

SPECTATOR PERCEPTION OF SECURITY AT THE SUPER BOWL AFTER 9/11: IMPLICATIONS FOR SPORT FACILITY MANAGERS

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INTRODUCTION

The Super Bowl has become one of the world's most significant and influential sporting events by placing the participants and the host city on an international stage. Because of this worldwide influence and recognition, events such as the Super Bowl as well as soccer's World Cup, and the Olympic Games are considered mega-events. Mega-events are high profile events that are conducted in a short, fixed amount of time that increases tourism, civic pride, and the international image of the host city (Persson, Anderson, & Sahlberg, 1998). However, due to their notoriety, mega-events have reportedly become attractive targets for potential terrorist attacks (Appelbaum, Adeland, & Harris, 2005; Atkinson & Young, 2002). Supporting this contention was a 2005 report by the Department of Homeland Security that recognized sports stadiums as potential terrorist targets. The statement indicated that the safety of patrons attending a sporting event could be severely compromised by the discharge from a truck bomb targeting the structural integrity of a stadium or arena (Lipton, 2005). This would be analogous to the 1995 truck bombing of the Murrah Federal Office Building in Oklahoma City that claimed 168 lives, including 19 children (Rosenblatt, 2000).

Terrorism has been linked to the threat of carnage to achieve political objectives by way of fear, intimidation or coercion (Alexander, Valton, & Wilkinson, 1979; Gibbs, 1989; Keet, 2003). According to the Department of State (2002) terrorism is "...premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience" (p. xvi). It is through this process that terrorists create an atmosphere of fear and vulnerability thereby, extending their influence as far as possible (Arce & Sandler, 2005).

MOTIVATIONS FOR TERRORISM

Sporting events have been considered significant targets of terrorism because they are so strongly connected with the American economy and culture (Masters, 2002). Corporations such as Coca-Cola, Hewlett-Packard, Pepsi, Anheuser-Busch, and General Motors are among those that symbolize American capitalism, nationally and internationally, and with their in events such as the Super Bowl through the sponsoring of television advertisements, there may be an association between the sponsor and the event.

There are other compounding issues as to why a sport mega-event may be a prime target relate to the huge national and international media attention directed to the mega-event as well as how the media frames the event. The frivolous festivities and pageantry that accompany the events are often showcased on the televised broadcasts of the game and may be in direct opposition to the cultural beliefs of other population segments. Given that ten of the most watched television programs in history are Super Bowls (Super Bowl Information, 2007) it is little wonder why individuals may assume that it symbolizes American values. This assumption creates an opportunity for terrorists to spread their message and forever become martyrs (Atkinson & Young, 2002).

A second incentive for an attack may be the potential for mass casualties (Schneider, 2002). With a few early exceptions, the Super Bowl attracts sell-out crowds as well as numerous others who attend event related parties or activities in a relatively small area. Additionally, the cities that have been selected to host the Super Bowl on more

than one occasion [Miami (9 times), Los Angeles (7 times), Houston (2 times) and Detroit (2 times)] also ranked in the 50 most populated cities in America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). By combining an event that attracts crowds attending the game numbering 70,000 to 100,000 with many more people reveling in the accompanying festivities being hosted in cities who have large populations it is easy to understand how mass fatalities could occur from a terrorist attack.

A third recognized motivation of international terrorist groups relates to the impact that a terrorist attack may have on national and international economies (Schneider, 2002; Suder, 2004). One of the primary premises recognized for the September 11th attack specific to the World Trade Centers was the ability to cripple economic industry in the United States. As a result of the significant property totaled insurance claims were estimated at \$40 billion dollars (Zolkos, 2003). A large segment of the telecommunications industry located in lower Manhattan was rendered useless for several days after the 9/11 attack, directly affecting service to the New York Stock Exchange (General Accounting Office, 2003). This resulted in the closing of the New York Stock Exchange as well as the NASDAQ Stock Market. Additionally, because so many offices important to government securities trades were obliterated, the failure to distribute U.S. government securities increased from \$1.7 billion per day the week of September 5 (2001) to \$190 billion two weeks later (Fleming and Garbade, 2002).

