



Security Planning for the 2004 Democratic National Convention (A)

When the Democratic National Committee announced, in November 2002, that it had selected Boston, Massachusetts, to host its July 2004 convention, the city's leaders and political allies jubilantly hailed their hard-fought victory. Boston had beaten out much larger cities, including New York (later chosen as the site for the Republican National Convention), Miami, and Detroit, to win the convention, which would formally nominate the Democratic challenger to President George W. Bush in the upcoming 2004 election. The city hoped to reap significant economic benefits from the many thousands expected to gather for the event, and to showcase its historical and contemporary attractions to a large national and international television audience. It was little wonder that the city's popular Democratic mayor, Thomas Menino, who had long sought to bring the convention to Boston, was likened in the press to the proverbial "grinning ... cat that had swallowed the canary" when news of the award was made public.¹

But the city's joy would soon be tempered by the somber realities of hosting the first major political event in the US since the September 11 terrorist attacks. Nominating conventions had long been a magnet for a range of domestic protesters, many of them seeking to disrupt the proceedings, but they were now also seen as a possible target for terrorist groups eager to capitalize on the opportunity to attack an important symbol of the nation's democratic process. In these more threatening times, the task of devising a comprehensive security plan that would protect conventioners was a daunting—and expensive—one, with no exact precedent to act as guide. The city could, however, draw on a major source of experience and expertise: the US Secret Service. It sought to have the Department of Homeland Security designate the convention a

¹ Scot Lehigh, "Is this the start of a new Boston attitude?" *The Boston Globe*, November 15, 2002, p. A19.

This case was written by Esther Scott for Arnold Howitt, Executive Director of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government, for use at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Funding for the case was provided by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative. (0905)

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"National Special Security Event," thereby giving that agency lead responsibility for security planning.

Thus it was that Secret Service Special Agent Scott Sheafe arrived in Boston in June 2003 to take on the role of "coordinator" of security arrangements for the Democratic National Convention (DNC), still a little over a year away. To do his job, he would need to enlist the cooperation and participation of over thirty federal, state, and local agencies, as well as the support of city and state political leaders. Under any circumstances, this would be demanding work, but the convention site—the FleetCenter, a sports and entertainment facility—posed special challenges. It was situated directly over a busy public transit station and right next to a key interstate highway; it was bordered by a bustling commercial district and close to the city's harbor and downtown. From a security point of view, the FleetCenter was, in Sheafe's words, "a very sick patient,"² and the medicine he would prescribe to make it well would be harsh. It would be Sheafe's task not only to prescribe, but to convince the patient to take the medicine.

Background: The DNC Comes to Boston

It was no secret that Mayor Menino—who would mark his tenth year in office in 2003—ardently wished to bring the Democratic National Convention to Boston. The city had bid for the 2000 convention and lost out to Los Angeles; on its second try, with the help of Senator Edward Kennedy and other members of the state's congressional delegation, its determined efforts paid off. "I think that in the end," Kennedy joked at a press conference on November 13 to announce the winning bid, "[the site selection committee] understood that no city wanted it more than Boston did."³ The convention, notes Julie Burns, a former deputy chief of staff for Menino and organizer of the city's 2004 bid for the DNC, was not in itself "a large event." Only about 35,000 were expected to attend the four-day gathering in July 2004—a trifling figure compared to the hundreds of thousands that turned out for the Patriots' Super Bowl parade or to view the Tall Ships in Boston Harbor—but roughly 15,000 of that number would be members of the press. "You've got 15,000 members of the media in your city," Burns points out, "for somewhere between six days and two to three weeks, because the planners come early; so in that sense, it's just an incredible opportunity to highlight your city."

For Mayor Menino, the media spotlight would allow the world to learn not only about Boston's rich historical past, but its dynamic present—to see it, he says, "as an older city that works." Moreover, he adds, "I saw [the convention] as a challenge for Boston. We'd never had an event of this magnitude." He was confident the city would meet the challenge, and fare better than

² Sarah D. Scalet, "Is this any place to hold a convention?" *CSO Magazine*, September 2004. Online at <http://www.csoonline.com/read/090104/convention.html>.

³ Glen Johnson, "Convention City: Democrats select Boston for '04 with nod to history," *The Boston Globe*, November 14, 2002, p. A1.

others that had hosted political conventions in the past, because he had the backing of the Chamber of Commerce and other civic and business groups. "It wasn't just the mayor saying I want the convention in Boston," he notes. Finally, the convention was expected to bring business to the city in the short-term—organizers had estimated that the event would pump \$154 million into the local economy—and attract investment in the long-term. The award of the DNC was greeted with nearly universal acclaim. "There is a delirium," said US Rep. Edward Markey at the November 13 press conference, "that is breaking out at every Dunkin' Donuts shop across the state of Massachusetts that would be hard to capture."⁴

Getting Organized. Once the long-sought prize was won, the huge job of planning for the DNC—which would take place from July 26-29, 2004—quickly got underway. Overall responsibility for organizing the event fell to "Boston 2004," the convention's host committee, headed by two former Menino aides: David Passafaro, the committee's president, and Julie Burns, its executive director. Among other things, the contract signed by the host committee required it to recruit and train a volunteer force of 8,000; provide transportation for delegates and dignitaries; and arrange for a number of auxiliary events, including hosting a party for the 15,000 media representatives and finding venues throughout the city for numerous convention-related activities. Perhaps most critically, the committee was responsible for raising the \$49.5 million that the city had budgeted for the convention in its bid.⁵ Even as the city basked in the glow of its victory, questions arose as to whether this sum would cover the costs of the convention and, in particular, an item that loomed increasingly large in importance: security.

The Security Issue. Boston had submitted its proposal for the DNC in April 2001. Its bid package, Burns notes, included a section on security, detailing the city's "ability to deal with large-scale protests, ability to deal with political events, dignitary protection. ... It was not at all focused on anti-terrorism." But by the time Boston's bid was accepted, September 11 had happened, and concerns about a terrorist attack cast a long shadow over the coming presidential race. Such concerns moved security to the front of the line of issues demanding the attention of the host committee. "Security was [only] one of the things we thought of" in preparing the bid, Burns says. "Post-9/11, it was the first thing."

The city had budgeted \$10 million for security in its winning bid. Even without the added worry of a terrorist attack, that figure had seemed low to some: Los Angeles, which had hosted the 2000 DNC, had spent over twice that amount to handle massive demonstrations around the convention center there.⁶ After September 11, there was general agreement that the need to protect

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The host committee expected the majority of funds to come from private donors, but hoped to secure \$17.5 million from public sources, either in cash or in-kind services.

⁶ Ralph Ranalli, "Critics say \$10M budget not enough to protect convention," *The Boston Globe*, November 14, 2002, p. A29; Yvonne Abraham, "DNC has price tags, details galore for '04," *The Boston Globe*, December 17, 2002, p. A1.

against terrorism would add significantly to the cost—and the complexity—of security planning for the 2004 convention. Cognizant of the new challenges facing it, the host committee moved quickly to avail itself of an important source of help from the federal government by seeking to be designated a National Special Security Event.

The NSSE. The National Special Security Event (NSSE) was created in May 1998 by presidential directive during the Clinton administration in the aftermath of earlier terrorist incidents, such as the first World Trade Center attack and the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.⁷ Under the terms of the directive, the governor of a state in which an event of “national significance” was planned could request an NSSE designation—after the passage of the Homeland Security Act in 2002, such requests were directed to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Previous NSSEs included, among others, the 1999 World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle, the 2000 Democratic and Republican National Conventions in Los Angeles and Philadelphia respectively, and the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. The NSSE designation provided no funding, but it did authorize the participation of federal agencies in the security planning process. Specifically, the NSSE stipulated the roles and responsibilities of three federal agencies: the Secret Service, the lead agency for preparing and implementing a security plan; the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the lead for “crisis management,” which included responsibility for preparing for and resolving any crisis that might arise; and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the lead in “consequence management,” which included responsibility for dealing with the aftermath of any incident that might occur.

It was this federal involvement that the Boston 2004 committee eagerly sought. The NSSE “didn’t come with money, which from the city’s perspective was unfortunate,” says Burns, but it did come “with resources,” notably in the form of planning assistance from the Secret Service. “So we were actually very proactive,” she recalls, “working with the governor”—newly elected Republican Mitt Romney—“and with [DHS] Secretary [Tom] Ridge to get our certification early, so that the Secret Service would come on board” early in the planning process. Governor Romney submitted his request to have the Democratic National Convention designated an NSSE in February 2003; three months later, on May 27, Ridge wrote to Romney informing him that his request had been approved. The Secret Service was on its way.

The Secret Service Steps In

The US Secret Service was charged with two missions: one was to investigate counterfeiting and other financial crimes, and the other, better known, was to protect the president, the vice president, their families, and other dignitaries from the US and abroad. The job

⁷ In 1993, Islamic extremists detonated a truck filled with explosives in the underground garage of the North Tower of the World Trade Center, killing six and injuring over 1,000 people. Two years later, Timothy McVeigh parked an explosives-packed truck in front of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City; the resulting explosion killed 168.

of planning the security for an event, as opposed to an individual, as the NSSE directive required it to do, was a novel one for the Secret Service, but, as Steven Ricciardi, special agent in charge of the Secret Service field office in Boston, notes, it was "a good fit" for the agency. "When you're on the president's detail [as Ricciardi had been], you're involved in planning his security, which is a large-type event every time he leaves the White House." Moreover, Ricciardi adds, "when you do presidential security, you cannot ... do it alone. You have to rely on other folks [and their] expertise [in] their jurisdictions." Special Agent Scott Sheafe agrees. "Everyday somewhere there is an advance team from the Secret Service in a city either domestic or foreign that's building a coalition of partners to prepare for a protectee visit." This was precisely the kind of collaborative effort that managing an NSSE required.

In 2003, Sheafe, a 12-year veteran of the Secret Service, was winding up his stint in Washington on the presidential detail and casting about for his next assignment. A GS-13—which Sheafe characterizes as a "journeyman" grade in the Secret Service—and eligible for promotion, he applied for and got the job of coordinator for the DNC in Boston. Once the NSSE designation was made official in late May and Sheafe had taken care of his last responsibilities on the presidential detail—doing the advance work for President Bush's attendance at the G-8 summit of industrial world leaders in Evian, France—he and his family moved to Boston, "a place I've never been to," he notes. "I know no one. But here I am."

The Boston field office—which was staffed by about 50 people and headed by Ricciardi—focused chiefly on financial fraud investigations, although, as Sheafe explains, "if there's a protectee in [the district], they put on their protection hat and get to work." While Ricciardi—who was also new to the Boston office—and his staff would work with Sheafe on the security planning, Sheafe would officially report to the Major Events Division in the agency's headquarters in Washington, DC.⁸

Although Sheafe had worked with Ricciardi earlier on then-First Lady Hillary Clinton's detail, he was otherwise a stranger to the field office and to the city. Ricciardi paired him with Don Anderson, another special agent in the Boston office, to help him learn the lay of the land, but it would be up to Sheafe to establish cooperative relationships with the state and local agencies that would be involved in providing security for the DNC. He was acutely aware of his outsider status. "Boston, I come to find out," Sheafe says, "is a tight-knit community, and [local agencies] I think were very much expecting this coordinator to come from within the [field] office." The Secret Service's decision to assign "somebody from out of town" made sense to Sheafe, "because it gives you a fresh perspective when you don't owe anybody anything. My mandate was clear, and my motives were pure—I wasn't looking to make a career out of Boston. I wasn't looking to get in good with anybody." Still, Sheafe felt that his task had to be handled with some delicacy. "My commitment to [Ricciardi]," he says, "was that I'm not going to embarrass you in your district. I'm

⁸ The Major Events Division was later merged with the agency's Dignitary Protective Division.

going to make sure when I leave here that the wonderful relationship that the Boston field office has with the law enforcement community, both local and state, and the relationship [it has] with [its] federal partners isn't going to be the same—it's going to be better."

The Planning Mechanism. While Sheafe would be starting almost from scratch in Boston, he did have the benefit of a procedure that Secret Service headquarters had established to organize planning for any NSSE, based on the agency's "core strategy" of "forming partnerships" with other law enforcement, security, and public safety agencies.⁹ The procedure called for the establishment of an intergovernmental apparatus that brought together federal, state and local agencies to work cooperatively on security planning and on resolving any issues that arose in the process. Its basic components were a steering committee—a kind of "board of directors," in Sheafe's words—composed of the heads of agencies that would have a role in the NSSE, and subcommittees—co-chaired by a member of the Secret Service and the local police department—whose task would be to devise operational and tactical plans for specific parts of the overall security plan.¹⁰ The membership of the steering committee, as well as the number and make-up of the subcommittees, depended on the type of event, but Sheafe could refer as well to previous NSSEs and his own experience on the presidential detail for ideas. "I can look and see the subcommittees they had for the DNC in 2000," he explains, "and I can see the subcommittees they had for the Olympics. And I know that if I go on an advance for the president, I need support from all these different groups, so it's basically the same model."

