recent Super Bowl cities are encouraging. Let me share a few with you from Houston by Dr. Richard Bradley of Houston Fire EMS and the University of Texas Health Science Center. He notes that as a result of Super Bowl’s planning process, there is:

- a closer working relationship between health professionals and law enforcement and federal agencies, and better understanding of each others needs and resources;
- stronger organizational and political links exist between EMS and public health;
- much better cooperation between hospitals for surveillance and data collection;
- a new secure system to facilitate hospital data collection and hospital bed status; and
- development of new models for responding to major emergencies.

Dr. Bradley notes that the benefits are still paying off and that the planning for Super Bowl was instrumental in Houston’s preparations for the recent MLB All-Star game.

Dr. James Aiken of LSU School of Medicine shared his insights as well. Super Bowl planning helped local agencies and organizations to look critically at a number of issues and to develop new city-wide disaster planning. He notes that, since Super Bowl XXXVI, there is:

- stronger relationships between public safety and the health community;
- a new recognition of health care as a first responder;
- development of new training programs at the local medical centers
- improved coordination of detection and response for hazardous materials; and
- transfer of lessons learned to a state-wide disaster planning process.

He, too, noted that this new city-wide planning has been useful for other events such as Sugar Bowl and the Final Four.

The work involved, as well as the lessons learned, could be the basis of entire day of discussion, but more importantly, the National Football League strives to continue to improve each city it visits through Super Bowl and each city it touches through its teams. As we all learn and move forward, the NFL will continue to look for, and update, its Best Practices program.

One last comment does deserve mention. Two years ago, the NFL did exactly that, in noting that the San Francisco 49ers had created an evacuation video for Candlestick Park. Recognizing the opportunity to provide additional guidance and help to its patrons, the Super Bowl has now incorporated the showing of an evacuation video several times prior to the event. I have a copy of this video, made by NFL Films, for you here today. The Commissioner's office is currently producing a localized version of the San Francisco video that will be provided to each League team for use at its facility.

The NFL recognizes that our success lies in the strength of public-private partnerships wishes to thank our many federal, state, and local partners who, each day, dedicate time, energy, hard work and resources to strengthen America's safety net. Thank you again for the opportunity to present a brief overview of some of the National Football League's activities to improve the nation's preparedness and capabilities and I am happy to answer your questions.