While not at the same national or international level of the New York Trade Center attack, economic harm would certainly occur if a terrorist strike would occur at a mega-event such as the Super Bowl. Previous research indicated that the economic impact on South Florida due to Super Bowl XXXIII was of \$393 million (Super Bowl Information, 2007). Moreover, Steeg (1999) reported that Super Bowl patrons are generally wealthier, spend more, and hold more influence over future business activity than spectators attending any other event in the United States. Thus, the potential economic loss of an attack at the Super Bowl could include the economic loss to the general geographic areas surrounding the event as well as significant business transactions in the future. This takes even greater meaning when populations and national economic importance of the host cities, as previously identified, are added to the equation.

This section has identified and briefly explained several reasons why a terrorist attack could occur at a mega-event like the Super Bowl. However, because no significant terrorist-related attempts, specifically relating to previous Super Bowls, have been made public, the uncertainty of such an attack may be called into question. The next section will recount other terrorist assaults that have taken place at previous sport mega-events.

TERRORIST ATTACKS AT OTHER SPORTS MEGA-EVENTS

One of the most tragic examples of terrorism at a mega-event occurred in 1972. During the Olympic Games in Munich, Germany, a Palestinian group known as "Black September" stormed the Olympic Village killing two Israelis and taking others hostage. After a 20-hour standoff the German government attempted a rescue at a nearby airfield, the failed attempt resulted in nine Israeli athletes killed, along with the five terrorists (Guttman, 1984). Another more recent terrorist attack occurred at the 1996 Olympic Games held in Atlanta, Georgia in which a detonated bomb resulted in causing one fatality and injuring 110 individuals (Hospitals respond to emergency, 1996).

In 1998 the World Cup tournament was held in France despite reports of evidence that actions had been planned by the Armed Islamic Group (AIG), a noted terrorist organization, to bring the competition to a halt. Importantly, an editorial was circulated that described the AIG as specifically targeting civilians and foreign residents (Voice of America, 1998). The targeting of non-military personnel is a strategy that is not new as many terrorist attacks are committed against such "soft targets" as tourist points, businesses and other non-secured targets (United States Department of State, 1991). The term "soft targets" refers to venues that are not well-protected thereby providing relatively easy access to potential terrorists (Clonan, 2002).

DEFINING RISK

To understand how to manage it, the concept of risk must first be addressed. Some have recognized risk as the potential harm of valuable items resulting from an individual's actions (Kates & Kasperson, 1983). In fact, Klinke and Renn (2002) stated that risk is something that people fear and may be extended to an event that has not yet occurred. Risk can be separated into risk as feelings and risk as analysis (Slovic & Peters, 2006). According to Slovic and Peters (2006) whereas risk as feelings are associated with a person's natural reaction to a harmful situation, risk as analysis applies the integration of items of logic, reason, and scientific forethought to determine how to handle a dangerous situation.

Risk can also include such items as uncertainty, catastrophic potential, and controllability (Slovic, 2001). Certainly the catastrophic potential of a terrorist assault may be perceived as immeasurable in regards to loss of life and economic considerations. This immeasurability strongly relates to the concept of uncertainty (Nohria & Stewart, 2006). It is through uncertainty that fear arises (Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Lerner, & Keltner, 2000). A terrorist strike at a mega-event may be analogous to the attack on the Twin Towers but with greater catastrophic potential in terms of the damage and/or destruction to human life.

To the extent that an attack is thought to be unique or isolated, the immediate impact may be limited and fleeting (Liesch, Steen, Knight, & Czinkota, 2006). This may result in uncertainty and accompanying fear to be contained at a lesser level. For example, the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, while a tragic occurrence, affected a relatively small number of individuals. If on the other hand, attacks are perceived by fans to be directed at more vulnerable or 'soft targets' such as the sport stadium in which a mega-event takes place which may have upwards of 100,000 attendees, the more insidious the uncertainty would be thereby increasing the level of fear among the people (Ip, 2004).