The group that Sheafe ultimately settled on for the steering committee encompassed the heads of eleven different agencies, including the commissioners of the Boston Police and Fire Departments, the special agent in charge of the Boston division of the FBI, the superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police, the secretary of the state Executive Office of Public Safety, the director of the regional FEMA office, and the general manager of the FleetCenter.¹¹ (See Exhibit 1 for a complete list of steering committee members.) Having agency leaders on the committee was considered a crucial ingredient to its effectiveness. "The steering committee is not going to work," Sheafe points out, "if you have the designee of the US attorney or the designee of the commissioner of police. We needed to create a body ... that had the players that were going to be involved—the decision-makers. Luckily, in this region everybody was dedicated to seeing this thing work out well. We didn't have to convince anybody that security is important, because this was a post-September 11 event."

Sheafe also put together a roster of "what the subcommittees should be and who should be on them." As was the case with the steering committee, there would be some additions and some

⁹ From the US Secret Service website. Online at <http://www.secretservice.gov/nsse/shtm1>.

¹⁰ There were actually three plans: the Secret Service's, for venue and dignitary protection; the FBI's, for crisis management; and FEMA's, for consequence management. Subcommittee plans were subsumed into whichever of the three was appropriate.

¹¹ Other senior managers of the agencies also sat in on some steering committee meetings.

rearrangements, but the final list comprised 17 subcommittees in all, each with responsibility for an area of security planning, such as venues, transportation and traffic, intelligence and counter-terrorism, and consequence management. (See Exhibit 2 for a complete list of subcommittees.) Each subcommittee would be chaired by a member of the Secret Service (some of whom came up from headquarters in Washington) and a member of the Boston Police Department; a number of subcommittees had one or more additional co-chairs, representatives of agencies that would play a major role in that particular group's work. The size of the subcommittees varied, but some were quite large: the "medical subgroup" of the consequence management subcommittee, for example, had 39 member agencies. Together, the subcommittees would work on creating highly detailed plans that would protect the FleetCenter from an attack of any kind; ensure the safety of delegates and dignitaries as they shuttled from their hotels to events at the FleetCenter and other venues; keep protesters from getting out of hand, while allowing them adequate opportunities to demonstrate; and respond to a range of possible emergencies, including chemical or biological attacks, explosions, fires, or simple human illness.

Building Partnerships. While he was assembling his lists of committee and subcommittee members, Sheafe also sought to introduce himself to key officials whose cooperation would be crucial to the success of his mission. Chief among these was Superintendent Robert Dunford, a respected veteran of the Boston Police Department. While the Secret Service would be responsible for the protection of the actual venue of the convention—the FleetCenter—as well as a handful of individual dignitaries in attendance, the Boston Police would be expected to provide security for the surrounding area and the rest of the city, including dozens of hotels and other sites where delegates and dignitaries would be gathering. Dunford had been chosen by then-Police Commissioner Paul Evans to take charge of security arrangements for the department, and had been hard at work on plans since November 2002. From Sheafe's point of view, the decision to make Dunford the police department's "point person" for the convention "made all the difference in the world." The superintendent, Sheafe notes, had been a police officer for almost 30 years. "I was 33 years old. He had been on the force almost longer than I had been alive. And he was just extremely kind, willing to explain to me the plans that he had established to date; I got the impression from him right away that he was willing to work it as a partnership."

The Steering Committee Meets. In June, Sheafe was ready for the official launch of the planning process. He sent out letters, over the signature of an assistant director from Secret Service headquarters, to the heads of the agencies he had selected, inviting them to the inaugural meeting of the steering committee on June 20, 2003, 13 months before the kickoff of the DNC. When the group convened, Sheafe recalls, "everybody [was] obviously a little bit nervous, [wondering] where the hell is this going to go and who am I and how is this going to be set up." He had given some thought to the seating arrangement, placing Dunford "right next to me," with FBI Special Agent in Charge Ken Kaiser "very, very close as well. I wanted everybody to see that it was my hope that Mr. Kaiser ... and us could build a coalition also," as he had with Dunford.

Steve Ricciardi served as the committee chairman, but he generally let Sheafe set the agenda and guide the meetings. Ricciardi could have taken charge of the meetings himself, Sheafe notes. "I don't think that's the vision that headquarters had, but he could have done it because it is his district and he knows the players and I don't. But he chose to allow me to run the meetings ... and pick issues that I felt were significant in a manner that I thought was appropriate."¹²

At that first meeting, after Ricciardi introduced him to the assembled agency leaders, Sheafe set out the ground rules for the committee and the subcommittees. The steering committee, he told them, would meet every two months at first, more often as the convention drew near; subcommittees would meet according to whatever timeframe worked best for them. Only the co-chairs of the subcommittees, Sheafe said, would report back to the steering committee. "There should be a one-voice policy for each subcommittee, and the co-chairs should be that one voice." The agency representatives delegated to sit as co-chairs, moreover, "should be given the authority to make decisions, because you can't be coming back with every issue to the steering committee, or it is not going to function." He also stressed that "the steering committee needed to be willing to dedicate the time to come to these meetings." When Sheafe finished outlining his goals, the first person to respond, as he recalls, was US Attorney Michael Sullivan. "Basically, what he said was, '... We're fully supportive and we're going to do anything we can to make this work for you.' ... And that really kind of set the [tone], and everybody else went around the table and they all said the same thing."

The Planning Process

Getting Acquainted. As they settled into their novel and complex task, some committee and subcommittee members felt the benefit of having worked together, in some cases for many years, in a relatively small community of law enforcement and public safety agencies. "All of the relationships that we built over time," reflects Richard Serino, chief of Emergency Medical Services in Boston, "and over the years for all these other events ... helped us when we were developing the plan for the DNC. ... So when it comes time for a special event [like the DNC], it's not going to be introductions for the first time; we're not exchanging business cards. ... [We're] on a first-name basis." This was especially true in the law enforcement area, where a Joint Terrorism Task Force—a consortium of about 22 federal, state and local agencies responsible for conducting counter-terrorism investigations—had brought officials into frequent contact with each other. "On the law enforcement side," says Ken Kaiser, special agent in charge of the FBI's Boston division, "we have a daily working relationship."

¹² Later, in March 2004, Ricciardi was named "principal federal official" (PFO) for the convention. The PFO—a new position created by DHS as part of its "National Response Plan"—would, Ricciardi explains, "facilitate any type of federal response that would be needed in the event of a crisis." Once he assumed his new role, he adds, he became less directly involved in the work of the steering committee.

Where that was not the case, the early going could take some adjusting. FEMA, for example, had little experience in working with some of the key participants involved in the security planning effort. It was, says Ken Horak, acting director of FEMA's regional office in Boston, "the first time we have had meaningful interaction with the Secret Service," and, as well, "the first time we were working with a number of city agencies." It took some time to come to an understanding of each other's perspectives and priorities. "We weren't knowledgeable about how the Secret Service handled these events," says FEMA's Mark Gallagher, who was a co-chair of the consequence management subcommittee.

It was, perhaps, the clarity of the Secret Service's role under the NSSE directive that kept any differences that arose from becoming disruptive. "There was no argument about who was in charge," says Carlo Boccia, director of the Mayor's Office of Homeland Security, "because that was designated—the Secret Service was in charge." Many also praised Scott Sheafe for his efforts to keep traditional rivalries and animosities to a minimum. "Quite honestly," says Boccia, who had recently retired from the Drug Enforcement Administration, "most of the difficulty always comes from the law enforcement agencies, because they are always very thin-skinned when it comes to turf. ... But the strategic ability of [Sheafe] really overcame all of those." The FBI and the Secret Service had, for example, long been rivals—not surprising, Sheafe notes, since "you have these two big kids on the block" whose jurisdictions sometimes overlapped. Even before he officially took the reins of DNC security planning in Boston, Sheafe—whose brother was an FBI agent—visited the FBI regional office to make clear that "I thought those days [of rivalry] were gone, that it didn't benefit anyone. ..." His goodwill efforts paid off. "We had no issues with the Secret Service," says Kaiser, "and that doesn't happen all over."

Sheafe himself credited Dunford with helping to lend legitimacy to the Secret Service's role in security planning and implementation for the DNC. He recalls a presentation Dunford made before the steering committee, describing the police department's plan to divide the city into eight zones for security purposes. "[Dunford] says, 'This is Zone A, the FleetCenter. Zone A is under the complete control and discretion of the United States Secret Service,'" Sheafe recounts. "I looked at [Secret Service Agent] Don Anderson and I said, 'We just won here. This is going to be a complete success because of Bob Dunford.' ... [Dunford] would constantly say, 'Tell me what you need and I'll help you find it.' He didn't try to dictate what was happening; he had a grasp of his role and my role, and how to complement each other."

Several participants noted that in a small city like Boston, the interdependence of law enforcement and public safety agencies in handling a large event like the DNC was an asset in building positive relationships within the security planning group. "We had to work together," Kaiser points out, "because if we didn't work well ... we wouldn't possibly have enough personnel to cover [the event]." Kaiser and Sheafe both contrasted the situation in Boston with that in New York City, where the massive police force of about 38,000—Boston's was only a little over 2,000—was virtually self-sufficient. "They can do just about anything they want with 38,000 police

officers," Kaiser says. "They don't need us." The New York police, adds Sheafe, "could basically take my steering committee and reduce it by three-fourths, because they have it all themselves. 'We don't need your hazmat [hazardous materials] stuff—we've got it. We don't need your helicopters—we've got it. We've got boats—Coast Guard, stay home.' ... They didn't need to say, 'I'd better be kind to this person because I may need something from [him].' So my mantra was that our parts are greater than their whole. They may have 40,000 officers, but what we have is each other."

Getting the Work Done. At the initial meeting of the steering committee, Sheafe told the assembled agency leaders that "I wasn't coming here with all the answers." For the most part, he let the subcommittees work independently, relying on their technical expertise and their familiarity with the city to produce viable plans for their particular area of concern. After their meetings, subcommittee co-chairs submitted "worksheets" to Sheafe, detailing "what their main issues were at the meeting, and how they felt they were resolved and [whether they] needed help from me."

Not all the subcommittees were working from an entirely blank slate. The Boston Police Department had begun formulating its own security plans back in November 2002, shortly before the city's winning bid for the convention was made public. Dunford had created a "compact team" of about five officers, who had drawn up a list of 225 tasks and established committees and subcommittees within the department to tackle them. When, months later, Sheafe set up the NSSE subcommittees, "we just transferred our ... structure over to theirs," says Dunford, "so it worked very, very smoothly."

In other cases, the subcommittees were starting from scratch. After the first meeting of the steering committee, Sheafe belatedly realized that, in Boston, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) was an independent agency and not part of the fire department, as it was in many cities. He called EMS Chief Richard Serino to invite him to join the steering committee and participate in the planning effort. In response, Serino created a 39-member subgroup of the consequence management subcommittee, including local public and private hospitals as well as government agencies, which set about drawing up plans to cover the full range of "medical and health aspects" of the security plan. "He really took a lot of ownership," Sheafe notes. "... The federal government could have carried a lot of the burden he chose to carry here locally."

Periodically, the various subcommittees made presentations before the steering committee, but these were primarily briefing sessions. The steering committee, says John Wentzell, senior vice president and general manager of the FleetCenter, was not a "critical decision-making body. ... I would say it was a validating group; it was a group that empowered their staff." The meetings of the steering committee were essentially choreographed by Sheafe to run smoothly. "I didn't want any surprises," he says. He consulted frequently with local officials, particularly Dunford, over potentially thorny matters, "because I knew that no matter what, when I sit at that table, two heads

are going to be going up and down: mine and the superintendent's." Where there were unresolved issues or differences within a subcommittee that might surface during steering committee briefings, Sheafe sought to "have a private meeting with the agencies that I thought were going to be affected," in the hopes of forestalling a larger conversation that could veer out of control. "If you've got eleven people," Sheafe notes, "and an issue is raised that affects two of them, and they're trying to have an open dialogue about it, the other people may decide to throw in their two cents just because they have an idea." So, he continues, "I kind of made the determination early on that if I've got something I think is a sticky wicket and I can get the players that are involved in a subgroup meeting and we can come to a conclusion, [then] when we come back to the [steering committee] briefing, everybody is going to agree."

This tactic extended as well to questions that Sheafe himself had about security arrangements. After observing some tabletop exercises, for example, Sheafe became "very concerned" that some Boston Fire Department officials were "very quick to want to completely evacuate the [FleetCenter]." From Sheafe's perspective, "better safe than sorry doesn't always work" where evacuation was concerned. If it proved to be a false alarm, then thousands of people would need to be screened again before being allowed back into the building; or the alarm could prove to be "a ploy to get [people] outside" and therefore vulnerable to attack. Sheafe took the matter to Fire Commissioner Paul Christian in a private meeting, where he proposed that the Secret Service should "take that responsibility for [evacuations] from off your shoulders." Initially, the fire commissioner was dubious. It was "a big issue," Christian says, "because I have statutory responsibility [for evacuation] ... and I was reluctant to give it up." At the same time, he acknowledges, some chiefs "will do maybe more than they should, to err on the side of safety" in ordering evacuations. Ultimately, he and Sheafe hammered out an agreement—in writing—which gave the Secret Service authority over evacuation decisions at the FleetCenter, but in consultation with the fire department's on-site commander. "I had no problem with it," says Christian, "after discussing it with Scott. ..."

Keeping the City Apprised. There was no official representative of the mayor's office on the steering committee, although, Sheafe says, when he talked with Dunford, in effect he was talking as well "to the police commissioner, the mayor, Julie Burns—all in one person. ... He knows the city well." Still, Sheafe kept in close touch with the host committee—and, by extension, the city—by making sure that either he or a deputy sat in on Monday morning "public agency working group" meetings that Burns organized to help manage the complex logistics of the convention.

It was in discussions with the Monday morning group and in private meetings that the most consequential security issues of the convention would be raised. While the various subcommittees were working on their plans, Sheafe, in conjunction with the venues subcommittee, was tackling the Secret Service's major direct responsibility for the DNC: the security of the FleetCenter itself. About a month after arriving in Boston, he recalls, he had met privately with

Burns, who "was concerned that the Secret Service would be making decisions that could have a negative political impact on the mayor, because he had done such hard work to get this event here [and] he didn't want to get burned as a result of that." Sheafe's response was hardly reassuring. "I said to her in a truthful manner, I'm not looking to do anything but what's right here, but I've got a public safety issue—a security issue—and a political issue, and I've got to balance the two. ... But I will be frank with you on what I'm going to decide to do, and let you know about it so you can make whatever decisions you think are appropriate."

In the months to follow, it would become clear that Burns had reason to worry. The measures Sheafe and his superiors at Secret Service headquarters were contemplating to secure the FleetCenter would affect not only the area immediately surrounding it, but potentially the entire metropolitan region, disrupting local and interstate traffic, the commutes of thousands of people, the conduct of business, and even the medical care of patients as far away as New Hampshire and Rhode Island.

Securing the FleetCenter

The Venue. A privately owned facility, the FleetCenter was home to two Boston sports teams—the Bruins and the Celtics—and host to numerous concerts and other indoor events. It was ideally located for the thousands of people who flocked to it from all parts of the city and its suburbs and even neighboring states—within walking distance of the city's downtown and easily accessible by public transit or car. But the very features that made the FleetCenter a virtue for sports fans and concert-goers made it a liability to those concerned with protecting it from harm during the convention. "From a security perspective at least," wrote one observer caustically, "the Democrats couldn't have chosen a worse site."¹³

The FleetCenter was a highly porous venue, located directly over North Station, a major public transit nexus. Everyday, roughly 24,000 commuters passed through the ground level of the facility on their way to or from the four commuter rail lines that had their terminus at North Station—the trains actually pulled in beneath the building's cantilevered overhang—where they often mingled with crowds entering the FleetCenter to attend one of its events. Another 13,200 subway commuters used the Orange and Green subway lines, which made stops one level below, in a newly renovated "superstation" scheduled to open in June 2004, a month before the DNC began. Moreover, Interstate 93, a major north-south artery, passed within 40 feet of the building's glass facade; Boston's inner harbor was visible from the FleetCenter, and Logan International Airport was a couple of miles away.¹⁴ In short, it was vulnerable to attack from any number of angles. (See Exhibit 3 for map.)

¹³ Scalet, *CSO Magazine*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The Threat. In the post-September 11 era, the danger of an attack on the convention was associated in most people's minds with Al Qaeda or other international terrorist organizations, but security officials believed the more likely threat would come from domestic protest groups—most notably, anarchists—whose sometimes violent tactics had disrupted the 2000 Republican and Democratic National Conventions in Philadelphia and Los Angeles. Julie Burns recalled hearing stories from the Philadelphia police of demonstrators overturning cars and setting fire to them; protesters in Los Angeles had created massive traffic jams and, according to Dunford, fired ball-bearings at police with slingshots. DNC organizers feared Boston would suffer the same fate, or worse. There was concern that protesters might “infiltrate our volunteer program,” Burns says, to gain access to the convention hall “and do something completely awful.” Law enforcement officials monitoring anarchist and other protest group websites saw signs of an intention to circumvent security measures and wreak havoc at the FleetCenter and its environs. From the evidence, says Dunford, it appeared that “we were going to get hammered.”

But while officials “felt the most probable source of a violent attack or major disruption was a domestic threat,” says the Thomas Powers, assistant special agent in charge of the Boston FBI office, “we never, ever discounted the Al Qaeda threat or any other international terrorism threat that, if they did attack, would probably be a major attack.” Such an attack could, for example, take the form of a truck loaded with explosives speeding down the highway, or a bomb planted on a commuter rail train—which was precisely what would happen in March 2004 in Madrid, shortly before elections in Spain, when a series of train bombings killed almost 200 passengers. Such incidents ratcheted up the fear that terrorists would strike at some point in the US presidential election cycle, possibly during a convention.¹⁵ “People in Boston were scared,” Sheafe maintains. “[They] were legitimately scared that something terrible was going to happen.”

Despite the FleetCenter's vulnerabilities, the Secret Service was prepared to work with what it had. Says Sheafe, “I told Rod O'Connor [CEO of the Democratic National Convention] flat out: ‘You decide what you want to do, and I'll figure out how to make it safe. I'm not going to dictate to you what you can and can't do. I'll build you a utopia, and you can do whatever you want inside it.’” For the city, however, Sheafe's message was tougher. “The [analogy] I use,” he explains, “[is] somebody rang the doorbell at the doctor's office and said, ‘Look, I feel awful. Can you make me better?’ We said, ‘Sure, ... but it's going to take some lifestyle changes to get you better.’”

The Solution. As the agency charged with protecting the president and other high officials, the Secret Service had developed and refined an effective technique for ensuring the safety of its charges. The job of the Secret Service, Sheafe says, “is not to do bodyguarding. Physical protection is going to fail.” Secret Service agents, he points out, did not brandish guns or “put our hands on

¹⁵ In early July 2004, just a few weeks before the DNC began, DHS Secretary Tom Ridge issued a warning that Al Qaeda terrorists were “moving forward” with plans to launch an attack on the US sometime during the election. [Charlie Savage, “Al Qaeda planning attack, Ridge says,” *The Boston Globe*, July 9, 2004, p. A1.]

people, because if it has gotten to that point, we've already lost." Instead, the agency relied on "advance work"—or, as Sheafe puts it, "environmental manipulation"—to protect the dignitaries under its care. So, for example, when President Bush threw out the first ball at a game at Yankee Stadium one month after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Sheafe notes, "you [couldn't] see a Secret Service agent anywhere. How is that? You manipulate your environment. You take the stadium and you empty it. You search the entire thing. Then you screen everybody coming in to bring it to the same level as you would if they were walking into the White House." Admittedly, this was a "very expensive ... and time-consuming" approach, but it had a long history of success. It was this approach that the Secret Service brought to its security planning for the DNC, where it would propose to do, in Sheafe's words, "a tremendous amount of environmental manipulation."

As Sheafe recalls, he had been in Boston only "about a week and a half, and [already] knew how I wanted it to look"—that is, how he wanted to go about making the FleetCenter secure. Essentially, it would mean employing the Secret Service's practice of isolating a site, searching it thoroughly, and then allowing only those who had been screened to pass through. It also meant ensuring that the now-secured venue would remain uncontaminated by anyone or anything that was not authorized to come in it, or even near it. In turn, this would mean keeping subway and rail commuters from mingling with conventioners, and keeping vehicles from passing close enough to do damage to the facility.

The Station. Some of the precautions the Secret Service would require had been anticipated. During the DNC bidding process, says Michael Mulhern, who was then general manager of the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA),¹⁶ "it was clearly understood that we would be adjusting the stopping locations and the lengths of some of our [commuter rail] trains so we could ... stay out from underneath the cantilevered overhang." The MBTA planned to have Orange and Green Line passengers disembark at stops before North Station, a difference of just a few blocks, so that the subway trains could pass beneath the FleetCenter without stopping. In addition, it would build a temporary platform about 100 feet away from the facility where commuter trains could stop and let passengers on and off; instead of entering the FleetCenter, passengers would be directed to the side streets east or west of the building and out on to Causeway Street, the thoroughfare that separated the FleetCenter and North Station from a commercial and business area known as the Bullfinch Triangle.¹⁷

But it soon became apparent that there were problems with this latter scenario. The Secret Service wanted its secure perimeter—what was later called the "hard zone"—to include the streets bordering the FleetCenter. This area would be under the tightest control. "We sweep the entire

¹⁶ Mulhern stepped down as MBTA general manager for a private sector job in May 2005.

¹⁷ The precise boundaries of the Bullfinch Triangle varied in some accounts. Roughly speaking, it was the area bordered by Causeway Street to the north, Merrimac Street to the west, North Washington Street to the east, and Haymarket Square to the south. The upper right side of the triangle, bordered by Canal Street on the west, was largely a construction site that would be used as a staging area for delegates' buses.

area—the Secret Service, [the Boston police], bomb-sniffing dogs—the whole thing,” Dunford explains. “We [sweep] the building, then out into the streets, sweep the entire streets, move everyone that is in there. ... And then we seal it. Once we seal it, the only way we could maintain security is that everyone who comes there goes through a magnetometer as an authorized person.” After all this painstaking effort, it would not be acceptable, says Sheafe, to have hordes of commuters walking “right into my venue, right into my secure area.” The best solution, from a security perspective, would be to close North Station to commuter rail altogether.

Not surprisingly, Mulhern strongly resisted the idea. “He was determined,” Sheafe says, “to keep the train station open” for commuters. Mulhern, adds Dunford, “fought us tooth and nail.” But the MBTA general manager was not the only one with reservations about closing North Station. Governor Mitt Romney, a conservative Republican who took office in January 2003, was opposed to the idea, according to Mulhern “The governor,” Mulhern recalls, “was pushing back, saying not to close it ... because we can’t be inconveniencing all those [commuters] coming from the north just because the Democrats want to have a party.” Romney was himself familiar with the workings of an NSSE from his experience running the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. He had welcomed the DNC to Boston, but made it clear that he frowned on spending state taxpayer dollars on political events; and some in his administration thought, as Mulhern puts it, that “the MBTA went too far in our commitments” to the convention.¹⁸

Mulhern describes himself as an enthusiastic supporter of the city’s bid for the DNC, pledging services that he estimated would cost the MBTA about \$1.5 to \$2 million—a figure that would eventually more than double. “I have a pretty good relationship with the mayor,” he says, “and I believed in everything the mayor was trying to do. And quite frankly, I looked at [the DNC] as not only a big advertisement for the city of Boston, but a big advertisement for our transit system. I always felt [there] was going to be a huge return on our investment.” Now, however, Mulhern found himself being “second-guessed left and right,” as he puts it, as it became clear that security requirements would drive up the cost to the transit authority. “I did not want to send the wrong signal to the mayor, in terms of wavering on our commitments,” Mulhern explains, “but yet I tried to walk a very fine line with the [Romney] administration to get to where they needed to be in terms of what their public position was. And it got a little dicey there for awhile.”

The controversy over the closure of North Station came to a head in early 2004, at a meeting in Mayor Menino’s office that included Mulhern, Dunford, and Julie Burns. Dunford—who was Sheafe’s strongest ally in the issue¹⁹—“was saying, ‘You’ve got to do it [i.e., close the station],’” Mulhern recalls. “... I was very concerned. ... I said, ‘I need to be convinced.’ ... And the mayor said, ‘Listen, until we decide [what to do], I don’t want to hear any more arguing, any more

¹⁸ The MBTA was an independent authority, but the secretary of transportation, a gubernatorial appointee, chaired its board.

¹⁹ In fact, says Sheafe, Dunford had written a memo “suggesting what needed to be done [to secure the site] very early on, even before I showed up. You don’t have to be a Secret Service agent to figure out a secure site.”

sparring.” At that point, the parties agreed to try to hammer out a solution that would be satisfactory on all sides. It would be a challenging task: as word got out that the Secret Service was contemplating closing down the Orange Line platform at North Station—the possibility of a complete closure had not yet surfaced publicly—*The Boston Globe* weighed in on the debate. The Secret Service, it wrote in an August 23, 2003 editorial, “ought to remember that the FleetCenter is a desirable site for a convention precisely because of its location at a transit nexus. Security should enhance the safety of delegates and others without walling off the convention from its lively host city.” For those who were concerned about walling off the convention from the city, however, there was worse news to come.