MANAGING THE RISK OF A TERRORIST ATTACK

Despite only the Olympic Games having the unfortunate distinction of an actual strike having taken place, the possibility of an assault on a mega-event venue exists (Atkinson & Young, 2002). When the 2002 World Cup was hosted by South Korea, President Kim Dae Jung expressed apprehension that terrorists might target the mega-event by stating that:

We can see now that there is no boundary, that no country in the world is safe from international terrorism and from these heinous terrorists. We are a very tempting target to these international terrorists, and we are very much aware of this fact (Wiseman, 2001).

Thus, a potential terrorist attack may be considered a foreseeable risk at sporting mega-events. To prepare against an attack, risk management has been cited as the most effective approach (Decker, 2001).

Risk management has been viewed as the process of decreasing a foreseeable risk to a point that is regarded by society as acceptable (Kolluru, 1995). The key issue in deciding the most effective course to follow in managing a risk is the contribution of the public in delineating appropriate levels of risk and safety (Lynn, 1990; Slovic & Peters, 2006). In theory, since it is the individuals who are most affected by a foreseeable harm, they should be allowed to participate with an organization in determining levels of acceptable safety (Webler, 1999).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Due to the Super Bowl's stature as one of the preeminent mega-events in sports, the safety and security of those attending the game itself, the festivities accompanying the event, or simply living in the immediate area may be compromised. Primarily this is a reflection of the difficulties inherent in securing the event venues due

to the large groups of people that gather around, enter and leave the premises. Specifically, a person with malevolent intentions could enter the venue, observe security patterns, and identify vulnerable areas without detection.

Presently there is a void in research examining spectators' perceptions of security at sporting events or if they are satisfied with security measures taken to keep them safe. This investigation theorizes that with the assistance of those attending the game, areas of vulnerability may be more readily identified. Prior reports concerning the management of risks have rejected the idea that risk is absolutely objective (Krimsky & Golding, 1992; Pidgeon, Hood, Jones, Turner, & Gibson, 1992; Slovic, 1992). As such, the identification of any vulnerabilities or threats should be measured solely by one person but include the perceptions of those attending the mega-event. Thus, the purpose of this study was to analyze the perception of sports fans attending the Super Bowl game regarding the management of risks associated in providing a reasonably safe environment.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher developed a 23-item questionnaire, consisting of five multiple choice and 18 Likert scale-type items. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, a test-retest protocol, which is an acceptable means of determining reliability (Patten, 2000), was given to seven football season ticket holders. A two-week period between the test and re-test was provided for the subjects. The scores from the first test and the following re-test resulted in a Pearson's product-correlation coefficient of .85. Thus, the questionnaire was determined to be reliable (Patten, 2000).

To make certain that the questionnaire measured what it was supposed to measure, a face validity option was selected using spectators attending intercollegiate football games. The primary reason for this selection related to the homogeneity between the test group and the population to be studied. In other words if football fans in the test group reported that the questionnaire appeared to measure what it was supposed to measure, the researcher was confident that football fans attending the Super Bowl would also.

DATA COLLECTION

A convenience sampling technique was employed as spectators attending the 2006 Super Bowl were surveyed about their perceptions concerning security measures. The questionnaire consisted of sections relating to the following areas: demographic information, perceptions of security equipment at the game, perceptions of security policies and security issues at the Super Bowl game. In order to be eligible to partake in the survey each individual had to produce a ticket to the event. Written and verbal instructions were provided to all participants. Of the 250 surveys that were returned to the investigator, 138 (55%) were fully completed. Reasons for discarding a survey included incomplete answers, inappropriate responses, and indecipherable replies.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

The first section of the survey asked the respondents to indicate demographic information such as gender, age, income, and race. Additionally, subjects were asked the number of professional football game previously attended in the past three years. The results indicated that 78 (57%) were males and 60 (43%) were females. By age group 27 (20%) were between 18-34 years of age, 39 (28%) were between the ages of 35-44, and 72 (52%) were over 45 years old. With respect to income 12 (9%) of the respondents average an income of \$25,000 to \$50,000, 40 (29%) averaged \$50,001 to \$100,000, 51 (37%) averaged \$100,001 to \$200,000 and

35 (25%) average over \$200,001. Thirteen (10%) of the respondents were non-Caucasian and 125 (90%) were Caucasian. The respondents were asked how many professional football games they have averaged attending the past years. The results revealed that 70 (51%) attended 1-3 home football contests, 31 (22.5%) were attended 4-6 games while 37 (26.5%) attended 6 or more games in the previous years. Only 46 (33%) of the participants have entered a Super Bowl since 9/11.

PERCPETIONS OF TERRORIST ATTACK

Ninety-six percent of the respondents perceived a strong likelihood that a terrorist attack would be attempted or occur at a Super Bowl within the next three to five years. However, 72% agreed that they would not change travel plans even if the Department of Homeland Security raised the terrorist threat level to red. Despite the previous responses, 64% indicated that they felt safe attending the Super Bowl.

PERCIEVED LEVELS OF SECURITY

Seventy-four percent of the respondents indicated that security has not become more relaxed at sporting events since 9/11 and that 86% were satisfied with the level of security. To increase security, only 35% were willing to pay an increase in ticket price for better security. When asked to identify an organization that should be responsible for the security aspects of the Super Bowl, 64% believed that the host city should be followed by the federal government (43%) and the National Football League (36%). Thirty-five percent indicated that mega-events such as the Super Bowl should have security provided by national federal agencies such as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) which is extensively used at most airports, while 30% did not.

PERCEPTIONS OF SECURITY EQUIPMENT MEASURES

All of the participants that completed this section indicated that stadiums in the NFL and all other agencies should use any security equipment necessary to provide a safe and secure atmosphere. When asked about the implementation of certain security measures at the Super Bowl, 79% of the respondents were aware of the increase in security. Specifically, 84% of the participants noticed the use of closed-circuit televisions (CCTV) for security use outside the stadium. While a much smaller percentage of the respondents (32%) noticed the use of CCTV's inside the stadium, 63% reported that using such an item could assist in creating a safer and more secure environment. In contrast, less than half of the respondents felt that closed-circuit televisions should be used in downtown venues of the host city. It was evident that spectators were aware of the increased level of security measures in the parking areas, as 66% noticed that cars were being checked thoroughly. Nearly the same number (62%) reported that security personnel were visible in and around the parking lot area.

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that stadiums have the right to check items being brought into the stadium to protect the public from acts of violence. As such, 71% did not agree that carry-in checks were a nuisance that may explain why 64% agreed that all spectators carry-ins should be checked before entering the stadium. When participants were asked about the use of metal detectors at the Super Bowl, 74% indicated that such security equipment should be used. Fifty-one percent indicated that the Super Bowl venue should use face recognition equipment to protect the spectators. Eighty-one percent of the respondents did not believe that their personal privacy was violated by any of the security issues noted previously.

DISCUSSION

Sporting events have become vulnerable to terrorist attack for three main reasons (Schneider, 2002). First, the venues are symbolic targets. American sports symbolize American culture (Sage, 1998). Second, these venues are difficult to secure because large groups of people gather entering and leaving the facilities. Third, sporting venues have been attacked in other countries demonstrating their attractiveness as a target. Thus, sporting

venues, especially those hosting mega-events, may be chosen as targets because of their representative economic value, public image, and ease of access.

Previous claims have indicated that it is just a matter of time before a sport facility is targeted (Hurst, Zoubek, and Pratsinakis, 2002). Similarly, more than 95% of the respondents in this study believed that a terrorist-related assault will be attempted at the Super Bowl in the next three years. Of particular interest to the sport facility manager is that more than 50% would travel to and attend a mega-event such as the Super Bowl despite this belief. Additionally, the results revealed that they would continue their plans to travel to and attend the Super Bowl even if the Department of Homeland Security were to raise the threat level to red. While the latter is not surprising as every Super Bowl since September 11th has been conducted under the red level, it is noteworthy that the spectators would continue to travel and attend a mega-event such as the Super Bowl despite the belief that an attack was likely. A rationale for this finding may be that the respondents believed that security has become more lax since 9/11 they were generally satisfied with the level of security at the event. For these reasons, venue managers must continue to try to stay one step ahead in all facets of safety and risk management measures.