The Interstate. Interstate 93, one of the busiest roads in Massachusetts, ran down from Vermont, through New Hampshire, and through the heart of Boston on its way to connecting with I-95, the major north-south highway along the eastern seaboard. It was heavily used by commuters from north and south of Boston, and was a major truck route for the region. On an average weekday, an estimated 200,000 vehicles traveled the road.²⁰ As part of the massive road and tunnel project known as the Big Dig, the elevated stretches of I-93 running through the city were slated to be dismantled, and the tunnels that would replace them were scheduled to open in December 2003. It was the southbound lanes of I-93 that would pass within forty feet of the glass façade of the FleetCenter—much too close for the Secret Service’s comfort. “Security specialists,” *The Boston Globe* reported, “recommend a 150-foot buffer zone between the building being protected and the first point where an explosives-laden vehicle can have access.” Even the northbound lanes, the paper pointed out, fell within the 150-foot radius.²¹

Sheafe had been eyeing the highway since he first arrived in Boston. “I’m looking at this, and I’m saying to myself, okay, I need offset. I need reasonable distance to secure [the FleetCenter].” At his request, the technical security division of the Secret Service sent experts to do “blast surveys” of the area; the Secret Service also hired an outside contractor to do “independent research” on the site’s vulnerability to explosives. In addition, he asked three assistant directors from headquarters to tour the site with him about six months before the start of the convention in July. Ultimately, he explains, the senior agency officials would “be making the final decisions” on any roadway or transit station closures, and making the case for closures to city and state political leaders. Their visit to the area “provided me the ability to foreshadow for them some issues that were going to come [up] later. We weren’t going to cry wolf about road closures and train closures before it was necessary. But it was easier for me to explain to them, look, we [may] need to meet with the governor, [after] they’ve seen it ... and have some knowledge of the obstacles we’re up against.”

²⁰ Scalet, *CSO Magazine*.

²¹ Rick Klein and Anthony Flint, “Security for DNC to snarl X-way,” *The Boston Globe*, October 30, 2003, p. B1.

The findings of the blast surveys confirmed Sheafe's initial assessment: the FleetCenter could not be safeguarded from a vehicle packed with explosives traveling through the tunnel. "If you just use a regular sedan," Dunford notes, "you're probably talking 120-125 feet standoff distance that you need. ... You start getting into a truck or an 18-wheeler, you need thousands of feet standoff distance." That someone might try to detonate a car or truck bomb from I-93 during the convention did not seem a remote possibility to those in charge of security for the convention. "The issue for the Secret Service," Sheafe explains, "is that you can't tell me that this [i.e., the FleetCenter] isn't a target. I cannot be convinced that this [wouldn't be] a target 24 hours a day for the four days [of the DNC]."

Under the circumstances, the ideal solution, to the Secret Service at least, was clear: "to do this right," Sheafe says, "that road should be closed ... for four straight days, period. End of discussion. Close it, never open it, and don't let any cars on it." But, as Sheafe was aware, the ideal solution did not take into account the high price it would extract from the city and its environs.

The Cost of Closure. The impact of closing any portion of I-93 would be hard to overestimate. For commuters from the north in particular, who already faced disruptions if North Station—the terminus for commuter rail lines serving the northern suburbs—were to close as well, the shut-down of I-93 would likely mean long back-ups on alternative roads into the city. Truckers serving the region would face similar traffic jams and delays. Businesses might be harmed if goods were not delivered in a timely fashion or if workers found it difficult to get to their jobs or if customers stayed home rather than face congested highways and streets. Even medical care could be compromised: I-93 was the main route from north and south for patients as far away as New Hampshire and Rhode Island seeking care at one of Boston's major teaching hospitals—most notably, Massachusetts General Hospital, which was nearest the FleetCenter. In short, closing I-93 would be, says Colonel Thomas Robbins, superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police, "a traffic nightmare."

There were other costs as well. Shutting down I-93 would make enormous logistical demands on the state police, who would be responsible for managing any kind of highway closure. Even estimating the effect of closing a major artery was difficult. "The state police had an incredibly big challenge in trying to model it," Burns notes. "There was no data that they could use to say what would happen to traffic if the highway was closed for four days, because it had never happened."

Moreover, the manpower needed to divert traffic from the closed highway would severely tax the state police force of 2,300 officers. As it was, police forces throughout the state would be stretched thin by convention-related duties. There "weren't enough bodies to go around to secure all the events," says Burns, both on-site and off. The Boston police were planning to borrow heavily from other forces—the state police, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, the state Department of Corrections, the Boston Municipal Police, and the Massachusetts National Guard,

as well as police from neighboring cities and towns. "We used everybody in the department," says Dunford, "and everybody we could get our hands on."²² The state police would already have responsibility for law enforcement in one of eight security zones in the city created by the Boston Police Department for the duration of the convention, as well as their usual policing duties for the rest of the state; how they would find the officers to manage traffic on I-93 was an open question.

Creating Options. Sometime in the fall of 2003, Sheafe began discussions with both the Boston police and the state police, in part to share his concerns about the highway and in part to get "fully educated on what the road meant to the region." In these sessions, as he remembers it, he would say, "Gentlemen, let me tell you what my burden is. I think my burden is full closure, 24 hours a day for the four days of the convention." And they'd say, 'Whew, that's pretty significant. ... To be honest, that's going to be crippling.' ... And they'd educate me on how 24 hours a day for four days is a problem, and I'd take that information back to [Secret Service headquarters in] Washington." These talks led to a kind of shuttle diplomacy for Sheafe, in which various scenarios for dealing with I-93 would be considered by both sides in the discussion. "We would talk issues and game it out, and then [I] would fly out to Washington, DC and brief the assistant director," Sheafe says; the assistant director also traveled to Boston to meet with the state police superintendent. Ultimately, four options for I-93 emerged, ranging from complete closure to closure only on certain days or for certain hours.

Discussions of the pros and cons of these scenarios were still underway when the Boston Police Department circulated a document outlining the four options during an October 2003 meeting of Burns' Monday morning group, where, according to Sheafe, they created quite a stir. For some of those present, this was the first time they were learning that a complete shutdown of I-93 was one of the options under consideration. The revelation elicited some strongly negative reactions. Sheafe recalls one official from the state highway department whose "basic assertion to us was that it's impossible to do that; it cannot happen. ... There were people who said this will absolutely cripple the city of Boston. The financial repercussions will be so obscene and damaging that there will be no recovery from it."²³

Burns, too, recalls the consternation among Monday morning group members when they saw the options. "Our response was," she says, "'Absolutely not. You're not closing I-93.'" For the city, the ramifications of closing the road were politically awkward as well as logistically staggering. It meant, Burns explains, "the city going to the state and saying, 'Okay, we bid for this;

²² To pay for the skyrocketing costs of security for the Democratic and Republican conventions, most of it for overtime pay for law enforcement and emergency response personnel, the cities of Boston and New York together sought additional funds from Washington. In late 2003, Congress appropriated \$25 million for each city for security-related expenses. Later, in June 2004, the mayors of both cities would ask for, and get, an additional \$25 million in federal funds.

²³ News that the Secret Service was considering a shutdown of I-93 quickly made its way into the *Globe*, though not the front page; the October 30 article did, however, strike an ominous note in its headline: "Security for DNC to snarl X-way."

it's our event and it's your road and, oh, by the way, you have to close it." While the Secret Service could frame the road closing "in terms of law enforcement, myself and the host committee and ... the politicians had to talk about it in much more political terms—what are you doing to businesses, what are you doing to commuters, what are you doing to residents? Can people even function around the FleetCenter?"

The state's response to the option of closing I-93 was equally emphatic. Col. Robbins of the state police recalls meetings in which "the state police and all the other state entities and local entities were saying to the Secret Service, 'You cannot close down 93; you just can't do it. I don't know what you're thinking.'" For the state, the shutdown of the highway imposed two kinds of burdens—on the state police and on the economy. Foremost, according to Robert Haas, undersecretary of public safety in the Romney administration, was the ripple effect it would have on the struggling regional economy. While Governor Romney readily acknowledged that "it's fine to host an event like this," Haas says, he questioned whether "we can afford to shut down our largest city for a week, and what kind of economic impact [it was] going to have, not just for the city, but for the entire region, because you have commerce that's passing through all the time." Burns also recalls a meeting with some members of the governor's cabinet in which there were "diatribes about if we close the highway, the entire region is going to shut down, and [people were asking] is there any other way to do this?"

In the mayor's office, the same question was being asked as well. When he first learned, in the fall of 2003, that closure of I-93 was being contemplated, Mayor Menino recalls, he thought the idea was "very extreme"—although, he acknowledges, the Secret Service had to "protect their own interests also. ... They were the lead agency. If something happened, they'd get their heads kicked in." But whatever his personal opinion in the matter, Menino did not want to pick a public fight with the Secret Service—or any law enforcement agency. Instead, he says, he told Burns and David Passafaro, president of the host committee, "that we'd better negotiate this thing. ... It can't be in cement. Let's figure this out, how we [can] work it out."

This approach suited Sheafe, at least for the time being. "I think everyone wanted to give the issue the proper amount of time before the final decision was made." He continued to explore the four scenarios in meetings with city and state police, and to consult with Secret Service headquarters in Washington. "What I was trying to do," he explains, "was shine the light on [the] issue without forcing it down [anyone's] throat, and without giving the impression that I'm going to take sole ownership of the decision." Periodically, he would get together with Menino and other city officials to go over a variety of security issues, including I-93. The mayor, Sheafe recalls, was supportive of the work Dunford and others were doing to ensure the public safety during the convention, but "he's not going to address an issue before it specifically needs to be addressed. ... So we let some issues slide down the line to be addressed at the proper time. ... [But] the mayor knows it's coming."

As the new year began and the convention loomed nearer, however, the issue of I-93 and North Station moved inexorably to the forefront. While negotiations continued behind the scenes, Governor Romney offered what the *Globe* called "some unsolicited advice" to Democrats. In March 2004, he suggested—provocatively, in the eyes of some—that the city move the DNC from the FleetCenter to the new Boston Convention and Exhibition Center—still under construction but scheduled to open in June—located in South Boston, a safe remove from interstate highways and major public transit hubs. The governor hinted broadly at the political damage to Democrats from having the DNC at the FleetCenter. "I anticipate that when people find it difficult to come in and out of the city," he told reporters, "they're going to ask a question: 'Why wasn't this held at the new convention center?' And the answer is, 'This is where the [Democratic] party chose to have their convention.'"²⁴

Democrats quickly accused the governor of making political mischief, although some commuters, concerned over reports of possible closures that had begun filtering into the press, voiced support for the idea.²⁵ But, says Burns, there was no possibility of switching venues for the DNC. The Democratic National Committee, she points out, had specified that the convention site "had to be a bowl," which would provide the right "sightlines" for delegates and for television cameras. Not only was the South Boston facility still under construction, with no guarantee of a firm completion date, at the time the city was preparing its bid, Burns notes, but the site could not be configured to meet the committee's specifications for stadium-style seating. Moreover, Merino points out, the convention center posed its own security problems: it was, for one thing, directly under the flight path of many commercial jetliners, so that Logan Airport would possibly have to be completely shut down for the duration of the convention; it was also right on Boston Harbor, and therefore more vulnerable to attack from the water. Finally, Boston 2004 had signed a \$3.5 million lease agreement with the FleetCenter, and could not back out of its contract without taking a huge financial penalty. "There was," Burns maintains, "really no option to move."

But if the convention were to stay in the FleetCenter, a solution would have to be found to the security problems posed by North Station and I-93, and the political and logistical problems posed by their closure. For the Secret Service, the public's reaction to security-related disruptions was not the central concern. "That's totally outside my purview," Sheafe told a reporter. "It doesn't affect me in the job that we do one way or another. Our mandate is clear; our responsibilities are clear. The politics of the local reception for the event doesn't affect our way of thinking at all."²⁶ But for city and state officials, the politics were a serious matter. Snarled traffic,

²⁴ Rick Klein and Frank Phillips, "Romney says convention should move," *The Boston Globe*, March 17, 2004, p. A1.

²⁵ Disgruntled commuters noted that there were no plans to shut down New York's Pennsylvania Station, a major commuter rail terminus that was directly under Madison Square Garden, site of the upcoming Republican National Convention. Penn Station, however, lay several levels below Madison Square Garden—whereas commuter rail trains in North Station pulled in at the ground level of the FleetCenter—and there were exits that led passengers to streets farther away from the Garden.

²⁶ Scalet, *CSO Magazine*.

frustrated commuters, and stranded businesses could lead to serious backlash locally and to ugly publicity nationwide. Sheafe and his superiors at Secret Service would have to decide how—and whether—they could meet their goal of securing the FleetCenter without wreaking economic and political havoc on the region.

As they pondered their next steps, worried commuters and business owners fretted over news reports of possible disruptions, and the *Globe* again spoke out strongly against the closures, arguing that Boston “ought to be able to accommodate special events without shutting down.”²⁷

²⁷ “Romney’s Sideshow,” editorial, *The Boston Globe*, March 18, 2004, p. A20.

Exhibit 1
Steering Committee Members

Boston Police Department
Boston Fire Department
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Boston Emergency Medical Services
FleetCenter Management
Massachusetts State Police
The US Attorney
US Secret Service
State of Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety
US Coast Guard

Exhibit 2
Subcommittees for Security Planning

Venues
Consequence Management
Crisis Management
Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism
Airspace Security
Legal
Public Affairs
Explosive Ordnance Disposal/K-9
Civil Disturbance/Prisoner Processing
Transportation/Traffic
Dignity/VIP Protection
Credentialing
Interagency Communication
Critical Infrastructure
Training
Fire/Life Safety/HazMat
Tactical and Counter-Surveillance

Exhibit 3²⁸



²⁸ Source: US Secret Service.



Security Planning for the 2004 Democratic National Convention (B)

Throughout February and March 2004, Secret Service Special Agent Scott Sheafe continued to work with city and state officials, and with the MBTA, on the issue of closing I-93 and North Station while the Democratic National Convention was in session in late July. In essence, his method was the same in both cases: generating options for each and weighing the pros and cons. "How we approached decision-making," explains Boston Police Superintendent Robert Dunford, "was we wrote scenarios and then wrote options; and then we [asked], what is the strength, weakness, threat, and opportunity of each of those." But while the various scenarios were being discussed and winnowed out by city, state and federal law enforcement officials, Sheafe was aware that the top political leaders would ultimately determine, if not which options were chosen, then at least how smoothly and cooperatively they would be implemented. "I didn't doubt," he says, "that the final decisions on these things [were] going to be made between law enforcement, the mayor, and the governor. It [was] going to be a very small pool of people who [were] going to be able to make a decision of that magnitude."

Closing North Station

In the case of North Station, MBTA General Manager Michael Mulhern, who fought hard to keep the transit hub open, was presented with a scenario that granted him his wish. "We went through a process," Mulhern recalls, "where the Secret Service actually devised a plan where we could keep [the station] open. ... They said, 'Okay, we'll keep it open, but here's what it's going to look like.'" What it looked like proved to be unpalatable. For one thing, passengers would have to take a long and circuitous route to and from subway or commuter rail trains to avoid passing through the secure perimeter around the FleetCenter—a detour that would mean a walk of about a

This case was written by Esther Scott for Arnold Howitt, Executive Director of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government, for use at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Funding for the case was provided by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative. (0905)

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mile and a half. For another, Mulhern realized, there would be no guarantee that the station would not be abruptly shut down by security forces in the event of an incident. "Now I began to get educated for the first time on what it means to run a national convention," Mulhern reflects. "I [had fallen] into the trap of thinking, what's 30,000 people? We take 30,000 people back and forth to Fenway Park [home of the Boston Red Sox baseball team]. We've done the Tall Ships. We've done the Ryder Cup [a professional golfing event]. The MBTA was always very proud of its [ability] to move the masses. ... [But] we didn't understand the security concerns, especially post-9/11—how those concerns had increased over that period of time." If, for example, protesters managed to make their way into North Station—the closest, Mulhern points out, that they "could have gotten to the actual convention"—the Secret Service and Boston police "would act unilaterally to close the station. ... Then I'd have all my resources deployed in the wrong place, [I'd] have to implement a substitute service plan—and that would be a crisis for us."

After reviewing this scenario, Mulhern conceded the wisdom of closing North Station. "We concluded," he says, "that it's better to come up with an alternative [transportation] plan during the planning process, rather than deal with the inevitability of having to come up with an alternative transportation plan during the event itself." Sheafe, Mulhern wryly notes, "turned out to be a very wise man who understood [that we] are going to have to figure it out on our own. ... I think he effectively managed me in terms of getting us where we needed to be."

But, as Mulhern recalls it, he found it difficult initially to "get the word out" that North Station would be closed during the four days of the convention. "Nobody wanted to take responsibility for getting the story out," he maintains. The Romney administration, Mulhern continues, had not "been convinced at that point that that was the way to go."¹ Mayor Menino was more "where I was," as Mulhern puts it, reluctantly bowing to the necessity of closing the station. "Early on, we [both] thought ... we were going to be able to just do some adjustments down at North Station to keep it open. ... I don't think he understood how serious an implication the security zone would have [for] the transportation infrastructure. So it became an issue for us to deal with. And it's like you go through the stages of grief. ... There was the storming phase, there was the angry phase, and then we went to the figure-it-out phase."

Eventually, feeling that the public "needed a head start to plan their summer vacations"—possibly timing them to avoid a difficult commute—Mulhern decided to take matters into his own hands by planting "a strategic leak" with *The Boston Globe*. On March 3, 2004, the paper reported that "MBTA officials want to shut down North Station to all commuter rail and subway traffic" during the DNC. "... The officials said they made the decision in part because even if they elected to keep North Station open, a security problem during the convention, such as a bomb threat or violent protest, could compel the Secret Service to shut it down, causing commuter chaos." City

¹ Undersecretary of Public Health Robert Haas, however, maintains that the Romney administration recognized the security problems posed by keeping North Station open. "There really was no choice," he says, "in terms of what you do with North Station."

Hall, however, remained noncommittal, at least publicly. Asked for a response, a spokesman for Merino "said the mayor still considers the matter open for discussion," the March 3 article reported, although, the spokesman added, "Obviously, the mayor will abide by whatever public safety determination is created."² A few days later, on March 6, Mulhern again spoke to the *Globe*, this time for attribution, telling the paper that the MBTA was "leaning toward closing commuter rail access to North Station."

The effort to persuade Mulhern was "tedious" and time-consuming," says Sheafe, but he viewed the planning process philosophically as "a marathon, not a sprint." Moreover, once the MBTA general manager was convinced, he became an ally. "I remember [Mulhern] saying, 'I've been looking at this [i.e., the closure of North Station] the wrong way; this is what I think we need to do.' Then once he did that, people began to realize that this is going to take some major muscle movement on behalf of the city. And I really give him a lot of credit because he was the first one to kind of step out and say, 'Okay, we'll take our lumps.'"

Closing I-93

While the issue of North Station was settled in early March—albeit to the dismay of the commuting public—the fate of I-93 continued unresolved for a few more weeks. Over the course of their meetings in early 2004, the Secret Service and city and state police reviewed and debated the merits of the four options under consideration, which ranged from complete to partial shutdown of the highway. The Secret Service, Sheafe says, was trying "to find a balance between our burden as the federal agency that has oversight for the safety and security of this event [and] the [needs of] the state police and the Boston police to have the assets to continue to provide the safety and security ... of the [entire] Commonwealth [of Massachusetts] and of the city. So we didn't want to say to ourselves, well, your concerns really aren't that valid."

But some of the less severe options for I-93 did not seem workable to the Secret Service. One scenario called for shutting down the highway only on the last night of the convention—Thursday, July 29—when Senator John Kerry would formally accept the Democratic Party's nomination. But that made little sense to Sheafe. "The people that are looking to inflict harm," he reasons, "aren't looking to do damage to Senator Kerry—they're looking to do damage to democracy," and could strike any of the four days the DNC was in session.

But another of the scenarios appeared more workable: to close I-93 in the evenings, when the main events of the convention would be staged. There was a flaw in this scenario, too, since, Sheafe notes, the FleetCenter was going to be "almost as full during the day as it [was] at night." Nonetheless, he concedes, "you could make the argument that somebody who was ... less sophisticated than an Al Qaeda may look to do damage at the highest threshold of people, when

² Raphael Lewis, "North Station may shut for parley," *The Boston Globe*, March 3, 2004, p. A1.

the most spotlight is on." Accordingly, he continues, "we came to a compromise." Under the terms of that compromise, I-93 would be completely closed only during evening hours. "There was some talk initially of only two days," Sheafe recalls, but the Secret Service insisted on all four. "And during the time [the road] was open," he adds, "we would leave one lane [reserved] for emergency vehicles, so if there is a gridlock situation, we can always get emergency vehicles in and out. And we're going to divert certain size vehicles off the road at all times." Police officials said, Sheafe recalls, "'It's going to be tough for us, but [we] think we can figure it out.' And there was some give and take, and then I took it back to Washington and [Secret Service officials] said, 'There's an acceptable level of risk there that we can live with.' And then we took it to the governor and the mayor."

Two Briefings. On March 25, Sheafe, two assistant directors from Secret Service headquarters, and a "blast expert" met separately with Mayor Menino and with Governor Romney. "The briefings were identical," Sheafe recalls. "We briefed the threat. We briefed options for mitigation. ..." Julie Burns, executive director of the Boston 2004 committee, who was present at the mayor's briefing, as was Dunford, notes that the session was "more for the mayor to understand the potential of an incident on I-93. [It] was not so much about closing it ... [or] the logistics of closing it. It was the impact of what could happen if there was an incident. So, for example, they had a blast specialist there who went into great detail about what kind of car could carry the type of explosive needed to actually damage the FleetCenter." The consequences of such an incident were also made graphically clear, according to Dunford. "We said to them," Dunford recalls, "'All we can do is tell you what the threat is and what the risk is, what the vulnerabilities are. You have to make the decision. But we're telling you that if someone came down this highway with a truckload of explosives, you would have thousands and thousands of casualties.'"

By this time, an "evolutionary process," as Burns puts it, over months of conversations and meetings, made the prospect of some kind of closure of I-93 seem, if not palatable, at least unavoidable. "By that time," Burns reflects, "I felt the mayor was comfortable with where we were." Menino "paid attention to our security concerns," Dunford recalls. "He knew the challenges and obstacles we were facing. And I think the best thing is he had confidence in us that we could do the job. [When] he was made the presentation, [he] said, 'Okay, if that's the way it's got to be,' and he made it without hesitation." The Secret Service, Burns notes, "really did their homework before they came to the [mayor]," and given the potential threat they presented, the mayor's acquiescence was in a sense a foregone conclusion. "No elected official," she maintains, "or no public servant—or actually no really sane person—is going to say, 'I don't like this. I'm going to tell you no,' and then be responsible for the outcome." This did not necessarily mean, however, that the mayor saw eye to eye with the Secret Service on what measures were needed to protect the FleetCenter. "My persuasion point," Menino reflects, "was really [that] I couldn't step in the way of the Secret Service. Security was number one. I didn't agree with them, but they had a better view, and they knew security much better than I did. [But] I thought we were going to an extreme."

The same could perhaps be said for Governor Romney. Concerned about the possibly severe economic repercussions from any kind of shutdown of I-93, as well as the burden it would put on the state police force, Romney sought a clear justification from the Secret Service for taking such drastic action. The governor, says Undersecretary of Public Safety Robert Haas, "wanted an emphatic statement from the Secret Service that this had to be done, because [the argument being made] was kind of, this is a good thing to do, or this is a prudent thing to do. The governor wanted something a little bit more definitive than that. If he was about to disrupt traffic and people's lives to this degree, he wanted to know that there was a good and proper reason to do so. And Scott Sheafe had to go back to Washington, had to go back to his superiors and tell them that you need to make a decision about 93. ... Because this is a special national security event, it's really the Secret Service's call to say, 'This has to be done for security reasons.'"

This was in essence the message that the governor heard during his March 25 briefing with the Secret Service. Along with providing graphic data from the blast surveys, Secret Service officials were at pains to make clear that the approach they were recommending was a compromise for the Secret Service as well as for the police. "What we said was," Sheafe recalls, "'Here's one end of the spectrum; here's the other end of the spectrum. Here's what seems to us as an agency and as a law enforcement collaborative group to be a reasonable solution for everyone.'" Secret Service officials "were blunt," he adds. "They said, 'We feel strongly enough about this threat that we were initially thinking of suggesting that the roads be closed in all directions at all times for the duration of the [DNC]. But when we take into consideration your region and your public, we think we've come to [a workable compromise].'" The briefing, according to Sheafe, "wasn't a hard sell. We restated the facts; we stated some options; we came to a conclusion. Everybody shook hands, and we went on our way."