Most sport venues have not been designed with high levels of security in mind, particularly regarding the ability to control access and visibility of attendees (Then & Loosemore, 2005). One of the available ways to increase the safety of spectators is through the utilization of closed-circuit televisions in the immediate area of the event. Technological measures and strategies need to be part of the overall facility and event security strategy. Some of the measures that may be included are automated technologies that provide barrier protection, surveillance, employee identification, inspection of goods and fans, and alarm systems (Fischer & Green, 1992). Today, metal detectors and wands are seen at stadium entrance points making today's sport environment similar to airport security (Deckard, 2000). However, Veslind (2003) suggested that terrorists with resources and knowledge can easily get around current security measures and may even use our own technology against the facility. This has prompted security personnel at sporting events to be less reactive and more proactive and incorporate initiative education training of employees to cultivate security consciousness and capability to effectively respond to a crisis (Levitt, 1997).

It has been proposed that in attempting to secure sport venues from terrorist attacks, the price of admission would increase, resulting in a decrease in attendance (Miller, Veltri, & Phillips, 2007). While a majority of respondents in this study would not be interested in paying more for a ticket to the Super Bowl despite the potential of increasing security, it is highly doubtful that the game would not be sell-out. However, as the results of this study has revealed, the spectators' perception of the probability of a terrorist attack has increased and facility managers have an obligation to provide spectators with a safe and secure environment. Thus, sport facility managers need to take proactive measures when it comes to security and have the necessary tools to reduce security threats.

It is important to note that the majority of respondents did not feel that their right to privacy was compromised neither by carry-in or car checks nor by the use of closed-circuit television or face recognition equipment. Previously, a question has been called regarding the legality of physical searches as well as video surveillance of Super Bowl attendees (Claussen, 2006). However, it has been argued that technological surveillance as "an invisible wall" should not be thought of as a separation from American tradition but as the next step in protecting the United States (Bewley-Taylor, 2005). While these are significant concerns, it is not the intent of this study to determine the legality of such security practices.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with many investigations there are limitations. First, only 138 responses to the survey were useable. However, Alreck and Settle (1985) have posited that even a small percentage of a sample population may yield

accurate results. Despite the accuracy of the information, the results of this study cannot be generalized towards larger audiences without further investigation. Moreover, it can only be assumed that the respondents responded in a truthful and honest fashion. Future research may include not only future Super Bowl contests but also other sport mega-events such as the intercollegiate basketball's Final Four or Bowl Conference Series (BCS) championship games. Additional investigations may include any of the professional golf majors, NASCAR, the World Series, National Basketball Association finals or the Olympics. Finally, more extensive research could be conducted regarding the awareness of Super Bowl spectators regarding the accumulation of their personal identity information and using it as a means to digitally frisk that individual (Uncle Sam, 2001).

CONCLUSION

Current world events such as the war in Iraq have resulted in heightened security tensions and have challenged existing security measures worldwide. Mega-events such as the Super Bowl are held despite the backdrop of growing concerns regarding international terrorism, and the increased possibility of a terrorist attack. As a result, there is a general belief that terrorism has overshadowed traditional security issues and the physical protection of the sports fans has become a critical infrastructure issue (Viuker, 2002).

The events of 9/11 have shown venue and event managers that a terrorist attack is not just a virtual possibility, but also an actual possibility, and its prevention will be extremely difficult (Boyle, 2005). However, to become more proactive, an effective risk management plan must not work in a vacuum. Venue managers and sports fans have to realize that even with the greatest security in the world, stopping a terrorist attack may be nearly impossible. Effective risk management needs to involve not only those individuals in sport facility management, but federal or regional law enforcement as well. It should also involve the individuals attending the contest. Webler (1999) stated that since it is the individuals who are most affected by a foreseeable harm, they should be allowed to participate with an organization in determining levels of acceptable safety.

Slovic (2001) revealed that as the societies in industrialized countries have attempted to make lives healthier and safer, more people have become more concerned about risks. While quantifiable assessments are essential elements in some decision-making situations, relying on the safety attitude of spectators attending games to recognize potentially dangerous situations and report them is often quicker and more efficient method of addressing potential risks. Promoting an inclusionary aspect of the risk management program will increase the sport facility manager's ability to assess potential threats and vulnerabilities, thus creating a reasonably safe environment, especially at a sport mega-event.

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