The following day, March 26, a larger, more public meeting was held in the Parkman House in Boston, with both Mayor Menino and Governor Romney in attendance, along with other state and local officials and representatives from Secret Service headquarters. Sheafe distributed "a white paper," as he puts it, with "three bullets representing the things the mayor had agreed to and the governor had agreed to": that portions of I-93, north and south, would be "closed during certain evening hours to be determined" for the four days of the convention; that commuter rail service to North Station would be halted; and that subway service to North Station would likewise be suspended. "I wanted everybody looking at it," Sheafe explains, "so we could talk about it in front of everybody. ... The important thing for us was to make sure that everybody was there to hear it at the same time." The meeting, according to the *Globe's* account the following day, was cordial and ended in pledges of cooperation. The governor, one official told the paper, "said, 'Whatever we can do to move this along, tell us. We want to be helpful.'" A joint press conference, it was announced, would be held to provide details of the closures of I-93 and North Station.³

³ Frank Phillips and Rick Klein, "Governor and mayor meet about convention," *The Boston Globe*, March 27, 2004, p. B1.

The Parkman House meeting, and the two briefings that preceded it, Sheafe reflects, were "a defining moment for me." While Menino and Romney did not have "a whole lot of options" where matters of terrorist threats were concerned, he acknowledges, they could have made things harder for him and the Secret Service. At the worst, they could have resisted the closure recommendations, which "would have put us in a difficult place of having then to try to use some sort of political pressure to accomplish that." Or they could have acquiesced, but made it clear to the public that the Secret Service had forced their hand, and left it for the agency to deliver the bad news. "There was the potential for them to say, 'Yeah, you're probably right,'" Sheafe explains, "but if that's what you want to do, ... you go tell everybody this is what we're doing. ... We're going to make you tell us this is what you want us to do." Instead, "They said, 'We are all in this together.'" For Menino, it was important to present a unified front to the public, regardless of his own views on the need for the closures. "I didn't want to see any disputes among public safety officials publicly," he says. "We do it privately. We yell at each other [in private], then go out and do a public statement. When you send out a message on public safety, if you're not united, it's bad."

Still, there was perhaps a tacit agreement about who would ultimately be seen to be the driving force behind the I-93 and North Station closures. The mayor and the governor "were both supportive," Sheafe observes, "but they're also very politically astute, in that they say, 'You're the experts, and if that's what you're telling us needs to happen, then I guess that's what needs to happen.' I felt, from an agency standpoint, that we didn't dictate anything to them, that we said, 'Here's what we think needs to be done,' and they agreed. But I think they understood, too, that it was clear to me that they were taking our suggestion. So I felt like everybody got what they needed." A few days later, shortly before a March 31 public briefing to announce the broad outlines of the plan to close North Station and I-93, a spokesman for the state secretary of transportation told reporters, "This is the Secret Service's show at this point. We have to defer to the folks with the earpieces and the microphones in their sleeves."⁴

Planning for Closure

The March 31 briefing on the closures of I-93 and North Station provided few specifics, but managed nonetheless to generate waves of prospective anxiety and anger among the public over the impact the shutdowns would have. "I just think it's crazy that they're going to shut down the main vein of the city just to please all these Democrats," one aggrieved commuter told the *Globe*. "To inconvenience that many people is absolutely crazy." Political leaders voiced their unhappiness as well. US Representative Stephen Lynch, a Democrat from South Boston, grumbled that in Washington, DC, a city that had "a lot of ... high-value targets for a terrorist attack, ... we don't shut down the expressways. There's got to be a better way to handle this. I can be persuaded

⁴ Anthony Flint and Michael Rosenwald, "Shutdowns set for convention; North Station, I-93 are affected," *The Boston Globe*, March 31, 2004, p. A1.

that this is necessary, but I'm not there yet."⁵ Businesses worried about how workers would get to their jobs; workers worried likewise. Hospitals—particularly Massachusetts General, a major tertiary-care institution located only a few blocks from the FleetCenter—worried about how both medical staff and patients would make their way in.

Within the subcommittees set up by Sheafe and the agencies that were charged with traffic management, officials worried about the same things, as they began laying plans to cope with the massive dislocation of traffic and commuters from Boston's roads and public transit that the closures would bring. The MBTA had already announced its alternative routes for the roughly 24,000 commuter rail passengers who would be affected each day by the closing of North Station. Where possible, passengers would detrain at rapid transit stops outside Boston and take the subway into the city; where no such connections were available, they would have to transfer to buses for the remainder of their commute.⁶ Inconvenient as these arrangements were, far worse was expected for those who drove into the city—and not just for those who used I-93. At least some feeder roads leading to the highway would have to be shut down as well, to prevent long lines of traffic from stacking up at entrance ramps to the highway.

While planners on the transportation/traffic subcommittee wrestled with the complex logistics of deciding which roads to close, the medical subgroup of the consequence management subcommittee worked on finding ways to mitigate the impact of the shut-down of I-93 which, according to Boston Emergency Medical Services Chief Richard Serino, "had huge consequences for the medical community." Among the many dilemmas created by the road closure was the question of what to do about the ambulances that came into the city everyday carrying sometimes desperately ill patients from the suburbs and neighboring states to Boston's world-famous hospitals. Ambulances, Serino points out, had been used to "deliver bombs in the Middle East," so devising a secure way to allow them access to Boston's top medical facilities would take some ingenuity. Eventually, after working with the Massachusetts State Police, the State Office of Medical Services, local hospitals, and "every ambulance service in New England," Serino and his group put together an elaborate security procedure—involving advance radio contacts and identity checks, checkpoints, and security sweeps of the vehicles with bomb-sniffing dogs—that would permit ambulances to come through on I-93 even when the road was "closed, period, final, end of statement," even to state troopers. "That was my biggest concern," Serino recalls, "because the one thing nobody wanted was to have somebody having a heart attack stuck on the road or [unable to] get to the hospital. ... Everything else [that was being prepared for] was, maybe it was going to happen, but I knew [this] was going to happen—you know people are going to get sick; you know they're going to the hospital."

⁵ Rick Klein, "Downtown businesses scramble to make plans," *The Boston Globe*, April 1, 2004, p. A1; Anthony Flint and Kevin Joy, "Safety precautions draw complaints," *The Boston Globe*, April 1, 2004, p. A30.

⁶ Sheafe did, however, arrange for MBTA buses carrying commuter rail passengers to use I-93 after it was closed to general traffic. "These people have been disenfranchised from an easy commute," he explains, "[so in compensation] we'll get them on a closed road and it will be the best commute they ever had."

But similar accommodation could not be made for the approximately 200,000 commuters and truckers who traveled each day on I-93, or for those who used the "vast network of roads," as the *Globe* put it, that fed into it. In order to dissipate traffic before it reached the section of the highway that ran near the FleetCenter, planners determined that almost 40 miles of roads, bridges, and tunnels would have to be closed; signs and warnings would have to be posted as far away as New Hampshire and Vermont.⁷ What's more, because of the complex nature of the road closure plan, some ancillary roads would begin shutting down at 4:00 p.m.—just as the evening rush hour was beginning—three hours earlier than anticipated.⁸ Even with these precautions, however, analytical models prepared by traffic consultants forecast a grim scenario. "We had projections," says Haas, "[of] six to eight hours of back-up" under normal traffic flow conditions; some predicted that southbound traffic would back up all the way to the New Hampshire border.

It was the specter of the region's roadways grinding to a standstill that led state officials to conclude that the public should be urged to avoid Boston altogether during the convention. This ran sharply counter to the mayor's and the host committee's vision of the DNC as a time to showcase the city not just to delegates and the press, but to area residents and tourists as well. The host committee had planned free concerts and other events as part of a citywide celebration during the convention. "We really wanted people to come into town and experience it," says Burns. Governor Romney, however, who had firsthand experience in running a National Special Security Event—the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City—viewed the DNC in a different light: as the sole draw to the city, a single event intended only for those with tickets or some official form of entrée. The governor "kept saying over and over again," Haas recalls, "... that what they did out in Utah was ... they just convinced the public that you don't want to be coming into the city unless you're coming in for [an Olympic] event, and that saved them an awful lot of trouble."

These divergent visions of the DNC led to "discussions back and forth," Haas says, "between Boston and the governor in terms of how this should be played out. Is [the convention] an event where it's the centerpiece for a lot of other events around the city, or is this the sole event that we deal with, [and] try to convince the rest of the people coming to work to kind of stay away from the city so that we can deal with the traffic issues associated with it." In the end, as Haas remembers it, "we just agreed that, given the fact that we're going to be shutting down North Station, given the fact that we're going to shut down 93, it wasn't viable to have people trying to get into the city." Burns recalls it somewhat differently. "The host committee," she says, "never told people to stay home. That message was definitely getting out, but it was definitely not a message of the host committee."

⁷ Anthony Flint, "Road closures make sense, engineers say," *The Boston Globe*, May 23, 2004, p. B1.

⁸ I-93 itself would not be completely shut down until 7:00 p.m.; it would reopen at 11:00 p.m.

Unveiling the Plan

On May 20, 2004, two months before the kickoff of the convention, the public got its first detailed look at the security precautions that would be in place during the four-day event. In a presentation hosted by the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and the Boston 2004 committee, city and state officials unveiled to local businesses and the media what the *Globe* called the "staggering scope of the security measures," which, it maintained, "surpassed the worst fears of many residents and businesses."⁹

Under the security plan, a "hard zone" would be established around the FleetCenter, encompassing not only that facility, but the adjacent O'Neill Federal Building as well. A staging area for delegates' buses across Causeway Street from the FleetCenter—essentially, the upper righthand side of the Bullfinch Triangle—would also be included in the secure perimeter.¹⁰ Anyone entering the hard zone would be required to have credentials, issued by the Secret Service, and be screened by metal detectors and X-ray machines. In addition, there would be a "soft zone," south of Causeway Street, extending from Merrimac Street eastward to Canal Street. (See Exhibit 1 for map.) Pedestrians could enter this area without credentials or security checks, but no vehicles would be allowed. Delivery truck drivers serving the area would have to park outside the perimeter and wheel their goods into businesses and offices; no deliveries would be permitted after 2:00 p.m.

The restrictions around the immediate vicinity of the FleetCenter paled in comparison to the ripple effects they would have on traffic patterns in the area. Almost all modes of transportation would be affected: private, noncommercial jets would be banned from the airspace around the FleetCenter, and sections of Boston Harbor and the Charles River would be closed to all boat traffic. But it was the road closings that raised eyebrows and generated the most negative response during and after the briefing. In particular, the revelation that not just a section of I-93, but nearly 40 miles of ancillary roads as well, would begin shutting down as early as 4:00 p.m. "drew gasps, grimaces, and gallows humor," according to the *Globe*.¹¹ Expressions of dismay came not only from businesses and other establishments in the area, but from the mayors of surrounding towns, who feared that their streets would become clogged with drivers seeking alternative routes to their destinations. "We understand the security concerns," said Mayor Joseph Curtatone of Somerville, "but the traffic, the congestion—it's going to be a nightmare."¹²

⁹ Anthony Flint, "Massive closings of roads set for convention week," *The Boston Globe*, May 21, 2004, p. A1.

¹⁰ Boston Police Department, Democratic National Convention Operating Plan. The hard zone would be bounded by Martha Way and Lomasney Way to the west, Causeway Street to the south, the North Washington Street Bridge to the east, and the Charles River to the north.

¹¹ Flint, May 21, 2004.

¹² *Ibid.*

State police did not dispute such grim assessments. "This going to be a serious traffic condition that we're trying to manage," said Major Michael Mucci, who was in charge of traffic management during the convention. "If everybody decides to have traffic as normal, we will back up to New Hampshire. It's as simple as that."¹³ A *Boston Herald* columnist reported that Mucci told the May 20 gathering, "with enough humor that you knew he was serious," that there might be times during the convention when a commuter's best option would be "to turn around and go home."¹⁴

To Menino and Burns, such statements—and the accompanying press coverage—were needlessly alarmist and drowned out the more "can-do" message they were trying to convey. The mayor urged employers to allow workers to telecommute or to reschedule their hours so that they could leave the city before the road closings began or to help organize car pools to reduce traffic volume. "Law enforcement and transportation officials tell us we need to reduce the number of commuters coming into the city," he said. "I am asking [employers] to give employees the flexibility they need." He also announced the launching of a "Let's Work Around It" campaign that would provide maps and information for businesses and commuters on changes in traffic and transit routes during the convention.¹⁵ The campaign slogan was instantly lampooned in the press, with the *Boston Herald* suggesting alternative catchphrases, such as "Let's just get it over with," or "Let's get outta here."¹⁶

For those who hoped that the convention would entice people into Boston, portraying the event in a positive light became an uphill battle. "The purpose of the host committee is to be a booster for the city, and my job was to be the chief booster and talk about how fabulous the event was," Burns wryly observes. "I used to go to panels with Scott Sheafe, Superintendent Dunford, and Major Mucci, who would talk about the closures, ... and I had to stand up and say how great this was for the city." Burns' efforts notwithstanding, what seemed largely conveyed was a sense that the open invitation to come to the city was being withdrawn. "The dominant message," a May 21 *Boston Globe* editorial declared, "is to stay out of town."

That message seemed to cast a pall over the upcoming convention, once seen as a source of civic pride. The crowds of tourists that local businesses expected to flock to the city for convention-related events now seemed unlikely to materialize; worse still, it seemed possible that even regular customers would stay away as well. "People are going to avoid us like a bad case of bubonic plague," one store owner glumly told the *Globe*. Instead of the \$154 million economic benefit that the mayor's office had predicted, some were now forecasting losses of anywhere from \$34 million

¹³ Rick Klein, "Boston's 'party' gets a new spin," *The Boston Globe*, May 21, 2004, p. B4.

¹⁴ Cosmo Macero, Jr., "DNC Mess: Unconventional honesty precedes DNC hassles," *Boston Herald*, May 21, 2004, p. 35.

¹⁵ Kimberly Blanton, "Firms see traffic-plan headaches," *The Boston Globe*, May 21, 2004, p. C1; Flint, May 21, 2004.

¹⁶ Macero, May 21, 2004.

to almost \$50 million.¹⁷ In a blistering May 26 piece on the security arrangements—provocatively entitled “The DNC Train Wreck”—*Globe* business columnist Steve Bailey castigated the mayor, Senator Kennedy, and others for having “sold the Democratic Party an impossible venue in this post-9/11 world, the FleetCenter, ground zero for the city’s transportation network. Our best hope for avoiding complete gridlock is to scare the pants off 250,000 daily commuters and persuade half of them to stay home. Some plan.” But Scott Sheafe offered a different perspective on the convention and the tight security surrounding it. “What is about to happen in Boston,” he said at the May 20 briefing, “is the continuation of the democratic process and the American way, at a time when the country is at war.”¹⁸

Going Down to the Wire

While the press and the general public continued to stew about the closings, city, state, and federal officials put the finishing touches on their security plans for the convention. In addition to the three federal plans—for implementation of an operational security plan (primarily for securing the FleetCenter), for crisis management, and for consequence management—some agencies produced their own plans outlining in detail the deployment of their personnel and supplies and, where pertinent, their response to a wide array of incidents. The most comprehensive of these came from the Boston Police Department, which was responsible for security outside the hard zone. For the city police, the most serious concern was the prospect of violent demonstrations from anarchists and other groups, who had managed to disrupt previous conventions, and who were expected to show up in numbers for the DNC, ready for trouble. “Experts across the country,” recalls Kathleen O’Toole, who was named police commissioner in February 2004, “predicted we’d have between 1,500-2,000 arrests.”

The experience of Seattle during the 1999 World Trade Organization, when demonstrations led to violent clashes between protesters and an overwhelmed police force, was much on the mind of police officials, says Dunford, as they prepared their operational plan. There was as well the specter of recent conventions, such as the 2000 DNC in Los Angeles, where police, according to Sheafe, resorted to rubber bullets and tear gas to subdue unruly crowds. It was the kind of ugly scene that Boston police hoped to avoid. O’Toole had been a member of a commission in Northern Ireland that had developed “a new framework for policing,” a less confrontational approach which she believed would be effective in dealing with protesters at the convention.¹⁹ “I think that’s probably the thing that I felt most strongly about,” she says, “because I’d witnessed it in Northern Ireland ... and saw how dramatically different the results could be if the police

¹⁷ Kimberly Blanton and Andrew Caffrey, “Convention bust may reach \$50m,” *The Boston Globe*, May 22, 2004, p. A1.

¹⁸ Flint, May 21, 2004.

¹⁹ Even before O’Toole took command of the Boston Police Department, she helped arrange for Dunford and another police officer to visit Northern Ireland during its “marching season” to learn firsthand about the tiered response to demonstrations.

engaged in a different approach." Under this "soft approach," as Dunford calls it, the police would present a less aggressive face to protesters. Demonstrators "would see police officers everywhere," he explains, "but [they] would be in the normal uniform of the day, which in July was short-sleeved uniforms." Should a demonstration threaten to escalate, there would be a "three-tiered" response of specially trained units that could be called in to handle the situation, starting with a small "quick response squad" and ending, if necessary, with a "public order platoon," equipped with "full Ninja suits" and riot gear. But while the tiered response had proven a success in Northern Ireland, it was untried in Boston and, as O'Toole recalls, some of the police officers who would be out in shirtsleeves were apprehensive. They were "so concerned about some of the predictions [of violent demonstrations]," she explains, "that they wanted to wear protective clothing ... battle dress uniforms and helmets. ... I had to meet with the Health and Safety Committee of the union and convince them that we needed to approach this from a different perspective, and that their gear would be staged in close proximity if they needed it, and we'd have tactical teams strategically placed throughout the city. ..."

Training. The detailed planning was accompanied by intensive training, both within and among agencies at all levels of government. In the police department, for example, tactical units were either "created from fresh," as Dunford puts it, or existing groups were "trained to a higher level." In addition, Boston police cross-trained with state police, as well as with officers from other cities and towns who were brought in to supplement the city's thinly stretched force.

The Secret Service, meanwhile, was doing "some grander-scheme training" in Sheafe's words. This included multiple tabletop exercises involving steering committee members, in which a wide range of incidents was presented—"a lot of what-ifs," explains Col. Thomas Robbins of the Massachusetts State Police, "a lot of scenarios in terms of any conceivable harm that could come to the event." FBI Special Agent in Charge Ken Kaiser jokes that "the only thing they didn't exercise for was a tsunami." As the convention drew nearer, the Secret Service staged a major exercise at "an old airbase," Sheafe recalls, where participants "did a lot of robust training. ... We actually brought in motorcade vehicles and motorcycles and pyrotechnics and were blowing things up and [staging] simulations [of] attacks and biochem[ical] attacks, and things like that."

Eventually, however, Sheafe concluded that it was time to stop preparing. "I would go to these tabletop exercises," he says, "and everybody would be very high-strung, ... very cautious about what they should say." Participants, he noticed, were losing confidence in their ability to handle an event as freighted with significance as a National Special Security Event. "We planned for so long," Sheafe says, "that people began to plan themselves out of their comfort zone." He reminded participants that "this is a community that handles events, big and small, all the time," and that they were well-trained and prepared for any eventuality. "And I started telling people about six weeks out that we're ready."

D-Day Approaches. On the eve of the convention, after 18 months of planning in some cases, officials were ready to launch what the *Globe* called "the most ambitious security operations ever mounted in New England." An estimated 3,000 law enforcement officers from almost 100 federal, state and local agencies had been mustered for the event, along with the "biggest concentration of bomb-sniffing dogs ever assembled in a city."²⁰ Over half of the state police force—about 1,400 officers, out of a total of 2,300—was assigned to convention-related duties, along with about 400 members of the Massachusetts National Guard. Contingents of state troopers from the five other New England states were on duty as well to help with traffic, at the request of Massachusetts State Police Superintendent Thomas Robbins.²¹ Both state police and Boston police officers would work twelve hour shifts for the duration of the convention; all vacation leaves were cancelled. Hundreds of additional Secret Service and FBI agents were on hand; the US Coast Guard was patrolling the waters of Boston Harbor near the FleetCenter; hospitals and ambulance companies were on alert to handle patient "surges"; special Disaster Medical Assistance Teams—part of FEMA—had been deployed to the area; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had expedited a shipment of antidotes in the event of a chemical attack.

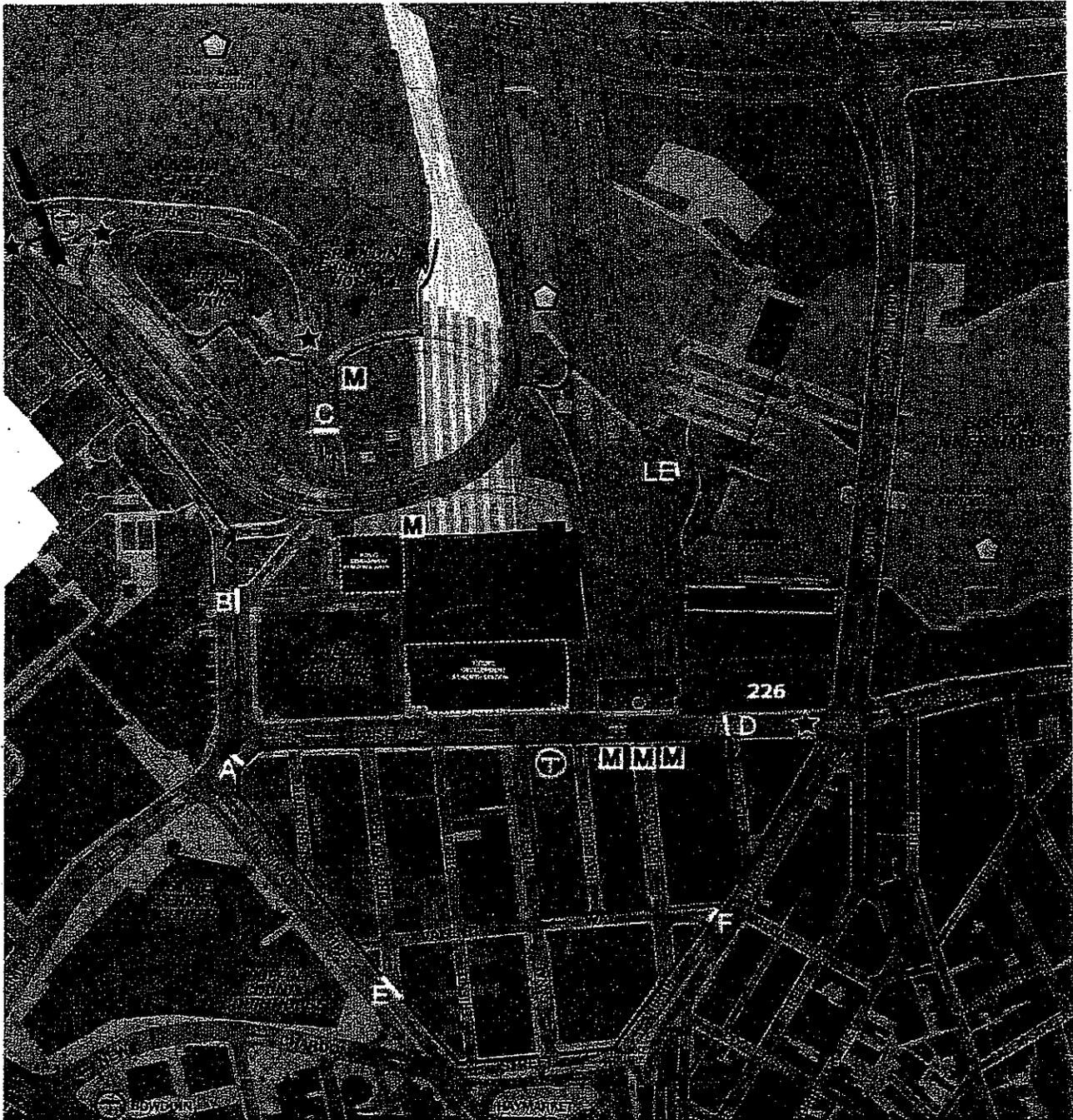
The Secret Service activated its expensive new Multi-Agency Communications Center at the Volpe Transportation Building in Cambridge, where 75 agencies and companies (such as Verizon) could gather before "incident monitors" to keep tabs on developments. The Boston police established a Unified Command Center and a Tactical Operations Center at its headquarters. The FBI readied its Joint Operations Center for counterterrorism and investigations at its office in Boston and opened an intelligence operations center at the Volpe building as well. Other agencies set up command posts and emergency operations centers throughout the area; by Richard Serino's count, there were a total of 29 command centers of various kinds in operation during the convention. (See Exhibit 2 for a partial list of centers.)

As delegates—and protesters—began arriving in Boston for the start of the convention on July 26, no one was sure what to expect—devastating terrorist attacks, violent and disruptive demonstrations, paralyzing traffic jams—or whether the complex security arrangements that required the cooperation of so many different agencies would work seamlessly. Officials, the *Globe* reported on July 11, seemed "confident, and realistic. ... 'I'm too much of a fatalist and Irish Catholic to say we are ready for anything at any time,'" State Public Safety Secretary Edward Flynn told the paper. "'We've tried to anticipate as many scenarios as possible.'"

²⁰ Kevin Cullen, "Convention gears for top security," *The Boston Globe*, July 11, 2004, p. A1.

²¹ The out-of-state troopers were provided after Robbins asked the governors of the New England states to invoke the New England State Police Administrator Compact.

Exhibit 1²²



²² Source: US Secret Service.

Exhibit 2

Partial List of Operational Platforms

Multi-Agency Communications Center

Lead Agency: US Secret Service

Site: Volpe National Transportation Center

DNC Coordinating Center

Lead Agency: US Secret Service

Site: O'Neill Federal Building

Intelligence Division Coordinating Center

Lead Agency: US Secret Service

Site: O'Neill Federal Building

Intelligence Operations Center

Lead Agency: FBI

Site: Volpe National Transportation Center

Joint Operations Center

Lead Agency: FBI

Site: FBI Boston Division Headquarters

Joint Information Center

Lead Agency: US Secret Service/Boston Police Department

Site: Boston Police Headquarters

Unified Command Center

Lead Agency: Boston Police Department

Site: Boston Police Headquarters

Bomb Management Center

Lead Agency: US Secret Service/Boston Police Department/FBI

Site: South Boston

Fusion Center

Lead Agency: Democratic National Convention Committee

Site: FleetCenter

Emergency Operations Center

Lead Agency: multiple agencies

Site: Multiple locations



Security Planning for the 2004 Democratic National Convention: Epilogue

On July 29, 2004, Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts formally accepted the nomination of the Democratic Party as its candidate in the upcoming presidential election before throngs of cheering delegates in Boston's FleetCenter. It was a galvanizing moment for the party faithful and, for the officials who had been responsible for security planning for the convention, a time of triumph—and relief. The Democratic National Convention had gone off virtually without a hitch from a security standpoint. There had been no major incidents, and few minor ones, involving protesters; terrorist threats had not materialized; even the traffic had flowed smoothly. As workers began dismantling the security fence surrounding the hard zone and city life resumed its normal rhythms, the consensus was that the event had been a success and produced some lasting benefits for the city, but at a steep cost.

Civil Disturbances. Possibly the most visible success, from a security standpoint, was in the policing of the convention. Protesters had not appeared in the numbers that had been anticipated, but many officials credited the heavy police presence—combined with the “tiered” approach adopted by the Boston police—with deterring those who did show up from engaging in the kind of disruptive activities that had marred previous conventions. There was “such a huge, huge presence,” says Ken Kaiser, special agent in charge of the Boston FBI office, “that it discouraged [protesters] from doing anything, because they knew that it wasn’t going to work well for them.” But when they did try something, Boston Police Commissioner Kathleen O’Toole notes, they were met with a “very non-confrontational approach” that gave demonstrators some leeway. “Rather than have riot cops in full gear respond to demonstrations where people were getting a bit disorderly,” she says, “we sent in cops on mountain bikes. Even the anarchists were impressed.” The reduced numbers and the “soft approach” resulted in only six arrests—far fewer than the 1,500-2,000 originally expected.

This case was written by Esther Scott for Arnold Howitt, Executive Director of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government, for use at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Funding for the case was provided by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative. (0905)

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The relative calm in Boston during the DNC marked a sharp contrast to past political conventions that had been jolted by sometimes violent demonstrations. "Politically, you [can't] buy that publicity," Boston Police Superintendent Robert Dunford says. "We got tremendous publicity here in the city. If you looked around, everything was peaceful and quiet."

Traffic. Some of the most dire predictions about the convention had focused on the impact of security measures—chiefly the closing of I-93 and miles of feeder roads—on traffic. But the anticipated snarls on the region's major roads and highways never materialized, as commuters stayed away in droves. Overall, traffic was down by an estimated 40 percent—and by a whopping 90 percent at 4:00 p.m., when the first road closures had been scheduled to begin. As a result of the unusually light traffic, state police discovered that there was no need for an early shutdown of ancillary roads; it took "only a few minutes," according to the *Globe*, to close down a nearly deserted I-93 at 7:00 p.m.¹

For those who commuted into the city during the convention, it was, as one *Globe* columnist wrote, a "week of bliss," as they zipped into and out of the city on normally congested roads.² For some retail businesses, particularly those in the area near the FleetCenter, however, it was a week of disappointment. The normally bustling Bullfinch Triangle—site of the "soft zone" established by the Secret Service—was "like a ghost town," says FleetCenter Vice President and General Manager John Wentzell. In Boston's North End—a food and dining mecca—bakeries and restaurants were reporting that business was down by over 50 percent. Some "faulted Mayor Thomas Menino," the *Globe* reported, "for agreeing to security measures they thought were too extreme, and the media for hyping the extensive road closures."³ The mayor himself points to comments made by State Police Major Michael Mucci on the extent of the closures and the likelihood of traffic jams, which, he argues, scared people away from the city. "That's what alarmed everyone," Menino says. "... Then the media just picked up on it and ran with it." State officials, on the other hand, were unapologetic about their role in warning the public away from the city. "We wanted to get [traffic] volumes down 50 percent," a Massachusetts Turnpike Authority official told the *Globe*, "and we succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. This wasn't a conspiracy to lie to the public. If we didn't knock those volumes down, it would have been Armageddon around here."⁴ But Julie Burns, executive director of the Boston 2004 committee, lamented the decision of so many to stay away from the city during what had been conceived of as a time of public celebration. "We really wanted people to come and take part," she says. "... That was a big disappointment for us."

¹ Andrea Estes and Anthony Flint, "Officials defend traffic measures," *The Boston Globe*, July 31, 2004, p. B4. Traffic was, however, reported to be heavier than normal in the early morning hours, as some commuters adjusted their work schedules in order to be able to leave before the scheduled closings began at 4:00. According to a July 30 *Globe* article, ridership on the four commuter rail lines that normally terminated at North Station was down by over 50 percent.

² Mac Daniel, "Welcome back! You missed our week of bliss," *The Boston Globe*, August 1, 2004, p. B2.

³ Stephen Smith and Benjamin Gedan, "Shops' dreams don't pan out," *The Boston Globe*, July 28, 2004, p. A1.

⁴ Estes and Flint, July 31, 2004.

Still, while acknowledging that some businesses may have been hurt, Burns maintains that "the hospitality industry did well. It could have done better, had it not been for the security, but it did do well." Although the city did not realize its initial estimate of a \$154 million benefit, neither did it suffer the economic losses some had predicted. According to one study, the DNC pumped \$14.8 million into the local economy—a figure that Merino argued understated the "total scope of benefits."⁵

Security Plan Implementation. Among those responsible for security, there was general agreement that their long efforts at planning had paid off—although the security plans were not put to a severe test. "Everybody understood the plan," says Secret Service Special Agent Scott Sheafe, "and the implementation of it was outstanding." The many players involved, notes Steven Ricciardi, special agent in charge of the Secret Service's Boston office, "stayed in their lanes and did a great job and never overlapped with anybody else's responsibilities."

The chief criticism from participants concerned the proliferation of "command centers"—29 in all, according to Emergency Medical Services Chief Richard Serino. There were several major communications and command centers—or "operational platforms," as the Secret Service termed them—most of them run by the Secret Service, the FBI, or the Boston Police Department. But there were as well a number of smaller centers set up by other agencies whose mission and function were ill-defined, according to Serino. "A lot of people put up their own command centers," he says, "and they all called them command posts, and they all called them emergency operations centers. Everybody had their EOC, and everybody said they're in charge. ..." Still, Serino notes, there were no major coordination problems among the command centers "that mattered," and in most regards communications ran smoothly. The elaborate system he had set up to allow ambulances on I-93 when it was closed, for example, "worked flawlessly" 180 times, he says, "[for] ambulances from Maine to New Hampshire [and] Rhode Island."

Participants noted that the planning effort had helped improve law enforcement and emergency response for strictly local events. "We developed a plan that can be used for other events going forward," Serino points out. "... We got a lot of good training that we've used subsequently. ... A lot of the equipment we had [for the DNC] we were able to utilize [in other events]." But it was not only in plans and equipment that Serino felt the benefit of the DNC security planning process. "I can't say enough how the relationships we built [with public and private hospitals and public health agencies]," he says, "paid dividends" in later incidents.

Group Harmony. Many others who participated in the security planning remarked on the cooperative and cordial relations that were developed over the long months of meetings of the steering committee and the subcommittees. While there was some friction among federal, state, and local agencies, it did not bog down the planning process. Disagreements or problem areas

⁵ Andrew Caffrey, "Convention benefit 'negligible,' study finds," *The Boston Globe*, August 10, 2004, p. A1.

were worked out between agencies, or by agency leaders who used informal contacts to talk over any issues that had arisen. So, for example, Undersecretary of Public Safety Robert Haas recalls that "Scott [Sheafe] and I had a number of telephone conversations back and forth, just on small issues, trying to work things out. ... It was just a lot easier to pick up the phone, call him and go back and forth with him. The same thing with Bob Dunford. [I was] able to call him directly and have a conversation with him when I needed something."

A number of participants also believed that the security planning effort had cemented relationships among officials who had little or no previous experience of working together. "I got to know Michael Sullivan, the United States Attorney," says Boston Fire Commissioner Paul Christian. "I got to know people in the FBI who I wouldn't [otherwise] run into. I go to meet Scott Sheafe, Steve Ricciardi [of the] Secret Service. These are people [who are usually] just ships passing in the night." Ken Horak, acting director of the regional FEMA office, notes that, despite differences that arose during security planning, "the relationships, the contacts we made were really the net positive of this experience. It's something that should be happening all the time, but here was an event that clearly got everybody's attention and focus for a year and a half ... and it paid off."

Perhaps most surprising, in view of the many agencies involved, the turf issues that traditionally plagued the law enforcement community proved not to be a major problem, in either the security planning or the implementation phase. Many attributed this to the personalities of the officials heading up the different agencies—"people who were just about devoid of ego," according to Carlo Boccia, head of the Mayor's Office of Homeland Security—as well as to their history of working together on security issues, particularly since September 11. Others also noted that the structure of a National Special Security Event left no ambiguities as to who was ultimately in charge. "It was," says Kaiser, "[the Secret Service's] show." But, Dunford notes, the agency was careful not to be seen to exert too much direct control. "The Secret Service," he observes, "is excellent at getting what they want without making you feel like they just twisted your arm, because they talk, they listen, they do a lot of persuading." Many also praised Scott Sheafe for his organizing skills and his tact in dealing with local agencies. Whatever the precise cause, the general consensus was that the DNC was a model of cooperative behavior. "We jokingly refer to the Democratic National Convention here among the law enforcement community," says Kaiser, "as the summer of love."

Final Assessments. Most observers agreed that, for all the controversy and complaints it generated, the convention had shown Boston in a highly favorable light, to delegates and to the TV viewing public. Delegates and officials of the Democratic Party expressed strong satisfaction with both the event and its host. "Everyone was so thrilled not only with the convention, but with the city," a Democratic National Convention Committee spokeswoman said. "It was such a successful

convention from every standpoint."⁶ Even the *Globe*, which had been critical of the tight security imposed for the convention, acknowledged in an August 2 editorial that, while "some security preparations were excessive," the DNC itself "ran smoothly and safely, and Boston received a boost in the national perception as a diverse, welcoming, and mature city." The mayor also got a vote of confidence from his constituents: 63 percent of Bostonians polled by the *Globe* said that Menino had done "an excellent or a good job overseeing the convention."⁷

Despite the generally positive reviews for both the convention and the security planning, however, few in the city evinced any appetite for a repeat. Hosting a convention was "a strain," says Wentzell. "Everybody says it's a once in a lifetime experience, ... and once in a life time is great, thank you." Mayor Menino was inclined to agree. "I don't think you'll have another [political] convention in a city like Boston or New York," he says. "Maybe New York will want to try it again, but it's just so much work. It really is a full-time job for the police, staff, everyone." Both Menino and David Passafaro, president of the host committee, pointed to the cost of security arrangements, in time and money.⁸ "I would find it very difficult to believe that either party will go to a downtown setting again," Passafaro told the *Globe*. "I guess we never anticipated the impact of [security requirements] early on."⁹ Dunford, whose department had worked for over 18 months on security planning, voiced a similar opinion. "People coming in said, what a great town this is," he notes, "... but purely from trying to manage it from a security [perspective], move it someplace else." In fact, Dunford adds, he had a good suggestion for what kind of place might be most suitable for a political convention or any kind of NSSE, based on his visit to Sea Island, Georgia, in June 2004 to observe security preparations for the upcoming G-8 summit. "We would recommend," he says, "that if you have any special events now, you have them on an island."

⁶ Rick Klein, "Convention must change, planner says," *The Boston Globe*, August 1, 2004, p. A1.

⁷ Scott Greenberger, "Menino, convention get favorable reviews," *The Boston Globe*, August 23, 2004, p. A1.

⁸ The host committee did not, however, spend the entire \$50 million in funds appropriated to it by Congress for security-related expenses. According to Burns, roughly \$30 million was spent; the rest was returned to the federal government.

⁹ Klein, August 1, 2004.